

WASHINGTON ICBM CONTRACTORS (ICons) GROUP



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Malmstrom first to launch missile squadron deployments to missile complex

341st Missile Wing Public Affairs, 7 Oct 2020

Senior Airman Tristan Day

The 341st Missile Wing's mission revolves around an in-garrison deployment to a 13,800-square-mile missile complex, home to Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Air Force ICBMs protect the American people and our allies from a major attack – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. They are the most responsive leg of the nuclear triad and are the cornerstone of the security structure of the free world.

Normally, teams of Airmen from various squadrons would deploy in pairs to the missile complex, however, recent concepts have been implemented to make a change.

“Throughout the entire history of ICBM operations, missile crews have performed alert duty on an ‘Alert - Travel - Off’ schedule,” said Lt. Col. Dustin Harmon, 490th Missile Squadron commander.

The ATO schedule refers to one day of alert – or 24 hours underground, the day teams travel back to base, then a day off.

That day off wasn't guaranteed nor protected due to training, commanders calls or other reasons.

“Squadron deployments were born out of a desire to provide reliable stability along with protected recovery time, return of squadron cohesion and integration, improved training opportunities, and leadership team visibility to the organization,” said Harmon.

When COVID-19 first hit, the deployment rotations throughout Malmstrom Air Force Base changed drastically – affecting security forces squadrons that posted to the field, as well as the missile squadrons.

In order to maintain readiness while the COVID-19 threat was increasing, a 14-day deployment rotation for missile field deployers was established to correlate with the incubation period of the virus and to monitor Airmen for symptoms.

Eventually, the rotation returned to its previous 7-day schedule.

“By using a 7-day rotation, each missile squadron is able to deploy to all launch control centers in the wing,” said Harmon. “Then, they are relieved by the next missile squadron in the rotation, and so on.”

Thus, ICBM crews post for a week, get several days off and then have a week dedicated to training, squadron events and mission planning.

With this missile squadron deployment concept, Airmen would be guaranteed protected time off – no interruptions from training or simulator sessions.

“Feedback from crew members has been great,” said Harmon. “They really seem to appreciate being able to get together as a squadron. Morale and unit cohesion are a big win for this.

With this new schedule comes stability where squadron members will be able to expect when they will deploy to the field this time next year. This allows for families to plan vacations and schedule important events, which weren’t always guaranteed before.

“I am impressed with the innovative thinking behind this missile squadron deployment concept and excited for the predictability it will provide missile field deployers and families,” said Col. Anita Feugate Opperman, 341st MW commander.

“We’ve run several rotations since the 490th led the way with the first squadron rotation in August, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive,” she added. “This is a great example of innovative ideas that come from our Airmen to increase our readiness to perform the mission while simultaneously caring for Airmen and families.”

Pentagon estimates new ICBM system to cost \$264 billion over life cycle

InsideDefense.com, 7 Oct 20

Sara Sirota

The Office of the Secretary of Defense projects the military's new intercontinental ballistic missile system -- the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent -- will cost \$264 billion over its life cycle, which could extend into the 2070s, Air Force spokesman Capt. Joshua Benedetti confirmed in a statement to Inside Defense today.

The new \$264 billion figure, which Bloomberg News first reported, is less than 1% higher than a previous life-cycle cost projection in 2016 when the GBSD team began technology-maturation and risk-reduction work. OSD developed the updated estimate to support the Pentagon's recent decision allowing the program to begin engineering, manufacturing and development.

The Air Force awarded Northrop Grumman a \$13.3 billion prime contract for the EMD phase last month and has already started work, according to Col. Jason Bartolomei, GBSD systems director. He said during an Oct. 1 event hosted by the Advanced Nuclear Weapons Alliance Deterrence Center that the Air Force and Northrop were in the middle of their first design review.

The \$13.3 billion does not include costs for low-rate initial production, which the Pentagon traditionally negotiates into EMD deals, service acquisition executive Will Roper said during a media roundtable last month, explaining that in some cases “early production lots incentivize industry to buy-in at significant losses.”

GBSD production will include 634 operational booster stacks, 570 operational missile guidance sets, conversion of 450 operational launch facilities,

24 launch centers, support equipment, surveillance and production quality assurance units, spares and mission equipment, Benedetti said today.

Once discussions over production lots begin, the government will be able to leverage key insights from the GBSD program's use of digital engineering, ensuring more balanced price negotiations, Roper told reporters during the press briefing last month.

Today's statement emphasizes that such design methods have already benefited the Air Force's early work on the new ICBM system.

"Digital engineering has decreased cost and provided a significantly more mature design at this phase than ever before realized in a program of this magnitude," Benedetti said. "GBSD will continue to use digital tools throughout design, production, and sustainment to provide a responsive deterrent capability for current and future adversaries."

"Digital engineering is defeating learning curve, integration risk, and concurrency upfront in this massive program with Manhattan Project-like complexities," Roper added in the statement. "Our GBSD team is also employing modular open architectures and agile software practices to ensure our next-generation ICBM system is adaptable to challenges posed by the pace of technology and future threats."

Guide to Nuclear Deterrence in the Age of Great-Power Competition (Attached above)

<file:///C:/Users/Owner/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/YNURDOSO/GuidetoNuclearDeterrenceintheAgeofGreat-PowerCompetition-1.pdf>

Adam B. Lowther Editor - Book September 2020 – 445pgs

There is no more important time to understand nuclear deterrence operations than now.

Global geopolitics and strategic threats continue to evolve, and we need to adjust our thinking about our deterrence responsibilities. Great-power competition with Russia and China, and the risks and uncertainties that come with it, will increasingly define the character of the Joint Force for years to come. This book breaks down the complicated strategic environment into easily digestible chapters to explain the critical roles strategic and nuclear deterrence play in defending our nation.

Air Force Global Strike Command forces will remain an essential component to our nation's ability to deter a range of adversaries and threats in great-power competition, even as Russia and China modernize and attempt to challenge international norms. This provides the opportunity to revisit deterrence and Global Strike forces. To do that, we answer the simple question: why does deterrence matter to each Global Strike airman?

First, functional deterrence is having the means to impose costs on an adversary to shape its calculus away from egregious behavior. Global Strike forces are an essential element of the Joint Force that can do that quickly and on a global scale.

Second, deterrence has to be credible—that is, believable—to be effective. If Global Strike airmen do not do their jobs in an exceptional manner, and do not have weapon systems that perform as advertised, this could lead adversaries to perceive the US as weak and miscalculate the cost of their aggressive actions. Adversaries need to know, and the US needs to be prepared to deliver a decisive response—anytime, anywhere.

Third, we need a variety of methods to communicate our intentions and our resolve. Global Strike forces provide excellent signaling options for leadership. Bombers, for example, provide a visible form of such signaling by changing their location to forward-operating areas and changing the

numbers that are deployed. Additionally, missile-strike forces are always on alert and provide the bedrock to our strategic posture. Signaling is essential, not only when tensions are increasing, but also when we need to signal our intention to deescalate in a crisis. Fourth, US Joint Forces also need the ability to manage escalation below the threshold of armed conflict, in crisis and during war. There are times, despite our best efforts, that deterrence can fail. In those times, we need to restore deterrence by punishing adversary actions in such a way that they restrain from further attacks.

Our conventional Global Strike forces can be utilized to conduct such punishment below the nuclear threshold. This serves two purposes: first, it punishes the adversary for past actions, and, second, it demonstrates to other adversaries our capabilities and willingness to strike, thus deterring future potential aggressive actions. Each Global Strike airman is a critical component to deterrence now and well into the future—to impose costs; credibility; signal; and restore deterrence. So, why does deterrence matter to each Global Strike airman? Because each Global Strike airman matters to deterrence!

THOMAS BUSSIÈRE Lieutenant General, USAF
Deputy Commander United States Strategic Command

Pompeo slams China's 'corruption, coercion' at Tokyo talks

Agence France-Presse, Oct. 6 | Not Attributed

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called on key Asian allies to unite against China's "exploitation, corruption and coercion" in the region, as he held talks Tuesday in Tokyo.

Pompeo was speaking at the start of discussions with his Japanese, Indian and Australian counterparts -- the so-called Quad grouping, seeking to present a united front against an increasingly assertive Beijing.

But it was the top US diplomat who took the hardest line on China, referring to the "pandemic that came from Wuhan", which he said was "made infinitely worse by the Chinese Communist Party's cover-up".

He warned it was "more critical now than ever that we collaborate to protect our people and partners from the CCP's exploitation, corruption and coercion", citing China's actions in the Himalayas, Taiwan Strait and elsewhere.

This rhetoric was not fully echoed by Washington's partners in the grouping, although Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne pointedly spoke of the desire for a region "governed by rules, not power".

The talks come with Washington, Sydney and New Delhi all at loggerheads with Beijing.

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar noted the fact that the meeting was happening at all, given the coronavirus pandemic, was "testimony to the importance" of the alliance.

But Japan, under the leadership of new Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, is seeking to balance the need to support its allies with its desire to continue gradually improving ties with China.

Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi notably did not mention China in his remarks, and the government has said the talks are not directed at any one country.

"Lately, the present international order has been challenged in various fields and the new coronavirus is accelerating the trend," Motegi said at the start of the meeting.

"Our four countries share the objective of strengthening a free and open, rule-based international order."

Pompeo's visit, which included bilateral talks with his counterparts as well as a meeting with Suga, took place despite the coronavirus crisis in Washington, where President Donald Trump and several staff and advisors have tested positive.

Although planned stops in South Korea and Mongolia were scrapped, Pompeo said it was important to go ahead with the four-way talks in Tokyo, promising "significant announcements".

However, no joint statement or press conference is expected after the meeting.

Pompeo is a vociferous critic of China on issues from security to human rights to the pandemic, which Trump's administration has sought to blame squarely on Beijing ahead of the US election next month.

He is the first senior American official to visit Japan since Suga took office last month, and he said he was confident Tokyo and Washington were on the same page.

Earlier Tuesday, Suga said the spread of the coronavirus had shown "exactly why right now is the time that we must further deepen coordination with as many countries as possible that share our vision".

But he too avoided any specific mention of Beijing, which has made clear its disdain for the grouping, and last week urged countries to avoid "closed and exclusive 'cliques'".

"We hope the relevant countries can proceed from the common interests of countries in the region, and do more things that are conducive to regional peace, stability and development, not the other way around," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said.

The Quad grouping was heavily promoted by Japan's former prime minister Shinzo Abe as a way for the region's major democracies to step up cooperation in the face of military and other threats posed by China.

The first Quad meeting took place in New York last year, and there are moves to make the gathering an annual event.

New START data as of 1 September 2020

http://russianforces.org/blog/2020/10/new_start_data_as_of_1_septemb_1.shtml

The U.S. State Department released aggregate New START numbers from the 1 September 2020 data exchange.

Russia declared 1447 deployed warheads, 510 deployed launchers, and 764 total launchers. [In March 2020](#) the numbers were 1326, 485, and 754 respectively.

The U.S. numbers in September 2020 were 1457 warheads, 675 deployed and 800 total launchers (1373, 6558, and 800 in March 2020). If the treaty is not extended, this will be the last regular data exchange between the parties. And it appears that inspections and BCC sessions, suspended by the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, have not resumed yet.

[\[Arms control\]](#) [October 1, 2020] [\[#\]](#)

Livermore Wraps Customer Requirements Review for W87-1, Holds to 2030 First-Production Date

DefenseDaily.com, Oct. 5 | Dan Leone

In the second-to-last week of fiscal year 2020, the Department of Energy wrapped up its customer requirements review with the Department of Defense for the W87-1 intercontinental ballistic missile warhead, the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory said.

W87-1, the replacement for W78, is arguably the civilian agency's most ambitious nuclear modernization project of the 21st century. It involves everything from freshly made non-nuclear components to brand new plutonium-pit triggers, to be cast at yet-unfinished facilities at the Los Alamos National Laboratory and the Savannah River Site.

For now, DoE's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) remains on track to complete the W87-1 first production unit in 2030, said Livermore, the design agency for the weapon, in a press release late last week. That's the same year its carrier missile, the in-development Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) would begin replacing the current fleet of Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The NNSA has said that the first GBSD missiles might go into silos tipped with W87-0 warheads: a GBSD-adapted version of the current-generation W87 warheads that tip some Minuteman III missiles today. Last week a senior Air Force official said the first W87-0 flight tests could launch in three years or so.

The service has not said when W87-1 might get its first GBSD flight test. Unlike W87-0, which will be a refurb of existing parts, W87-1 will be a newly manufactured copy of an existing design.

The Government Accountability Office reported last month that the entire W87-1 program could cost anywhere between \$7.7 billion to \$14.8 billion, depending on whether the warhead “includes features that meet minimum safety and security requirements” or whether it uses “enhanced safety and security features.”

Among other things, a customer requirements review can establish the technical basis for real-world tests that precede mass production of a new weapon design, according to the NNSA’s latest annual Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan, an unclassified summary of the agency’s nuclear weapons work.

Military leaders quarantined after official tests positive

Associated Press, Oct. 6 | Lolita C. Baldor

WASHINGTON -- The nation’s top military leaders were under self-quarantine Tuesday after a senior Coast Guard official tested positive for the coronavirus, the Pentagon said. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Mark Milley, and the vice chairman, Gen. John Hyten, were among those affected, U.S. officials said.

Military leaders who were in contact with Adm. Charles W. Ray, the vice commandant of the Coast Guard, were told Monday evening that he had tested positive, and they were all tested Tuesday morning, according to several U.S. officials. Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman said in a statement that none have exhibited symptoms or have so far tested positive.

Ray was in a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff late Friday morning in what’s called the Tank — the classified meeting room in the Pentagon. Officials said that is where most of the military leaders were exposed to him, but he also had other meetings with officials.

The news stunned officials at the Pentagon. Top leaders there have largely remained free of the virus, although there have been a number of outbreaks across the active-duty force and the reserves around the nation and overseas. Overall, more than 47,000 service members have tested positive for the virus, as of Monday, 625 have been hospitalized and eight have died.

It is not known how Ray contracted the virus. He attended an event for Gold Star military families at the White House on Sept. 27 that was hosted by President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump.

Several senior military leaders, including Milley, Defense Secretary Mark Esper, Army Gen. James McConville and Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy, also attended the event, which honored the families of service members who have died. A number of the military officials who were there got COVID-19 tests late last week after Trump and his wife both tested positive for the virus. According to officials, the military leaders were negative at that time, and they will continue to be tested in the coming days.

It’s not clear if Ray contracted the virus at the White House event or elsewhere, officials said.

The Coast Guard said in a statement that Ray felt mild symptoms over the weekend and was tested Monday. It said he will quarantine from home, and other Guard personnel who were in close contact with him will also quarantine. The Coast Guard headquarters is not located in the Pentagon; it is in southeast Washington, D.C. It is the only military service that falls under the Department of Homeland Security rather than the Defense Department.

The Coast Guard is following established policies for COVID, per CDC guidelines, to include quarantine and contact tracing. According to CDC guidelines, any Coast Guard personnel that were in close contact will also quarantine.

In accordance with established Coast Guard COVID policies, Admiral Ray will be quarantining from home.

Since April, the Coast Guard has been following CDC, DoD and DHS guidelines for temperature testing, social distancing to the greatest extent possible, and the wearing of masks when social distancing is not possible. The Coast Guard remains ready to ensure our Nation's maritime safety, security and stewardship.

Hoffman said the quarantining of leaders won't affect "the operational readiness or mission capability of the U.S. Armed Forces." He added that, "senior military leaders are able to remain fully mission capable and perform their duties from an alternative work location."

Top military leaders have robust communication systems installed in their homes as a routine matter, and many have sporadically worked from home during the pandemic for a variety of reasons. Some stayed home after having been exposed to the virus and other military leaders have self-quarantined for a short time after returning from travel.

Hoffman's statement did not identify those affected, but multiple U.S. officials said that besides Milley, they included the chiefs of the Army, Navy, Air Force and National Guard, as well as the head of U.S. Cyber Command, Gen. Paul Nakasone. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss information not yet made public.

At least 14 military officials — including some staff members of the chiefs — are believed to have been potentially exposed to the virus after meetings last week with Ray. Hoffman said the military is conducting additional contact tracing to identify anyone who may have been exposed.

91st Missile Wing awarded the 2019 Omaha Trophy

91st Missile Wing, Oct. 6 | Airman 1st Class Caleb S. Kimmell

MINOT AIR FORCE BASE, N.D. -- The 91st Missile Wing, through their extraordinary and exemplary support of the U.S. Strategic Command's (USSTRATCOM) strategic deterrence mission, has been awarded the 2019 Omaha Trophy for the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) category. The Rough Riders were announced as one of five winners by U.S. Navy Adm. Charles Richard, commander of USSTRATCOM.

The Omaha Trophy was first introduced by the Strategic Air Command Consultation Committee in 1971 for the U.S. Air Force's Strategic Air Command. At its inception, it was a single trophy given to the command's best wing. Composed of business leaders in the Omaha, Nebraska area, it

became the Strategic Command Consultation Committee at the activation of USSTRATCOM in 1992. Over time the award has been expanded to five different categories including the command's top intercontinental ballistic missile wing, ballistic missile submarine, strategic bomber wing, global operations unit and strategic aircraft wing.

"It's an honor for the 91st Missile Wing, and I'm beyond proud of the men and women that made it happen," said Col. Menuey, commander of the 91st Missile Wing. "This win is a result of the hard work, professionalism and innovative thinking it takes to generate nuclear combat capability 24/7, 365 days a year."

The 91st Missile Wing showcased their superior ability to be mission ready by leading Air Force Global Strike Command with multiple Major Command level awards. Leading the way in AFGSC, the 91st Rough Riders dominated in numerous areas such as a No.1 in sortie alert rate, launch facility availability rate, maintenance execution rate and mean time to repair; showing that the Rough Riders get it done for AFGSC.

Their superior performance was recognized alongside their ability to innovate and employ advanced technological solutions. Spearheading the implementation of Numbered Air Force's first deployed 3D printed module saving the Air Force countless dollars. The 20th Air Force adopted the new solution all across their command.

As members of Team Minot, the Rough Riders managed the Air Force's largest dual-wing armory. Further embodying the innovative spirit, they employed the first TCMax automated system drastically reducing arming time for 1,500 security forces Airmen, setting the benchmark for AFGSC.

Though many of the airmen stationed at Minot Air Force Base are active duty, the contribution of the reservists and Air National Guard service members cannot be understated. The 91st integrated 100 Air National Guard airmen into daily missile field operations being the only nuclear certified Air Reserve Component across the Department of Defense. In addition, the 91st deployed the first reservist in Air Force history to be on alert at a missile alert facility (MAF). The reservist from the 91st Operations Support Squadron stood watch over the ICBM's, completing a 24-hour alert at a MAF.

In a Nuclear Surety Inspections assessment, Team Minot was recognized for its superior performance as the best in AFGSC's history with 76 Airman recognized for their efforts. Additionally, in an intensive five-day Higher Headquarter functional review, the Rough Riders were found with zero errors and were revered as the "Enterprise Standard" by their Combatant Command.

Through the tenacious approach to mission readiness, unrelenting discipline and innovative spirit, the 91st won multiple AFGSC awards. These awards include the Williams Award for the "Best ICBM Wing", the Blackburn Trophy for "Best ICBM Maintenance", the McAdoo award for "Best Overall Operations Support Squadron" and the Chadwell trophy for "Most Superior Maintenance". The Rough Riders set the pace for nuclear operations within AFGSC.

"The dedicated professionals working for and with USSTRATCOM allow the command to execute its operations and provide the nation with its strategic deterrent against threats in all domains," said U.S. Navy Adm. Charles Richard. "Without the men and women of USSTRATCOM, actively performing the deterrence mission every day, we could not deter potential adversaries and guarantee the freedoms our nation holds dear."

The dedication showcased by the 91st day in and day out is not possible without an equally dedicated local community like the City of Minot. Fostering strong bonds with the Minot community is of the utmost importance to the 91st. It is this appreciation of their community partners that led to earning the Barksdale Trophy, an award given every two years for outstanding community support, to the City of Minot.

Growing strong partnerships extend to the global community as well. The 91st acts as the Air Force's emissary to the Bangladesh military, supporting international communication on important issues such as peace and security. This global outreach strengthens allied partnerships and enhances international relations.

The leaders and airmen of the 91st Missile Wing, through their steadfast dedication to maintaining mission readiness and innovation, proved themselves to be well deserving of the 2019 Omaha Trophy. As the motto goes, they are "Poised for Peace" and defending the nation with a combat-ready nuclear force. The men and women of the 91st embody the spirit of "Only The Best Come North." BULLY!

News & Opinion

Our ICBMs Are Necessary and No They Are Not on Hair-Trigger Alert

Real Clear Defense, 3 Oct 20
Rebecca L. Heinrichs

A flurry of opinion pieces have called into question the Air Force's decision to award the contract to begin building the country's new intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). For example, in an article by William D. Hartung, he asks, "What's the rush?" My answer to that is: half a century is hardly a rush.

That is how old the current Minuteman IIIs are, and senior officials across Republican and Democratic administrations have said for years that we could no longer extend the life of those old systems without unacceptable risk. Following ten years of study, rigorous analyses, and development, the U.S. will replace the Minuteman III with the Ground-based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD).

One of the most persistent criticisms of GBSD is less about the system and more about ICBMs, generally. Indeed, Mr. Hartung is transparent about his ultimate objective, which is "eliminating land-based nuclear missiles altogether." Critics claim ICBMs put the country at risk of barreling us into a nuclear holocaust because they are on "hair trigger alert." Mr. Hartung lauds Former Defense Secretary William J. Perry's warning: "The highest probability of starting a nuclear war is a mistaken launch caused by a false alarm and a rushed decision to launch nuclear-armed ICBMs..."

If we are going to look to Secretary Perry for counsel on this matter, it merits considering his 2009 report, which he co-authored with former Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger. Regarding "hair trigger alert," the two former Secretaries of Defense penned: "This is simply an erroneous characterization of the issue. The alert postures of both countries are, in fact, highly stable. They are subject to multiple layers of control, ensuring clear civilian and indeed presidential decision-making." Secretaries Perry and Schlesinger also stated in this study that "The [ICBM] force is also immediately responsive in a highly controlled manner."

The beauty in our ICBMs' alert status is that they offer the United States a powerful prompt response option that can hit any target on the other side of the planet. But one should not conclude that an on-alert status means that we are a hair's breadth away from launching ICBMs at an unsuspecting country accidentally or due to the wrong belief that we are under nuclear attack.

The United States fields an extensive array of sensors to provide warning of a massive launch of ICBMs against our missile fields. We have satellites to detect the infra-red plumes, an array of radars to detect inbound missiles, other satellites to detect the movement of mobile ICBMs and other forces, and other intelligence assets. And, realistically, should an enemy decide to launch a nuclear attack against the United States, barring an act of insanity, it would occur within a broader context of tensions. So this hypothetical nightmare scenario, where we would have a believable warning of enemy launch that is, in fact, a false alarm, is highly unlikely.

Strategic Commanders have repeatedly pushed back on the notion of "hair trigger alert" over the years, but Admiral Richard W. Mies said it so well before a Senate committee in 2001 it is worth repeating here at length:

I would also like to challenge the perception that our forces are on "hair-trigger" alert – a characterization routinely used to justify de-alerting proposals. Multiple, stringent procedural and technical safeguards have been in place and will remain in place to guard against accidental or inadvertent launch. Rigorous safeguards exist to ensure the highest levels of nuclear weapon safety, security, reliability, and command and control. Additionally, the policy of the United States is not to rely on "launch on warning." As I stated earlier, our forces are postured such that while we have the capability to respond promptly to any attack, we will never need to rely upon "launch on warning." The diversity, flexibility, and survivability of our strategic forces and our command and control networks are designed to ensure we are never faced with a "use them or lose them" dilemma, and we are always capable of an assured response.

It is no wonder the Obama administration affirmed the triad's salience and eschewed calls to shelve any leg after rigorous analysis. ICBMs continue to provide an indispensable role in bolstering the effectiveness of that deterrent, especially now, when the United States faces adversaries with the ability to pose a strategic threat to the United States and our way of life.

The country's 400 Minuteman IIIs are housed in silos and dispersed in Montana, Nebraska, and North Dakota. An enemy would need to launch a large-scale attack against the American homeland to diminish this leg of the triad. To quote Secretaries Perry and Schlesinger again: "The ICBM force imposes on a prospective aggressor the need to contemplate attacking only with a very large number of nuclear weapons, substantially depleting its forces while ensuring a devastating response by the United States." Put another way, our ICBMs significantly raise the bar for any enemy who is even contemplating a strategic attack against the U.S. homeland.

The United States should be looking for ways to further complicate an adversary's calculations, not simplifying them. Without U.S. ICBMs, adversaries could focus their targeting only on the sea and air legs of the triad. Our bombers and submarines operate from a handful of bases. This creates a more than plausible nightmare scenario wherein fewer bases tempt adversaries to contemplate executing a first strike that would have a devastating impact on the survival of the United States.

The challenge for policymakers and strategists is to ensure the triad is credible to deter our adversaries from concluding that a strategic attack is ever worth the cost. A credible nuclear force is one that is reliable, safe, and leverages modern technology to meet the challenges of today and for decades to come. The decision to replace the Minuteman III program with the GBSD program is a welcome move toward this end.

-Rebecca L. Heinrichs is a senior fellow at Hudson Institute where she specializes in nuclear deterrence and missile defense.

ICBM: The indispensable deterrent

A Biden administration would almost certainly abolish land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles
Washington Times, Oct. 7, Pg. B4 | Peter Vincent Pry

"Both in politics and war, what matters is speed." — Julius Caesar

In the 2020 elections, perhaps the most important, and least appreciated, issue: a Biden administration will almost certainly abolish unilaterally America's 400 land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

ICBMs, according to U.S. Strategic Command, are “the bedrock of our strategic posture” but the Minuteman III, a half-century old, needs to be replaced by a new ICBM. The anti-nuclear left has persuaded top Democrats ICBMs are unnecessary.

ICBMs are the most important weapon in the U.S. nuclear Triad — faster, more combat-ready, and more responsive than strategic bombers and missile submarines.

Everyday, anytime, in the few minutes required to receive an Emergency Action Message and turn two keys, U.S. ICBMs can launch 400 of the most powerful, accurate, effective nuclear warheads, delivering them anywhere in 30 minutes or less.

The awesome capabilities of U.S. ICBMs for decades prevented the Cold War from becoming World War III. Today, U.S. ICBMs continue their role as the most immediate and most powerful nuclear deterrent, overshadowing every big military and diplomatic move on the global chessboard by Russia, China, North Korea and Iran.

U.S. ICBMs are the Sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of America’s enemies, protecting the U.S. homeland and allies from surprise attack.

Yet, almost immediately after the 2018 elections gave Democrats control of the House, the House Armed Services Committee held hearings to make the case for abolishing U.S. ICBMs and nuclear bombers — two-thirds of the nuclear Triad — and relying only on ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs).

House hearings also proposed halving U.S. SSBNs from 12 to six boats, barely enough to sustain just two SSBNs on patrol at sea.

These radically irresponsible ideas, that used to be the fantasies of the anti-nuclear left — including groups like Ploughshares, Union of Concerned Scientists, Federation of American Scientists and the Arms Control Association — are now mainstream thinking for Democrats.

President Clinton’s former Secretary of Defense, William Perry, and many other Democrat defense professionals likely to influence a Biden administration, vociferously advocate banning ICBMs. (See the report “Rethinking Land-Based Nuclear Missiles” Union of Concerned Scientists: June 22, 2020).

Democrats now subscribe to nuclear deterrence minimalism, which theory assumes that only a small number of SSBNs are needed to deter nuclear war, and that nothing can go wrong with their warheads, missiles or the submarines — assumptions which defy all of military history.

The nuclear Triad was invented by the Great Generation who survived and won World War II where, for the Allies at the beginning, confidently propounded pre-war military theories and sophisticated weapons went wrong. France’s “impregnable” Maginot Line was rendered obsolete by Nazi Germany’s Blitzkrieg strategy. Allied infantry and tanks were overwhelmed and outclassed by Axis panzer divisions. Battleships were rendered obsolete by aircraft carriers at Pearl Harbor. U.S. torpedoes did not work, but dive bombers miraculously saved the day at Midway.

As in World War II, a lot can go wrong with the best laid plans and weapons in a nuclear World War III.

The nuclear Triad is designed with multiple redundant delivery and weapon systems just in case things go wrong, to assuredly deter and defeat a nuclear aggressor:

- Bombers can deliver nuclear or conventional weapons and can be recalled. But they need to be generated, are the slowest delivery system, might not penetrate air defenses, and could all be destroyed on their 3 bases with just a few warheads in a surprise attack.
- ICBMs can strike fastest, deliver the most accurate and effective warheads, are rapidly retargetable, have the most secure-survivable communications, each carries one warhead so can be used singly and selectively or massively as circumstances demand. Located in 400 hardened silos spread across several states, destruction of all U.S. ICBMs would require a big, highly coordinated and costly attack, needing at least 400 enemy warheads. However, as adversary weapons become more accurate and stealthy, U.S. ICBMs are increasingly vulnerable.
- SSBNs are far more vulnerable than ICBMs to surprise attack, as two-thirds of U.S. missile submarines are berthed at two ports, where they could be destroyed by nuclear or conventional weapons, highly tempting targets as every submarine sunk eliminates 20 strategic missiles and 60-80 warheads. SSBNs at sea are supposed to be “invulnerable.” Assumptions about “invulnerability” are often the first fatalities in war.

Surprise attack is the nightmare scenario — most likely to happen because it maximizes U.S. vulnerabilities — against which 400 ICBMs that can launch-on-tactical-warning are sentinels.

Surprise attack would find at sea just 4 U.S. SSBNs — none responsive as ICBMs. Most submarine missiles are MIRVed with 3-4 warheads, unsuited for many limited nuclear operations.

SSBNs are designed never to be used, a survivable reserve at sea intended to deter attack on U.S. cities.

Instead of banning U.S. ICBMs, critics should support space-based missile defenses and terrestrial Phalanx or Iron Dome defenses for ICBM silos to make unnecessary launch-on-tactical-warning, and ease unwarranted fears about an alleged nuclear “hair-trigger.”

U.S. ICBM critics fear the wrong ICBMs. While U.S. ICBMs exist to prevent war — Russia, China and North Korea favor ICBMs because they are ideal for nuclear blackmail and surprise attack.

--Peter Vincent Pry, director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security, served as chief of staff on the Congressional EMP Commission, and on the staffs of the House Armed Service Committee and the CIA. He is author most recently of “The Power And The Light” (Amazon.com)

Russian Military strongest since COLD WAR – experts issue worrying nuclear weapons warning

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1342668/Russia-news-Vladimir-Putin-cold-war-military-nuclear-weapons-poisoning>

RUSSIA has more military strength today than at any time since the fall of the Soviet Union, international experts have warned.

By [EDWARD BROWNE](#) for the UK Express // PUBLISHED: 05:53, Fri, Oct 2, 2020 | UPDATED: 09:00, Fri, Oct 2, 202

Russia's military might is at its greatest since the Cold War, a report by a British think-tank says.

The country's nuclear weaponry and air forces are gaining particular strength according to the report. Moscow has an estimated 6,375 nuclear warheads compared to America's 5,800 and Britain's 215, according to the Arms Control Association. The Soviet Union had around 40,000 warheads at its peak but fears of a new arms race have grown after the US backed out of a Cold War-era treaty last year.

The experts say this increase in military might is due in part to increased investment over a period of nearly ten years. The IISS said: “The re-equipment programme has been complemented by reforms to create a core of professional military, much of it held at a high state of readiness, rather than depend on conscription. “Russia also retains one of the world’s two largest strategic arsenals.

“The Strategic Dossier concludes that Russia’s armed forces are today a capable military tool that Moscow has demonstrated a willingness to use or to threaten the use of.” The think tank adds “Russia is today a far more capable military power than it was in the early 2000s or at any time since the fall of the Soviet Union”. It claims the analysis of Russia’s military capabilities at this point in time “could not be more important,” claiming Russia is “increasingly trying to exert control in neighbouring states.”

It also points to “deteriorating” relationships between Russia and NATO – the global security alliance featuring 30 countries. Recently, Russian president Vladimir Putin addressed delegates at the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The leader praised the UN for “adequately fulfilling its main mission – to protect the world” and also spoke of the “fundamentally new challenge” of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr Putin also highlighted what he referred to as ‘green corridors’ – allegedly a Russian proposal – which allow essential goods and food to be transported to combat the pandemic free from sanctions. He also blasted ‘illegitimate sanctions’ without referring to any specifically, calling for a more general relaxation of world trade barriers, and also insisted Russia would “persistently propose constructive, uniting initiatives” relating to arms control and “biological and toxin weapons.”

However, less than two months ago Russian dissident Alexei Navalny fell ill on a flight in Siberia. Doctors in Germany later announced he had been poisoned. The Kremlin opposition activist recently blamed Mr Putin for the poisoning, which he said involved a Novichok nerve agent – the same used against Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury in 2018. Mr Navalny told German newspaper Der Spiegel: “I asset that Putin is behind the act. I don’t see any other explanation.”

Russia denies this, and a spokesman for Mr Putin said there is no evidence of nerve agent use, according to the BBC. Mr Navalny added he wanted to go back to Russia despite the attack, saying: “Not going back would mean that Putin had achieved his goal.”

North Korea is likely to start acting up again during the US presidential election

But this year might be different

<https://news.yahoo.com/north-korea-likely-start-acting-122000401.html>

By: David Choi for [Business Insider](#) • // October 3, 2020

North Korea has historically acted in a provocative manner like firing long-range missiles or shelling South Korea just a few weeks before or after a US election.

A nonpartisan think-tank examined North Korea's behavior during a 64-year span and found that it averaged a provocative act within the 4.5 weeks before or after a midterm or presidential election.

One of the leading experts of the Korean Peninsula told Insider that if President Trump is reelected in November, he would make another haphazard deal with North Korea — one that "he'll talk about as being the greatest deal ever."

North Korea has historically acted in a provocative manner a few weeks before or after a US election, leading foreign policy experts to brace for long-range missiles or other provocative acts around the upcoming presidential election in November. The [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) (CSIS), a nonpartisan think-tank in Washington, D.C., recently examined North Korea's behavior during a 64-year span and found that it averaged a provocative act within 4.5 weeks before or after a midterm or presidential election.

The organization found that the window of these provocative acts — which include a serious violation of international law, military actions that breach "the sovereignty of a third country," or personal injuries or damages to property — have narrowed during the election cycle. When Kim Il Sung, North Korea's first leader and Kim Jong Un's grandfather, was in power, the average window for provocations was 13 weeks during an election year. Kim Il Sung's son and successor, Kim Jong Il, took over in 1994, and the average window shortened to 5.5 weeks.

After Kim Jong Un took his father's reins in 2011, that average was shortened again to 4.5 weeks. "This was a pattern that emerged that we thought was quite interesting," Victor Cha, the National Security Council's former top Asia official, told Insider. The former diplomat, who chairs the Korea department at CSIS and is a leading authority on matters regarding the Korean Peninsula, was previously the front-runner candidate for US ambassador to South Korea before being passed on by the Trump administration.

North Korea's interest in American politics is not new. The US's relationship with South Korea and its hand in imposing international sanctions is a motivating factor to keep up-to-date with the ongoing in Washington, D.C. This was apparent during the "[Republican Revolution](#)" in November 1994, when Republicans took over both chambers of Congress for the first time in decades. This transition of power would help scuttle a [deal](#) brokered between the Clinton administration and North Korea just one month earlier, which was expected to freeze the regime's nuclear reactors in exchange for light-water reactors, heavy fuel, and sanctions relief.

"To the extent they can, they pay very close attention to what's happening in the United States," Cha told Insider. Cha recalled attending meetings with North Korean officials amid the 2016 presidential election, where he was asked, "Do you really think Hillary Clinton could win?" North Korea has also gone beyond insulting heads of state by referencing individual lawmakers, calling them out for what it claimed were antagonizing actions.

During a televised interview in 2017, Republican Sen. Cory Gardner of Colorado described North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as a "whack job" and a "crazed maniac at the helm of one of the world's nuclear regimes." North Korea's propaganda outlet responded by calling Gardner a "psychopath" who "perpetrated wicked blasphemy against our supreme dignity during an interview," according to [UPI](#).

"That a man mixed in with human dirt like Gardner, who has lost basic judgment and body hair, could only spell misfortune for the United States," a North Korean foreign ministry spokesman reportedly said at the time. Cha stressed that there were a number of variables — such as scheduled

weapons testing, South Korea's domestic policies, economic factors, and future negotiations with the US — that precluded him from deducing that North Korea's behavior is solely prompted by an upcoming US election.

But Cha noted that based on the data, "there is definitely a pattern there." "There are many possible explanations for why North Korea carries out provocations," Cha said. "The historical pattern that we found was that there were more of them during US election years. So regardless of what you think causes the provocations, there's at least a pattern." "It tells us that if North Korea behaves like it normally would, we would see provocations around these elections — and if they don't, then maybe there are some other things happening inside the country that are affecting the way they behave externally," Cha added, pointing to reports of natural disasters, such as [flooding](#), in the country.

The Korean peninsula faced one of its longest monsoon seasons in recorded history, potentially diverting the North's scarce resources elsewhere. Heavy rains caused landslides and severe flooding in South Korea, killing at least a dozen people, according to local reports. North Korea is speculated to have experienced higher casualty rates given its vulnerability to flooding and its lacking infrastructure.

Around 15% of the country's arable land was destroyed by floods in 1990s, according to one [estimate](#), and a separate study approximated that over 2 million people died. North Korea [claims](#) that roughly 225,000 died during this period. Meanwhile, human rights organizations have presumed Pyongyang is struggling to keep the coronavirus pandemic under control, contrary to regime's claims that it has little to no cases of infection.

The regime may have exacerbated its predicament after it sealed its borders and refused to accept humanitarian aid, claiming that accepting such help would fuel the coronavirus within its borders. Although CSIS's study examined decades of North Korean provocations, the results does not include those during the congressional midterm elections in 2018, where "there was a prolonged and anomalous period of no provocations."

This particular lull came after Trump and Kim's first meeting in Singapore, which capped off a year of bellicose "fire and fury" rhetoric and rocky relations between the two leaders. Shortly after Trump took office in 2017, North Korea fired about two dozen missiles, including its highest-ever intercontinental ballistic missile. While the regime may portray itself as an unpredictable actor, North Korea's behavior is calculated by holding off on any outward, provocative acts amidst peace talks, according to Cha.

He predicted that based on the historical patterns, the regime would have resorted to its usual round of provocations this election year had it not been for the bilateral talks with the US. "After Trump got elected, there was nothing going on in terms of diplomacy," Cha said. "North Korea, that following year, did 20 ballistic missile tests and a hydrogen bomb test. I think if left alone, they would do all sort of things."

"It's typical North Korean tactics to try to negotiate from a position of strength," Cha added. "By carrying out provocations, they put themselves in the position of being asked to walk down from the crisis." But the bilateral talks, which Cha characterized as "made-for-TV summits," may not address many of the underlying concerns. Based on Trump's performance in the last four years, Cha believes that if reelected in November, the president would make another haphazard deal with North Korea — one that "he'll talk about as being the greatest deal ever."

Some evidence suggests North Korea continued to develop its weapons program, even after the 2018 summit and the exchange of so-called "love letters" between Trump and Kim. Current and former US and South Korean officials discovered Kim was continuing to process uranium and digging

underground tunnels to move weapons, according to [The Washington Post](#). "I'm sure they like Trump," Cha said, referring to North Korean leaders. "Trump met with their leader three times and says nice things about their leader."

And they probably see Biden as a continuation of President Barack Obama — and they did not like that administration." Roughly a month after Obama was reelected in 2012, North Korea conducted a long-range rocket test, marking one of the quickest acts of provocation during a presidential election year. "If Biden wins, I imagine that [the US] would immediately do a policy review because that's what a new administration does," Cha said. "It's possible that North Korea will carry out provocations to try to force the administration to deal with them right away."

Although Cha did not rule out the possibility of North Korea continuing its current détente under a potential Biden administration, he said it would be "highly unusual behavior." "Right now, there is no agreement to get [North Korea] to stop producing fissile material or plutonium and uranium nuclear weapons," Cha said. "There's no formal agreement that they will no longer test nuclear weapons, and no formal agreement that they would actually stop testing long range ballistic missiles."

North Korea's Short-Range Ballistic Missiles

They Can't "Evade Detection" and Are Still Vulnerable to Interception

<https://www.38north.org/2020/10/melleman100220/>

BY: [MICHAEL ELLEMAN](#) for .38 North // OCTOBER 2, 2020

This article is the first of two examining the ability of the **Korean Air and Missile Defense system (KAMD)** to counter Kim Jong Un's newest short-range ballistic missiles, the KN-23 and KN-24. This initial assessment examines whether Pyongyang's aero-ballistic missiles[1] can evade detection[2] and tracking by flying under the radar. The technical analysis indicates that these low-flying systems degrade the efficiency of both the Patriot and Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) systems, but remain vulnerable to interception. As a result, the South's two ground-based missile defense systems retain significant capacity to protect key assets and capabilities.

KAMD in South Korea

The rapid pace of nuclear and ballistic missile testing by North Korea under Kim Jong Un, beginning in 2012, significantly heightened South Korea's threat perceptions. Faced with an imminent and existential threat from the North, Seoul quickly established a "[three-axis](#)" strategy to deter Pyongyang's use of nuclear-armed ballistic missiles, and, should deterrence fail, minimize their damaging effects. In 2006, the ROK Ministry of Defense unveiled KAMD, which is founded on indigenously developed and imported systems that detect, track and intercept ballistic missiles launched by North Korea.[3] Initially, the system was enabled by 48 previously owned Patriot PAC-2 interceptors acquired from Germany in 2008, though ultimately South Korea would field 300. Seoul upgraded its capabilities in 2014 when it purchased 136 Patriot PAC-3 interceptors. In 2009, the South announced it would purchase two Green Pine Block-B radars from Israel, which are believed to be capable of detecting and tracking targets at distances of up to 800 km, though it is unclear if this range estimate refers to missiles or their much smaller, harder-to-detect warheads.

The ROK is continuing its effort to develop indigenously its own missile defense system, the M-SAM, whose overall capabilities are like those of the Patriot PAC-3. The South also has a longer-range missile defense system—the L-SAM—under development. When operationalized, L-SAM will provide a layered defense network capable of greater efficiencies than a single-tier defense architecture. The KAMD is supplemented by eight Patriot PAC-3 batteries deployed with US Forces Korea (USFK) to protect military capabilities. In 2017, Seoul accepted Washington's offer to deploy and

operate a single THAAD unit on the Korean Peninsula to provide wide-area, [upper-tier](#) defense when coupled with the PAC-3 point defenses. THAAD is netted into the US-operated PAC-3 batteries stationed in South Korea but is not integrated with the ROK-operated Patriot batteries. In addition to the ground-based missile defenses, the ROK and US operate sea-based platforms equipped with radars capable of detecting and tracking aircraft and missile threats. They are also armed with ship-based interceptors.

The KN-23 and KN-24

In 2019, North Korea began flight testing two new short-range ballistic missiles, designated by US intelligence as the [KN-23 and KN-24](#). Unlike Pyongyang's Scud- and Nodong-based missiles, which typically fly on trajectories reaching peak altitudes of about one-fourth the total range, the KN-23 and KN-24 travel to their targets on flight routes that never exceed roughly 50 km in elevation, despite reaching ranges of 600 km or more. The air at altitudes below 50 km is dense enough to enable the aerodynamic surfaces (fins) positioned at the aft end of the two systems to steer the missile over its full trajectory, including the terminal phase. If equipped with advanced inertial navigation units, aided by satellite navigation receivers, aero-ballistic missiles like the KN-23 and KN-24 can achieve great accuracies, making them [militarily valuable](#) when armed with only conventional, high-explosive warheads.

In addition to enhancing military utility through increased precision, the flattened trajectories employed by aero-ballistic missiles, according to some analysts, “allow [the missiles] to evade detection from Seoul, which relies on ground- and sea-based sensors to track North Korean missile launches.”^[4] Such claims rest on the assumption that by flying below 50 km, ground-based radars cannot detect, let alone track aero-ballistic missiles early in their flight toward a target. Delays in detection and tracking decrease the defense's battlespace (i.e., the time needed to track threats, develop and transmit fire-control solutions to the interceptors launched to destroy the incoming threat), resulting in smaller defended-area footprints, a key measure of defense effectiveness. In other words, if these claims are based on an accurate assessment of current USFK and ROK capabilities, the new North Korean missiles would significantly compromise missile defense effectiveness relative to Pyongyang's older, liquid-fuel systems that fly on standard trajectories.

How Missile Defense Radars Work

Modern missile defense systems rely on phased-array radars to detect and track threats. Unlike a conventional radar that tracks targets by mechanically turning its bowl-shaped antenna—and its main beam of radio waves—to scan the horizon a full 360 degrees with each revolution, a phased-array radar steers its main electromagnetic beam by manipulating the signals generated by hundreds, if not thousands of individual elements mounted on an antenna's flat and stationary surface, as shown in Figure 1. This allows the phased-array system to nearly instantaneously scan the main beam up and down and side to side to create a large “fan” of coverage. Figure 2 depicts the radar fan—in a red-colored grid pattern—for the AN/TPY-2 radar placed in the ROK. The TPY-2's detection range is determined by the size and reflective qualities of the target at the electromagnetic wavelength generated by the radar. (The size and reflectivity of an object are defined as its radar cross section, or RCS, and is expressed in square meters.) For this depiction, the target of interest has an RCS of one square meter, which is a typical value for a missile flying toward the radar.

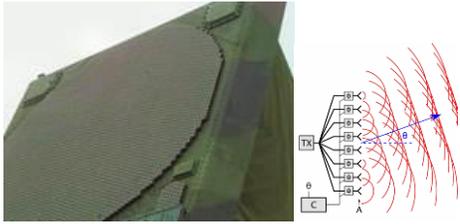


Figure 1. Patriot (left) missile-defense batteries rely on a passive electronically scanned array (PESA) of tiny elements uniformly distributed on the radar’s flat face. The radar’s antenna elements are powered by a single transmitter (TX) and steered left to right, and up and down by appropriately phase shifting the signal emitted by each of the individual elements to produce a wavefront traveling in the direction of the blue arrow. The radar’s boresight points in a fixed direction perpendicular to the antenna face, as denoted by the dashed, blue line. The maximum steering angle, theta, is governed by the number of elements and their separation distance in the vertical and horizontal planes. A newer technology, known as active electronically scanned arrays (AESA), is employed by THAAD’s AN/TPY-2 radar. The individual antenna elements of an AESA radar have their own independent transmitter, which is controlled by a central computer.



Figure 2. TPY-2 radar coverage (aka “fan”) is shown in red. Any object with a radar cross section of more than one square meter can be detected and tracked by the TPY-2 radar, whose notional location is roughly 100 km north of the current THAAD deployment site.

Figure 3 shows the TPY-2 radar’s fan from the side rather than from overhead, as in Figure 2. From this view, it is readily apparent that the earth’s curvature blocks line-of-sight detection of distant, low-elevation objects. (The elevation below which the radar cannot see an object at a given range is termed the “minimum detection altitude.”) If the radar is situated about 250 km from the aero-ballistic missile’s notional launch location, as shown in Figure 3, the KN-23 missile can, in principle, be detected roughly 12 seconds after launch, at an altitude of approximately 3 km. In other words, the KN-23 spends only its initial 12 seconds “flying under the radar.”

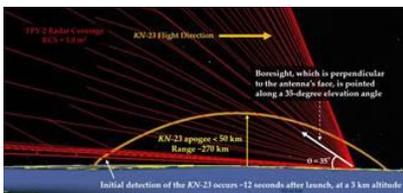


Figure 3. The AN/TPY-2 radar that enables the THAAD missile-defense system is able to detect and track targets located within its radar fan, depicted by the red grid pattern. The many hundreds of electromagnetic elements on the radar’s face can be electronically steered from side to side, up and down to expand the volume of space it can surveil. The TPY-2’s face is typically pointed (bore-sighted) at a 35-degree upward tilt (white arrow) to maximize coverage. However, despite being pointed at an upward at a 35-degree angle, the TPY-2 radar can steer its main beam to different angles, roughly 30 to 35 degrees off its boresight direction in the vertical plane, and about 55 degrees off its boresight in the horizontal plane, as shown in Figure 2. The earth’s curvature blocks the radar beam, blinding it to distant objects at low altitudes. In the scenario depicted here, a TPY-2 radar located about 250 km for the KN-23 launch initially detects, in principle, the missile just 12 seconds after launch, at an altitude of about 3 km.

Figure 4 offers a simpler, clearer view of the radar’s minimum detection altitude as a function of range. Included in the depiction are the notional tracks of the KN-23 and Hwasong-5 (R-17, Scud-B) missiles during their respective boost-phases, marked at one-second intervals. The missiles are launched from two different sites, relative to the TPY-2 radar’s position. One is 250 km in front of the radar, as was the case in Figure 3, and the other is at 500 km. As shown, the TPY-2, or equivalent radar, detects and begins to track the KN-23 and Hwasong-5 missiles during their respective boost phases and at approximately the same altitude and an equivalent distance from the sensor, despite the “blind spot” created by the earth’s curvature. Figure 4 also reveals that the detection altitude for a KN-23 and Hwasong-5 fired from a site 250 km from the radar is significantly lower than that of either missile launched 500 km away. The operational depiction shows that the KN-23 offers no discernable advantage over the Hwasong-5 when it comes to early detection by ground-based missile defense radars when launched from the same location.[\[5\]](#)

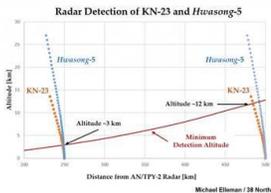


Figure 4. The earth’s curvature blocks a radar’s line of sight, obscuring distant, low-altitude objects, as depicted by the red curve. Objects flying below the red line are invisible to the radar. The powered flight (i.e., boost phase) trajectories for a KN-23 aero-ballistic missile, and a Hwasong-5 ballistic missile located 250 km and 500 km from the radar are shown at one-second intervals. Initial detection of a KN-23 and Hwasong-5 launched 250 km from the radar occurs at almost the same time and same altitude. When fired from a range of 500 km, the missiles are initially detected at a higher altitude, roughly 12 km. The KN-23, despite its flattened flight path and shorter boost phase, offers no material advantages over the Hwasong-5, in terms of initial detection.

Early Detection and KAMD

Early detection and tracking of a missile launch by long-range radars not only enhances the performance of terminal missile defenses that enable KAMD, but also provides the real-time data needed to calculate a missile’s launch location—information that can be used to assist airborne strike forces designed to attrite North Korean missile launchers and crews, if not pre-empt future missile launches.

KAMD is founded on Patriot and M-SAM systems that provide point defense against short- and medium-range missiles. Both systems rely on fire-control radars that detect and track missiles in flight at a range of about 100 km, perhaps more if the target has a large radar cross section. The earlier the fire-control radar sees the threat, the sooner the system can develop a fire-control solution and launch its interceptor, which in turn maximizes the amount of territory that can be protected. Early detection of a threat missile by long-range radars, such as THAAD's AN/TPY-2 or South Korea's Green Pine radar, can be used to cue Patriot's (or M-SAM's) fire-control radar to focus its transmitted beam on a limited portion of the sky, where the threat is expected to appear, rather than having to scan continuously the entire horizon. A focused search allows the fire-control radar to pick up and track the threat sooner than would otherwise be possible. In an engagement where a second or two can make the difference between a successful interception and a missed opportunity, cueing fire-control radars is critical.

Conclusion

As the analysis above indicates, North Korea's KN-23 and KN-24 missiles are no better at evading detection by long-range radars than their Scud-type counterparts. Therefore, aero-ballistic missiles are just as vulnerable to early targeting by KAMD and Kill Chain as the Hwasong-5 and similar systems. However, the newer missiles can maneuver throughout their entire trajectory. The potential impact maneuverability has on the interception process will be the subject of a forthcoming article on 38 North.

Hawks push U.S. to confront rising China

https://washingtontimes-dc.newsmemory.com/?token=ff62d30654706c3c8d5a8115f5471661_5f7b1aa2_d3019ac&selDate=20201005

Congress gets alarming reports on looming 'great-power competition'

BY GUY TAYLOR for THE WASHINGTON TIMES // 05 Okt 2020

China is making a concerted push for control of the post-World War II institutions created to uphold the international order, often using bribery and economic coercion to get its way.

The expanding campaign has prompted calls for the U.S. government to fight back with a permanent entity to craft and implement American strategy to counter China on the global stage. Analysts say Beijing's campaign has accelerated since 2017, with a particular focus on securing leadership posts for Chinese officials in U.N. agencies that hold sway over international law and standards for human rights, global trade, digital communications, public health and other matters.

It's a sharp break from past practice. China, a veto-wielding permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, previously was reluctant to take the diplomatic lead. Although President Trump has shaken up U.S. policy toward China over the past three years, the Chinese offensive to colonize and dominate multilateral institutions has not gotten the pushback it deserves, say experts at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a Washington think tank known for hawkish policy recommendations.

"We're in a great-power competition, an all-of-society and all-of-country one, and I think precedent has taught us that we can't engage in that kind of a competition unless we have an independent body that is supraordinate and is tasked with this as a mandate," said Emily de La Bruyere, a senior fellow with the think tank, said on a recent conference call with The Washington Times. Congress should create and fund an entity that would "report

directly to the president but otherwise be independent from the National Security Council and existing bureaucratic structures,” Ms. de La Bruyere said.

She said the entity should not be large, but nimble and capable of harnessing an all-of-government strategic plan. Two congressional reports last week found that the Chinese challenge to U.S. interests is rising and that the U.S. lacks the necessary diplomatic, economic and military responses. One report was by Democrats on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and the other was by a Republican-run China task force that Democrats declined to endorse. Both offered a broad range of recommendations, but neither called for the creation of the kind of agency that Ms. de La Bruyere is advocating.

She and other analysts at the **Foundation for Defense of Democracies** warned that China is stepping up its bid for influence in leading agencies such as the World Health Organization just as the Trump administration is disengaging on many fronts. “The Chinese government is keen to turn the U.N. and international organizations in general into platforms for its foreign policy agenda ... while stifling dissent and democracy and generally hollowing out the rules-based order,” said Craig Singleton, an analyst at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies who works on China issues.

“What’s needed now more than ever is a bipartisan approach to addressing the China challenge regardless of which party proves victorious in November,” Mr. Singleton said. Analysts say China’s expanding influence at the United Nations is not surprising. It is the organization’s secondlargest financial contributor after the U.S. and is a rising economic and military superpower. China and Russia pose a formidable tandem challenge to U.S. interests.

They vetoed resolutions this summer that were critical of Syria and blocked the Trump administration’s push to preserve sanctions on Iran. Veteran American diplomat Jeffrey Feltman, now a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution, said fears of a Chinese takeover of the United Nations are “if not overblown, at least premature,” but he added that the U.S. has lost some clout even though it remains the biggest single source of U.N. funds.

“The U.N. can still be a force multiplier for the values and interests of the United States, but only if Washington now competes for influence rather than assume automatic U.N. deference,” he wrote in a Brookings survey of Chinese influence issued last month. “The U.N. can be characterized as ‘home turf’ for the United States, but walking off the field will facilitate China moving in to fill the vacuum,” he wrote.

If personnel is policy, then China’s influence is clearly on the rise. Chinese candidates put forward by the ruling Chinese Communist Party have won nearly every major election within the U.N. system for several years, according to a tally by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Chinese officials are now at the helm of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization as well as the International Telecommunication Union, which sets global technical standards for digital communications such as the emerging 5G national data networks.

Despite private and at times public opposition from the U.S., the Chinese now also heads the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the Industrial Development Organization. UNIDO has increasingly provided official support for China’s Belt and Road global infrastructure investment initiative. U.S. officials accuse Beijing of using the Belt and Road Initiative to push predatory loans to weaker nations under the guise of development assistance while it gains financial

and political leverage over the borrowers. Chinese officials sharply reject the allegations and claim Washington engages in such tactics. Beijing recently won an uncontested election for one of its judges to serve a nine-year term on the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, although China summarily rejected a 2016 tribunal ruling rejecting its expansionist territorial claims in the South China Sea.

The report released last week by the House Republicans' task force highlighted China's success in expanding influence at the United Nations. The push, the report said, is tied to the Communist Party's United Front Work Department, which is aimed at building international support for Chinese policies. Under Chinese President Xi Jinping, the department has "taken on even greater importance within the [party] hierarchy, and Xi himself has singled it out as a 'magic weapon,'" the report said.

"This magic weapon can take a variety of forms, but it typically involves co-opting elites in foreign governments as well as in international organizations in a way that subtly but steadily reshapes the international system away from Western or universal values," it said. "Corruption is central to the CCP's strategy to reorient the values of the international system." Mr. Singleton said China has "actively sought to weaponize this growing influence at the U.N." with the goal of getting the world to turn a blind eye on Chinese domestic vulnerabilities, such as its treatment of Hong Kong and Taiwan and its record of human rights abuses regarding Tibet and the Uighur population in Xinjiang.

"Just recently, the world began to express a lot of concern about China's brutal security crackdowns in Hong Kong, as well as China's ethnic cleansing of Uighur Muslims," said Mr. Singleton. "[But] Beijing was able to leverage its enormous influence at the U.N. Human Rights Council, where a number of other very prominent authoritarian regimes hold seats, to secure a vote in its favor, in effect providing diplomatic top cover for mass sterilizations in concentration camps.

"It's kind of unfathomable to think through," he said. "There have been a lot of examples where Chinese officials have dangled Belt and Road Initiative funding as a corruptive means to convince U.N. member states, particularly ones in Africa, to vote for U.N. leadership candidates so they can set standards on issues affecting everyone in the world. China has no qualms about holding countries hostage in exchange for their compliance."

The Trump administration, he said, has squandered opportunities to work with like-minded allies to block Chinese candidates that Beijing often spends years strategically maneuvering into positions of U.N. power. "We seem to be finding out about China's wins at the near-last minute, when Beijing is taking months and in some cases years to tee up a candidate and buy support," Mr. Singleton said. "It's sort of shocking to watch that we're so flat-footed."

Ms. de La Bruyere added that "the U.S. can't rival China's scale and simply just doesn't have the capacity to do this unless we do it in conjunction with allies and partners." The private sector must also be marshaled, she said. "One of the challenges facing the U.S. is to sit down and say what existing systems for multilateral partnerships still work and haven't been co-opted and can now be repurposed to engage in this new kind of competition over international rules and systems," Ms. de La Bruyere said.

"NATO, might be an example," she said. "It could absolutely be repurposed into a competitive mechanism vis-a-vis China, with allies and not just in a strictly military sense, but across industrial sectors and standards in what China might conceive of as the 'military-fusion domain.'" Talk of such initiatives has gained steam recently within Trump administration as well as among NATO member nations.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has said China's emergence as a rising superpower is "fundamentally shifting the global balance of power" in ways that should motivate NATO itself to "become more global." Separately, Deputy Secretary of State Stephen E. Biegun recently suggested that an informal defense alignment of the U.S., Japan, Australia and India, known as the "Quad," could be the core of a NATO-style alliance in Asia

Taking note of China's Peloponnesian strategy

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By Gary Anderson to the Washington Times // 05 Okt 2020

China is building up one what may become one of the most impressive military coalitions in world history in the Indo-Pacific region, including India, Australia, the Asian Tigers, Vietnam, Korea, Japan and the Republic of the Philippines. Unfortunately for Beijing, this emerging coalition is anti-Chinese. China's President Xi Jinping has apparently made a deliberate policy of bullying and antagonizing his nation's neighbors in the region, and he has succeeded.

For centuries, the Chinese traditionally looked at neighboring states as tributaries at worst or clients at best, but there has generally been a mixture of conciliation and coercion in the relationships. Pre-Xi, China seemed to be on regional charm offensive; but all of that has changed recently. There is not much diplomacy involved in China's regional actions of late. China claims that its crackdown in Hong Kong and its bullying of Taiwan are internal political disputes, but its aggressive actions in the South China Sea are clear violations of international norms and law of the sea.

Vietnam and the Philippines as well as Taiwan have issues with China's illegal claims to sovereignty over islets in the South China Sea. Japan and China have a dispute over the Senkaku Islands. Taken as a group, it is easy to write these issues off as normal border disputes along with the longstanding China-India border disagreements. However, some of China's recent actions are hard to explain other than as regional bullying.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte went out of his way to try building a closer relationship with Beijing at the cost of his relationship with the United States only to be rudely rebuffed. Likewise, Australian attempts to develop closer ties with China have were met with threats and bluster. These were golden opportunities that most rising powers would have leapt at. Mr. Xi is inexplicably playing off a different sheet of music.

His "my way or the highway" approach to regional actors is a clear message to them that he wants the United States out of the Indo-Pacific theater and that he intends to use all elements of national power — to include military and economic coercion — to enforce his will. To date, the United States has pushed back strongly against Mr. Xi as have several regional actors. India, Japan and Australia have joined the United States in forming the so-called Quad Group to oppose Chinese bullying. Some commentators have expressed the desire to see this expanded into a NATO-like alliance.

That is not likely to happen any time soon. Many regional nations don't like each other much more than they do China, and some have competing territorial claims. For the last seven decades, the United States has maintained bilateral defense agreements with a number of these nations, which have not historically been prone to work with each other. For example, Japan and South Korea have major issues that Americans are constantly forced to referee. Vietnam, Taiwan and the Philippines have the previously mentioned competing claims in the South China Sea.

That doesn't necessarily mean that an effective coalition for deterrence of China is not possible, but it will take much American patience to make one happen. As I have said in these pages before, the first step should be an Indo-China version of the Monroe Doctrine strongly stating that any attempt to resolve a regional issue by force would cause American intervention against the party initiating the conflict. Regional actors would be invited to participate in exercises designed to counter such aggression under U.S. leadership. Taiwan would be covered in this doctrine.

The United States would not formally recognize Taiwan independence as that would cross a red line for China, but it would erase the studied ambiguity toward Taiwan's defense that has been American policy since President Nixon recognized Red China in the 1970s. An Indo-Pacific Doctrine would have to be a whole of government approach. China's bullying of regional actors is as much economic as military, and the United States should be prepared to assist victim nations with both economic aid and lucrative bilateral trade agreements.

As burgeoning military exercises take place, the United States can encourage regional partners to standardize ammunition, communications and air/sea defense. The NATO alliance has strengths and weaknesses, and we can learn from those in crafting an Indo-Pacific coalition. China is beginning to show the hubris that Athens exhibited prior to the Peloponnesian War, and that did not end well for it. Athens created the coalition that eventually defeated it by its misdeeds. Chinese strategists should begin reading Thucydides.

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China-Saudi nuclear pact can trigger an arms race in West Asia

<https://theprint.in/opinion/china-saudi-nuclear-pact-can-trigger-an-arms-race-in-west-asia/516781/>

Saudi Arabia's acquisition of nuclear capability would draw Turkey and Egypt to join the regional nuclear race, which might turn conflict-torn West Asia even more volatile.

By: [ADIL RASHEED](#) for The Print // 5 October, 2020 1:34 pm IST

At a time when the world was expecting Saudi Arabia to join the UAE and Bahrain in normalising relations with Israel, a noted British daily published a news story that has since raised Israeli concerns over the kingdom's nascent nuclear programme.

On 17 September 2020, an [article](#) in The Guardian reported that Chinese geologists have prepared a report for Saudi Arabia — as part of their nuclear energy cooperation agreement — which names locations having large reserves of uranium ore in the kingdom that could be sufficient for its domestic production of nuclear fuel. This news comes on the heels of an earlier Wall Street Journal [report](#) that the kingdom has also already constructed a facility with Chinese assistance for extracting uranium yellowcake from uranium ore, a major development in Riyadh's avowedly peaceful nuclear programme.

The report states that the facility is being built far away from the eastern borders close to Iran, with the help of two Chinese companies near the Saudi city of Ula, midway between Medina and Tabuk. The motives of China in helping Saudi Arabia with its nuclear programme seem dubious. Recent Chinese involvement in building Saudi nuclear capabilities comes at a time when there is news of its major partnership with Iran (some [reports](#) say to the tune of US\$400 billion), which apart from making huge investments in the sanctions-hit country also covers arms sale.

It is well-known that China's economic and geopolitical dragon rose mainly in the shadow of West Asian wars in the 2000s, and so it is in Beijing's interest to keep West Asia a troubled region. By having defence cooperation with both adversaries (Saudi Arabia and Iran) at the same time, China seems to be burnishing a new 'arc of crisis' in the volatile region for its own Great Game. By supporting Iran when it has restarted uranium

enrichment and by helping Saudi Arabia extract and process its indigenous fissile raw material, Beijing seems to be setting up and weaponising the two arch-rivals of the Gulf, thereby catalysing a nuclear arms race in West Asia, so that US military is never able to pivot effectively to China's backyard in the Indo-Pacific.

The Saudi yellowcake

Although there has been no official Israeli statement in response to Saudi Arabia's nuclear programme-related reports, Israel Kasnett of the Jewish News Syndicate [observes](#): "Saudi nuclear capability, even if for peaceful purposes, could still place the Saudis at the threshold of nuclear military capability, which has Israel greatly concerned." Another Israeli commentator is even wary of a prospective UAE purchase of sophisticated weaponry from the US in the wake of the Abraham Accords, for that might lead to the UAE receiving F-35 fighter jets, Reaper drones and electronic warfare planes.

Thus, Azriel Bermant warns in his [article](#) published in Foreign Policy: "The United States does not deny that the arms package has been facilitated by the normalisation deal between Israel and the UAE, but neither the administration of US President Donald Trump nor the Netanyahu government are willing to acknowledge the dangers of transferring sophisticated arms to countries that are allies today but could be enemies tomorrow."

It is noteworthy that the New York Times [reported](#) in early August 2020 that US intelligence agencies are "scrutinizing" Saudi efforts to build industrial capacity with Chinese help to produce nuclear fuel that could later be enriched to weapons-grade level. However, the article averred that US analysts had yet to draw firm conclusions about some of the sites under scrutiny and believed that even if Saudi Arabia decided to pursue a military nuclear programme, it might take many years before coming close to producing a single nuclear warhead.

For its part, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has published a document that states it would help Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signatory Saudi Arabia's efforts to develop nuclear fuel for a peaceful programme, yet it wants the kingdom to adopt Additional Protocols so that the nuclear watchdog could monitor its nuclear programme more effectively. "The Additional Protocol is the standard we all want, we all aspire to," IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi [stressed](#).

The choice of China

The Saudi regime's choice of China for assisting it in its nuclear programme has also raised eyebrows in the international community. Saeed Ghasseminejad, a senior Iran and financial economics adviser at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies [believes](#) that Saudis decided to go with Chinese companies because if the kingdom "decided to move towards military nuclear capabilities, China and Chinese companies will be more accommodating or at least less hostile towards such a move."

In addition, Saudi Arabia is unhappy about prospective US plans for a reduction in the US naval presence in the Gulf and its greater focus on the Indo-Pacific, which is in evidence with its recent decision to [withdraw](#) two squadrons of US airforce and two Patriot anti-missile systems from Saudi oil facilities (deployed last year after the 2019 drone attacks on Aramco oil refineries). According to [Dr Mordechai Cheziza](#) of the Bar Ilan University in Israel, "The Kingdom can no longer count on Washington's willingness to counter Iran, and might well have determined that it will have to deter Iran on its own.

Therefore, until the Iranian nuclear program is permanently terminated, the Saudis will most likely keep the option open to produce their own fuel, thereby providing a pathway to a weapon”. Therefore, the Kingdom is seeking to diversify its strategic foreign partnerships and has turned to China with which it has historical relations in the security dimension. In the late 1980s, international concerns were raised when Riyadh had [acquired](#) 36 Chinese DF-3 (CSS-2 by NATO) nuclear-capable intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) and nine launchers. Then in 2014, US magazine Newsweek [reported](#) that Saudi Arabia had acquired CSS-5 intermediate-range ballistic missiles from China in 2007.

In fact, it was in August 2017 (at a time when US withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal – the JCPOA – seemed imminent) that Saudi Arabia and China agreed to cooperate on nuclear energy projects, with the China Nuclear Engineering Corporation (CNEC) signing an MoU with the Saudi Geological Survey (SGS) to pursue further cooperation in order to explore and assess uranium and thorium resources. The Saudi Technology Development and Investment Company (Taqnia) subsequently [signed](#) another MoU with CNEC to develop water desalination projects using gas-cooled nuclear reactors.

China’s ‘arc of crisis’

It is noteworthy that China has had a dubious history in providing nuclear technology to countries in West Asia. As far back as 1983, China secretly made an agreement with Algeria to build a nuclear reactor. A Washington Times [report](#) then charged China of helping “Algeria develop nuclear weapons”. It was only in 1991 that Algeria finally placed this nuclear reactor under IAEA safeguards.

It is now feared that the Saudi acquisition of nuclear capability would draw other regional powers such as Turkey and Egypt to join the regional nuclear race, which might turn conflict-torn West Asia even more volatile. Last year, maverick Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that it was unacceptable that the international community should stop Ankara from obtaining its own nuclear weapons, although he fell short of stating whether Turkey had plans to obtain them. “Why we shouldn’t have nuclear warheads while others do? This, I cannot accept,” he [reportedly](#) told his own party members in September last year.

The actions of China in spreading nuclear technology to feuding countries of West Asia could not only spur a regional nuclear arms race but also allow nuclear assets to fall into the hands of radical non-state actors. As an aspiring global superpower, China clearly needs to play a more mature and responsible role in upholding international peace and security. The author is Research Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi. Views are personal.

The Future of Chinese Power

The policies and practices of the country’s dynasties offer insights into how modern Chinese leaders may wield their strength.

BY MICHAEL SCHUMAN OCTOBER 6, 2020

What kind of superpower will China be? That’s *the* question of the 21st century. According to American leaders such as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, China will be a rapacious authoritarian nightmare, intent on destroying democracy itself. Beijing, needless to say, doesn’t quite agree. Fortunately for those of us seeking answers to this question, China was a major power for long stretches of history, and the foreign policies and practices of its great dynasties can offer us insights into how modern Chinese leaders may wield their widening power now and in the future.

Of course, Chinese society today is not the same as it was 100 years ago—let alone 1,000 years. But I've long been studying imperial China's foreign relations, and clear patterns of a consistent worldview emerge that are likely to shape Beijing's perceptions and projection of power in the modern world.

In an address to the United Nations General Assembly in September, Chinese President Xi Jinping repeated Beijing's oft-stated claim that it was committed to peaceful development, and there is a widely held view that Chinese emperors of the past generally eschewed the use of force. It is certainly true that the country's dynasties enjoyed stable relations with some of their East Asian neighbors for extended periods of time—unlike in Europe, where competing monarchies were almost constantly at each other's throats. Modern Chinese like to contrast brutal European colonial adventures with the 15th-century voyages of Chinese Admiral Zheng He and his treasure fleets, which sailed across the Indian Ocean but conquered no one.

But this quaint picture of Chinese pacifism ignores that the country's dynasties were almost constantly at war. Sure, many of these wars were defensive, mainly against a panoply of invading northern tribesmen. But at the height of their power, the emperors were quite aggressive expansionists, too. The Han dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) and the Tang dynasty (618–907) had armies marching from Central Asia to the Korean peninsula. The Song dynasty (960–1279) fought wars with and sought territory from rival states; it just wasn't very good at it. The most acquisitive of the dynasties was the Qing (1644–1912), which carved up and controlled Tibet and conquered today's Xinjiang. The Qing emperors were Manchu, a northern people, but lands they acquired are now considered indisputable parts of the motherland. (Mao Zedong's People's Liberation Army had to reclaim Tibet, which had drifted away from China amid the chaos of the Qing collapse, while the Xinjiang region, which had attained a high degree of autonomy, had to be reintegrated as well.)

The states China didn't or couldn't overrun were absorbed into the Chinese world through a system of diplomacy and trade that the emperors controlled. Other governments were expected to pay tribute to the Chinese court as an acknowledgment of Chinese superiority, at least ceremonially, and the emperors then considered them vassals. Whether such a tribute system really existed as a hard-and-fast or consistently applied foreign policy is debated among historians. But it is clear that the Chinese usually tried to foist their diplomatic norms and practices onto those who desired formal relations with China. Think of it as the rules of the game of foreign affairs in East Asia, dictated by China.

This order was rarely challenged, at least by the more established East Asian states. Unlike Europe, where states of roughly similar muscle contended for territory, trade, and influence, China had no real rivals. Generally speaking, its neighbors accepted Chinese dominance and followed its rules of engagement.

When China faced a challenge, however, it could resort to force. The short-lived Sui dynasty (581–618) and the Tang spent decades, for example, trying to destroy the strong Koguryo kingdom in Korea. Zheng He, the supposedly peaceful admiral, launched a military expedition on the island of Sumatra (now part of Indonesia) against a rival to the local king and Chinese vassal. When the Japanese invaded the Korean peninsula in 1592, the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) sent troops to help the Koreans expel them. As late as the 1880s, the Qing dynasty went to war to aid its Vietnamese tributaries against the French. The Chinese would also police their system in other, coercive ways—by, for instance, denying proper trading rights to unruly foreigners.

So while Xi told the UN in September that Beijing “will never seek hegemony, expansion, or sphere of influence,” history suggests that China will use force or coercion against other countries when they contest Chinese power. This has implications for Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries that dispute China’s claim to nearly all of the South China Sea, and for Taiwan, which Beijing sees as a renegade province.

There are also signs that the Chinese will restore aspects of the old imperial order as their power expands. On two occasions, Xi has summoned high-level delegations from countries participating in his infrastructure-building Belt and Road Initiative to pomp-heavy Beijing forums—tribute missions in all but name. Conversely, when countries defy Beijing’s edicts, they are denied access to its bounty. China blocked imports from Canada and Australia amid recent diplomatic tussles, and Beijing targeted South Korean businesses in China three years ago after Seoul agreed to deploy a U.S. missile defense system that the Chinese saw as a security threat.

One reason supporting the notion that China will be a benign superpower is the amorality of its current foreign policy. Unlike the U.S., with its missionary zeal to bring its form of liberty to all, China doesn’t seem as interested in changing the world, this argument goes, just making money from it. There is some truth to this. The Chinese are equally happy to sell Huawei 5G networks to autocratic Russia and democratic Germany without a fuss.

Historically, though, the Chinese believed that their culture had a transformative power—it could change barbarism into civilization. Confucius himself thought so. In the *Analects*, China’s greatest sage expressed a desire to live among barbarian tribes. A startled listener asked how he could tolerate their uncouth habits. Not to worry, Confucius answered. “If a superior man dwelt among them, what rudeness would there be?”

Practically speaking, China’s historic statesmen didn’t really expect the world to “go Chinese,” but they did promote their civilization. Ceremonies for visiting ambassadors at the imperial court were designed to awe. Tang officials built dormitories for foreign students who wanted to study Chinese literature at the country’s famous academies. The voyages of Zheng He were meant most of all to display Chinese greatness: The Ming emperor who launched them, Yongle, imagined that the people of Cochin in southern India “went down on their hands and knees,” and, “looking to Heaven, they bowed and all said: ‘How fortunate we are that the civilizing influences of the Chinese sages should reach us.’”

The Chinese also understood the link between culture and power. Other peoples naturally looked to China, the most advanced society in East Asia, when building their own kingdoms, and they liberally borrowed legal codes and governing institutions, artistic and literary styles, and, most famously, Chinese written characters. This common cultural bond sustained Chinese influence in the region even when the country itself was politically weakened.

Xi knows this full well, and he intends to build up China’s soft power by pushing Chinese values, both old and new. “Facts prove that our path and system ... are successful,” he once said. “We should popularize our cultural spirit across countries as well as across time and space, with contemporary values and the eternal charm of Chinese culture.” This is the purpose of Confucius Institutes, a state-run program aimed at promoting Chinese language and culture. In the wake of Beijing’s (supposedly) superior coronavirus-busting effort, Chinese officials and state media outlets have been relentlessly marketing their (authoritarian) governance system as superior, while denigrating the (democratic) U.S. by mocking its pandemic response.

The implication of this is that modern China will prefer other countries to be more like them, not unlike the emperors of old. In imperial times, China's rulers tended to favor foreigners who were "more Chinese." In the first century A.D., the Chinese historian Ban Gu developed the concept of an "inner" world—comprised of societies touched by Chinese civilization—and an "outer," of incorrigible barbarians who remained blind to China's light. The inner crowd was treated more benignly and participated more closely in Chinese affairs. This suggests that ultimately China will support like-minded (read: authoritarian) regimes. Indeed, it already does: It befriends illiberal governments shunned by most other countries, such as North Korea, Iran, Belarus, and Venezuela.

Even in deep antiquity, the Chinese considered themselves better than other peoples because they believed that their civilization *was* civilization. This formed the basis of a worldview in which the Chinese sat atop the hierarchy. They did not believe in equal relationships, at least in official or ideological terms. Their world order, with its rules and norms, was based on the principle of Chinese superiority, and the acceptance of that superiority by all others. Traditionally, when the Chinese were forced into a subordinate or even an equal position with another power, usually due to military weakness, they resented it and tried to reassert their usual dominance when they were strong enough to turn the tables.

And it is happening again today. Seething at what they consider humiliations inflicted by Western powers—from the Opium War to what the Chinese call "unequal" treaties that sapped their sovereignty—China is on a mission to regain the upper hand. As Xi put it, the country "will never again tolerate being bullied by any nation." That's the goal behind much of his current policies, from a significant buildup of military capabilities to state-funded programs aimed at helping China overtake the West in technology. More and more, China's diplomacy turns threatening when faced with challenges from other countries, whether the U.S., India, or Australia.

What becomes clear from an examination of China's history is that the Chinese don't just *want* to be a great power—they believe they *deserve* to be. In centuries past, the Chinese thought their sovereign had a right to rule "all under Heaven." Due to the realities of technology and distance, China's reach usually remained regional. But now, in the age of globalization, Beijing's influence may achieve that lofty goal.

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North Korea's SLBM to complicate denuclearization efforts – ex-defense official

Yonhap News Agency (South Korea), Oct. 6 | Byun Duk-kun

WASHINGTON -- North Korea's acquisition of submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM) capabilities will further complicate international efforts to denuclearize the communist state, a former U.S. defense official said Tuesday, highlighting the need to address the issue in future negotiations aimed at denuclearizing the communist state.

Peter Brookes, a former deputy assistance secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific affairs, notes North Korea's ballistic missile submarine (SSB) may also be on the horizon.

"Like its ascension into the once-exclusive nuclear weapons club in 2006, the SSB/SLBM program, if successful, will again elevate North Korea into a small group of countries with SLBM capability, providing domestic and international notoriety to the regime," Brookes said in a report published by the Heritage Foundation.

"The benefits that will almost certainly accrue to Pyongyang from its successful development and likely eventual deployment of an SSB program and a likely nuclear-armed SLBM will complicate dealing with the rogue state," he added.

The former Pentagon official currently serves as a senior research fellow at the Washington-based think tank.

North Korea has long been suspected of developing SLBMs, while many suspect the communist state may soon unveil a new weapons system, possibly a nuclear-armed SLBM, to mark the 75th founding anniversary of its ruling Workers' Party, which falls on this Saturday.

Brookes said North Korea's submarine fleet is already said to be one of the largest, "though not the most capable" in the world, with an estimated 80 submarines that he said run 'alongside the United States and China in numbers."

Most North Korean submarines are said to be diesel-powered and "acoustically noisy," which makes them easy to detect, according to Brookes.

Still, the former Pentagon official insisted a North Korean submarine capable of launching nuclear-armed SLBMs would sharply increase its threats to the United States and its allies, including South Korea and Japan, while also expanding its leverage in denuclearization negotiations.

"An increase in the SLBM's range or the deployment range of SSBs beyond home waters would increase the threat beyond Northeast Asia to include Guam, Hawaii, and Alaska. An SLBM with ICBM range would threaten the continental United States," wrote Brookes.

In October 2019, the North successfully tested a SLBM, the Pukguksong-3, which climbed to 950 kilometers above the Earth's surface and traveled 450 kilometers before falling into the East Sea.

If fired on a standard missile trajectory, the missile would have traveled some 2,000 kilometers, Brookes notes.

"To counter the threat that this program presents once it becomes fully operational, the United States and its allies will have to adjust their intelligence coverage, missile defense capabilities, and anti-submarine warfare duties, among other things," he said.

He also underlined the need to include the North's SLBM program in future denuclearization talks with the communist state.

"While talks about denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula go back decades with less than optimum results, diplomatic efforts aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula must still be pursued. North Korea's SLBM program should be included in any future nuclear negotiations, assuming that the SLBM is a strategic weapon," said Brookes.

U.S.-North Korea denuclearization talks have stalled since early 2019 when their second bilateral summit held in Hanoi ended without a deal.

U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un met again in June that year but only briefly and without any progress. Their first summit was held in Singapore in June 2018.

Breaking the Silo EXAMINING INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AT THE NUCLEAR NEXUS

OCTOBER 8, 2020 By Rebecca Hersman, Reja Younis, Maxwell Simon

Traditionally, U.S. nuclear policy has enjoyed a largely siloed existence—an elite community of expertise both within and outside of government; focused government organizational structures including a combatant command devoted to U.S. nuclear capabilities, plans, and personnel; and, at least for the last four administrations, an independent and fairly insulated national policy review process referred to as the Nuclear Posture Review.

This relative autonomy has allowed nuclear policy—including nuclear force posture, declaratory policy, launch authority, and arms control—to develop largely outside of the give and take of other major policy development processes. Today, however, current and emerging challenges related to nuclear weapons cut across a range of strategic issues from cyberspace to outer space. Concurrently, under a growing nuclear shadow, perceived firewalls between capabilities, plans, and organizations for conventional war and those dedicated to nuclear deterrence are eroding, leaving policymakers to grapple with the concept of conventional-nuclear integration.

More than ever, many of the most significant and vexing strategic national security challenges lie at the nexus of these complex issues, domains, and risks—defying traditional analytical and organizational stovepipes and forcing experts in each of these respective areas to move beyond their comfort zones. The International Security at the Nuclear Nexus article series was created to galvanize cross-pollination between the study of nuclear issues and other international security subject areas by exploring these points of intersection.

Understanding international security issues at the “nuclear nexus” is critical for managing a contemporary security environment characterized by rapid technological innovation, increased strategic competition, and a looming nuclear shadow. For example:

- Space is becoming increasingly congested and contested,¹ and space-based assets are at once central to effectively prosecuting a conventional war while serving as the backbone of U.S. nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3). In fact, the United States relies on many of the same space-based systems to obtain important situational awareness (SA) and reconnaissance capability as it does for early missile warning and for tracking strategic forces.²
- Artificial intelligence capabilities combined with advanced sensors and improved big data management have dramatically enhanced the speed, precision, and persistence of surveillance, monitoring, and detection capabilities—posing new and potentially escalatory risks in crises involving nuclear-armed states.³
- Gray zone capabilities (cyber, counter space, disinformation) can threaten strategic interests even as the attacks themselves are technically sub-conventional, presenting new risks of rapid and unpredictable escalation. The increasing use of hybrid warfare tactics—efforts to achieve strategic objectives without using significant force—may reflect a belief by Russia and China that they can threaten strategic U.S. interests through cyber, counter-space, and influence operations, with a lower risk of provoking an escalatory response. ⁴
- Conventional arms are also more capable of playing a strategic role and accomplishing missions once reserved solely for nuclear weapons—namely, targeting nuclear weapons, especially when paired with increasingly precise targeting capabilities.⁵
Hypersonic missiles and programs such as the U.S. Conventional Prompt Global Strike will further compress decision-making timelines in a crisis, and as the line between strategic and conventional forces blurs, the implications for deterrence and stability are unclear. ⁶
- Divisions between geographic combatant commanders tasked with prosecuting a conventional conflict and U.S. Strategic Command, which would have the lead for any nuclear operations, raise questions about how crises between nuclear armed adversaries can and should be managed.

In a security environment where strategic challenges involving space, cyber, artificial intelligence, or influence operations intersect with nuclear issues, organizational stovepipes may be intensifying risks for shared missions.

- The nuclear enterprise's current cycle of modernization will require the defense acquisition system—which is undergoing its own transformation—to exercise discipline in executing its requirements and to deliver new nuclear capabilities reliably, on budget, and on time.⁷
- Civil-military relations in the United States also appear to be changing.⁸ In the throes of exacerbated tensions, questions of civilian control of nuclear weapons and launch authority may merit revisiting.⁹

To date, the siloed nature of the nuclear community has limited examination of these crosscutting issues and prevented the cross-pollination of expertise across communities. Today, the greatest risk of nuclear escalation comes not through a bolt from the blue barrage of inbound nuclear-tipped ICBMs tracked on a series of globally, connected radar-based nuclear warning systems, but rather from unmanaged or miscalculated escalation resulting from conventional, or even sub-conventional, conflict between nuclear powers. In this environment, the failure to plan, exercise, and train across nuclear and conventional capabilities in an integrated way may introduce more escalatory risks than de-escalatory firewalls.

Thus, it is increasingly important to reevaluate if the institutional structures and divisions of the past are still valuable today and to work toward greater engagement between the nuclear and non-nuclear communities. Pooling expertise in a collaborative approach is necessary to address current and future strategic security challenges in the international environment. For example:

- What approaches—between arms control and development of offensive and defensive capabilities—can the United States take to protect its nuclear-critical assets if a conflict begins in, or spills over into, space?
- How has the situational awareness ecosystem evolved, and what are the potential benefits and risks of new capabilities to effective escalation management under a nuclear shadow?
- How will the increasing vulnerability of strategic forces and forward-deployed systems, compressed decisionmaking timelines, and further blurring of strategic and conventional forces impact traditional thinking on deterrence and stability?
- How will the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning into conventional and nuclear command, control, and communications impact crisis management and stability?
- As strategic interests continue to grow in cyber and outer space, how should the United States act to deter and defend against attacks in these areas while managing catastrophic escalation risks?
- As civil-military relations in the United States evolve, how do military responsibilities to plan and prosecute war across the spectrum of conflict interact with civilian control of nuclear weapons and sole presidential launch authority, especially in highly escalatory scenarios with significant strategic effects?¹⁰
- What are the likely implications of the current cycle of acquisition reform on nuclear modernization broadly, and on the nuclear command, control, and communications system in particular? To what extent can, or should, nuclear modernization programs function independently of other conventional programs and processes? How can the defense acquisition system balance speed-oriented approaches with the necessity to keep NC3 invulnerable to outside interference?

This article series aims to address these questions and others and to work toward greater engagement between the nuclear and non-nuclear defense policy communities. Doing so will enable engagement of nuclear issues by the broader defense and national security community, while also bringing valuable and diverse subject matter expertise into analysis of issues relevant to the nuclear community. Through this collaboration between nuclear and nonnuclear experts, the articles in this series offer fresh perspectives, novel insights, and policy recommendations.

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US Must Weigh ‘Strategic Impacts’ Of Arming The Heavens

https://breakingdefense.com/2020/10/us-must-weigh-strategic-impacts-of-arming-the-heavens-aerospace/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2010.08.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

"I think probably the biggest single thing that I know Gen. Raymond is working on ... is really fleshing out that long-term vision for the Space Force," Justin Johnson, acting deputy assistant secretary for space policy says.

By: THERESA HITCHENS for Breaking Defense // October 07, 2020 at 4:52 PM

WASHINGTON: A new study by the Aerospace Corporation calls for a public, in-depth and government-wide debate about America’s use of space weapons.

“[T]he United States has not had a robust public debate about the advantages and disadvantages of weaponizing space in almost 20 years. U.S. restraint carried the day then, but the threats and the strategic environment have changed a great deal since that era, leading to the need for a fresh examination,” the paper, *A Roadmap for Assessing Space Weapons*, states. “U.S. decisionmakers should carefully examine this most fundamental and critical of all space security issues to assess how deployment of weapons in space by any country, including the United States, will affect U.S. strategic interests,” the study, released yesterday, adds.

The Space Force’s leadership is trying to hammer out just what America’s military presence and operations in space will look like. “I think probably the biggest single thing that I know Gen. Raymond is working on — and, you know, more follow on this — is really fleshing out that long-term vision for the Space Force. What is the force design — the force development elements — of the Space Force? What does that future vision in 10, 20, 30 years need to look like?” Justin Johnson, acting deputy assistant secretary for DoD space policy told the Heritage Foundation today. “And then, we in the rest of the Department, need to figure out how does that fit in with our overall strategy.”

Johnson did not provide any details about when a new force posture document might be in hand; nor did he take audience questions during the Heritage event. The study, authored by retired Lt. Col. Peter Hays, and former space analyst at DoD’s Office of Net Assessment, Michael Gleason, cautions against deploying weapons in space simply as a reaction to the increased threat. “[R]ather than basing a U.S. decision primarily as a reaction to China’s and Russia’s provocations, the United States should carefully consider the viability and effectiveness of space weapons for itself, bearing in mind the advantages and disadvantages outlined above and in light of the changes in the strategic environment identified below.

Only then should the United States consider the best strategy and best mix of capabilities needed to respond to China’s and Russia’s space weapons,” it says. However, DoD has already determined that a top priority for Space Force is projecting power “in, from and to space,” as the Aerospace Corp. paper notes. As Breaking D readers know, providing “Combat Power Projection” is one of the five “core competencies” for the Space Force listed in the “Spacepower” Capstone Doctrine released on Aug. 10.

“This includes applying lethal force in, from, and to space,” the Aerospace paper adds. “That new organizational imperative, traditional military preferences for offensive doctrines, and advances in competitor capabilities all raise the question of whether the United States will decide to field weapons in space.” The paper shies away from directly advocating that the US should deploy an arsenal of space-related weapons, including offensive weapons to target adversary space capabilities.

“The first paragraph points out that official publications imply the U.S. is thinking about deploying space weapons. The paper does not argue that such a decision, however, is a foregone conclusion,” Gleason told Breaking D in an email today. “The paper also suggests that before a decision to deploy space weapons is made, the risks and merits of ground-based space weapons should be given equal consideration with space-based weapons.” The goal, he said, is to spur public debate.

At the same time, the paper makes it pretty clear that the time for traditional US restraint regarding space weapons is probably past, given Chinese and Russian technology developments. Further, the paper points out that there isn’t a real option for the US to “leap ahead” either for the same reasons. Hays and Gleason argue that the US government must thoroughly consider both the advantages and disadvantages for military operations of specific types of weapons — i.e. Earth-to-space, space-to-Earth, and space-to-space.

“The United States already has a large and varied arsenal of weapons that can attack different parts of adversary ground-based and space-based networks, helping to deter aggression or win a fight in space if deterrence fails. But if the United States decides deployment of space weapons is required, policymakers will need to decide the best mix of space weapons needed and decide which types of weapons should be prioritized in development and deployment,” the study says.

In the military realm, a key concern should be whether or not any particular type of space weapon — whether Earth-to-space, space-to-Earth or space-to-space — is survivable and can be built for a reasonable price. For example, the DoD “will need to make significant investments to protect and defend U.S. space-based weapons” against the space-to-space attack capabilities that China and Russia might deploy. “In comparison, U.S. Earth-to-space weapons would not be directly threatened by these Chinese or Russian capabilities but, instead, would be able to threaten Chinese and Russian space-based weapons and other space-based capabilities,” the study explains.

The effect that space weapons of any kind might have on nuclear deterrence and strategic stability must also be considered, the authors say. For many years, one of the drivers of US restraint regarding space weapons has been fear that a space arms race would undercut nuclear first-strike capabilities, especially deployments of weapons based in space. “Even if space weapons do not fatally undermine nuclear deterrence, they still offer another path to rapid nuclear escalation,” the paper stresses. “Those traditional concerns still exist and should be debated anew.”

There also is a possibility that “deploying any type of space-based weapon could weaken the right of overflight for other military satellites” under the foundational 1967 Outer Space Treaty (OST), the paper warns. While the OST currently provides for the “peaceful uses” of military satellites — which includes spying over another country’s territory — and prohibits interference, it is legally unclear whether weapon systems based in space would carry the same protections.

“Just deploying space-based weapons may mark all military satellites as targets, even in peacetime, since there is no guarantee that space-based weapons could be confidently distinguished from other military satellites,” the paper cautions. “Today’s debate should examine the indirect risks the deployment of space-based weapons might create for military and intelligence community intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), communication, and other satellites.” (The same could be said for commercial satellites, although the paper doesn’t mention that.)

Finally, the paper stresses that the affects of how a space weapons arsenal is put together will affect the ability of the United States to wield diplomatic and economic soft power and should not be overlooked. It is important, the paper stresses, to consider whether some constraints on negative actions by adversaries could be created via diplomacy. “While current political tensions may make it unlikely in the near term, it is possible the United States,

China, Russia, and other countries could find it in their mutual interest to agree to formally proscribe weapons that create space debris. The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols regulate armed conflict and seek to limit its effects, providing an example of a framework for limiting conflict that extends into space,” the paper notes. “Mutual restraint in deployment and/or employment of debris-creating space weapons would reduce the indirect risk of indiscriminate, disproportionate harm to civilians or non-combatants, help preserve the sustainability of space environment, and temper decisionmakers’ dilemmas. The community should continue to investigate ways to develop diplomatic instruments that would reduce the indiscriminate risks of debris-producing space weapons,” the paper recommends.

NOVEMBER ELECTIONS

Where Trump and Biden stand on defense and security issues

https://www.defensenews.com/global/the-americas/2020/10/09/find-out-where-trump-and-biden-stand-on-defense-and-security-issues/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2010.09.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

By: [Aaron Mehta](#) and [Joe Gould](#) for Defense News // 1 hour ago

Arms Control:

U.S. President Donald Trump: The Trump administration has withdrawn the U.S. from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and (almost) the 1992 Open Skies Treaty. It has loosened the Missile Technology Control Regime's restrictions on selling armed drones to foreign governments amid concerns about China's defense relationships in the Middle East. As of press time, administration officials have been unwilling to extend the 2010 New START nuclear pact with Russia, which expires in February, insisting that a new version include Russia's growing arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons and China, whose smaller arsenal is rapidly expanding and which appears unwilling to sign such an agreement.

Former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden: Favored by arms control advocates, Biden has promised to renew New START and would likely accept Russia's offer to extend it five years without preconditions. He also said he would rejoin the Iran nuclear deal if it returned to full compliance described in the agreement. While Trump has loosened restrictions on the use of landmines by the U.S. military in conflict areas, Biden has said the move unnecessarily puts civilians at risk and that he would reverse it.

Nuclear weapons:

Trump: It's expected the current president would stay on his path of modernizing all three legs of the nuclear arsenal — something that has bipartisan support in Congress despite growing budget pressure. Trump deployed the W76-2 submarine-launched, low-yield nuclear warhead to counter a similar Russian weapon, and he has plans for a submarine-launched cruise missile, or SLCM. Trump approved a \$44.5 billion nuclear weapons budget request in fiscal 2021 — an increase of about 19 percent — meant for the W76-2, several ongoing nuclear warhead life extension programs, a future W93 submarine-launched ballistic missile warhead, and the expansion of the production of plutonium pits for nuclear warheads to at least 80 per year.

Biden: Biden signaled he would scale back Trump's buildup. The Democratic nominee for president is opposed to the W76-2 and an SLCM. Biden would face pressure from the left to drop plans to build a new nuclear intercontinental ballistic missile force, replacing the Minuteman III fleet fielded in 1970, though he has not announced a position on it. Biden said he would review a policy reserving the option of using nuclear weapons first.

Defense budget:

Trump: The Pentagon's five-year defense plan indicates it will request flat defense spending after 2021, and — under pressure from coronavirus-related expenses — the budget is widely expected to stay flat regardless of who is president. Trump championed record national defense top lines of

\$700 billion in 2018, \$716 billion in 2019 and \$733 billion for 2020, and he created the new Space Force. He has also diverted billions of defense dollars to fund a southern border wall, and in 2018 he backed off a proposal for a \$750 billion defense budget, calling it “crazy.”

Biden: Biden said Trump “abandoned all fiscal discipline when it comes to defense spending,” and while he doesn’t foresee major U.S. defense cuts if elected, he would face pressure from the left to make them. To affordably deter Russia and China, Biden said he would shift investments from “legacy systems that won’t be relevant” to “smart investments in technologies and innovations — including in cyber, space, unmanned systems and artificial intelligence.” He also wants to boost neglected nonmilitary investments, such as “diplomacy, economic power, education, and science and technology.”

Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran:

Trump: Both candidates have railed against “endless wars,” and both have vowed to bring U.S. troops home from Afghanistan. After engaging in peace talks with the Taliban, the U.S. cut its troop presence to 8,600 in June, with plans to go to 4,500 by November and no troops by the spring. For Iraq, Trump plans to go from 5,200 troops to 3,000 by November. On Iran, Trump withdrew the U.S. from the nuclear deal and reimposed crippling trade sanctions as part of a maximum-pressure campaign. The administration recently warned allies it may target leaders of Iran-backed militias that have targeted U.S. forces and diplomatic posts in Iraq.

Biden: Biden has vowed to bring U.S. combat troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan, likely leaving residual counterterrorism forces. His camp favors small-scale operations (maybe led by special forces) rather than large, open-ended troop deployments, which he agrees would require the informed consent of the American people. Biden, who voted for the Iraq War when he was a senator, said during his current campaign that he played a key role in the Obama administration’s drawdown of 150,000 U.S. forces from Iraq. On Iran, he said he would commit to preventing the country from acquiring a nuclear weapon, offer a diplomatic path while maintaining targeted sanctions, and work closely with Israel to ensure the American ally can defend itself against Iran and its proxies.

Arms sales:

Trump: Increasing U.S. arms sales has been a central focus of Trump and his administration’s foreign policy. He’s moved to speed up the review process for major arms sales, made it easier to export firearms, eased the criteria for selling armed drones under the Missile Technology Control Regime and directed U.S. diplomats to advocate for American weapons purchases. He advanced several sales suspended under the Obama administration — which played into a clash with Congress over sales to Saudi Arabia and other parties to the war in Yemen. Though Trump has touted the economic benefits of U.S. arms sales abroad, the idea is also to provide partners with American alternatives to Russian and Chinese weapons in order to maintain American influence.

Biden: While Biden hasn’t made his views clear about arms sales overall, he said he would end U.S. military and other support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen. As he reassesses the U.S.-Saudi relationship, he would end weapon sales to Riyadh (which has historically been the top partner for U.S. military sales). “We will make clear that America will never again check its principles at the door just to buy oil or sell weapons,” Biden said. On firearm exports, his campaign said he may reverse a Trump administration rule that moved jurisdiction from the State Department to the Commerce Department.

NATO and Europe:

Trump: Among Trump's earliest foreign policy stances was a pledge to "get allies to pay their fair share," particularly by getting NATO members to spend at least 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense by 2024. That percentage of GDP is a NATO-backed goal. Trump often mischaracterizes that pledge as allies being "delinquent" in paying the U.S. funds. Trump has also pushed for tough trade rules with European nations, which has led to tensions with European capitals.

Biden: Biden and his advisers have drawn a contrast with Trump, pledging to rehabilitate frayed alliances. Biden has hit Trump for straining relations between the U.S. and Europe. He said the next president must "salvage our reputation, rebuild confidence in our leadership, and mobilize our country and our allies to rapidly meet new challenges," pledging that he would "take immediate steps to renew U.S. democracy and alliances, protect the United States' economic future, and once more have America lead the world." Biden plans to review troop movements out of Germany if he takes office, according to a top foreign policy aide.

Great power competition:

Trump: The Trump administration's National Defense Strategy announced a new era of great power competition. But while that includes Russia on paper, the administration's economic and military focus has squarely focused on China; the rhetoric from Trump has only increased following the COVID-19 outbreak, which the Republican president has called the "China virus." Militarily, the Pentagon is attempting to shift focus and investments toward Pacific priorities, while also withdrawing forces from Europe.

Biden: While in the Senate, Biden pushed for better relations with China through increased commercial ties. But he now views China as "the greatest strategic challenge to the United States and our allies in Asia and in Europe," one of the few areas in which he and Trump agree. Biden has called Chinese President Xi Jinping a "thug" and pledged "swift economic sanctions" against China if it tries to influence American companies or citizens. While Trump has bragged about having a good relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, expect a different tone from Biden should he occupy the White House. The former vice president has described Trump as "subservient" to Putin, and has talked about telling Putin directly: "I don't think you have a soul."

Information about the candidates was compiled from a series of sources including: Defense News; Military Times; Al-Monitor; Arms Control Association; Center for International Policy; CNBC; CNN; Council for a Livable World; Defense One; Foreign Affairs; Forum on the Arms Trade; Los Angeles Times; Military Officers Association of America; New York Times; New Yorker Magazine; Reuters; Stars and Stripes; The Associated Press; Vox; Washington Examiner; and Washington Post.

A Foreign Policy Without a Strategy

A look at Biden's Foreign Policy Approach

<https://www.newsmax.com/lamontcolucci/foreignpolicy/2020/10/08/id/990997/>

By Lamont Colucci for NewsMax // Thursday, 08 October 2020 11:30 AM

As a young Foreign Service officer without authority or status, one of my first experiences in Washington was attending a debate between the senior foreign policy advisers to Senator Jesse Helms and Joe Biden.

I sat in the small hearing room and listened as both men displayed their acumen as surrogates regarding missile defense and the legacy of President Reagan's SDI. It astonished me that Biden's man had so little understanding of realpolitik and, in particular, the goals of our adversaries. The back and forth continued until the Biden representative retreated into the old canard that the SDI vision could not be accomplished regardless of the political issues because of the problem of technology.

During the Q&A, I distinguished myself as a member of the minority in the audience by asking the following question. I still ask today: "In the end, your argument is about a lack of technology and innovation, but that is not your real problem, if we had the technology today, would you still be against it? Is your real problem a disdain for American primacy?" This vignette, reported to you by less than a bit player, was a colossal change for me.

The exchange ultimately led to my introduction and friendship to one of the most outstanding Americans of the age, Ambassador Jim Lilley. The contrast to the vision of Ambassador Lilley and that of the Biden campaign could not be greater. It also serves as a microcosm that haunts Vice President Biden's record and trajectory on foreign policy and national security. It is, at its core, a view with no vision and without a strategy.

It fails to embrace the very roots of successful American national security strategy, based on Primacy, Democracy Promotion, Preemption, and Prevention, all within the greater sphere of American exceptionalism and superiority. A review of Vice President Biden's foreign policy failures has been done and redone. Some have less meaning to the youngest generation, but for those of us in Generation X and older, much will resonate.

As far back as 1975, he showed his true colors opposing support of our South Vietnamese ally following American withdrawal and withholding assistance for South Vietnamese refugees requested by President Ford. In the 1980s, he fought support for the anti-communist resistance in Nicaragua and the anti-communist government of El Salvador. In the 1990s, he voted against Operation Desert storm to expel Saddam from Kuwait and, of course, opposed the National Missile Defense Act.

In the 21st century, he opposed the surge in Iraq that saved Iraq from further civil war and national disintegration. He even openly advocated that Iraq should destroy its sovereignty by dividing the country into three parts, a plan that would have been the greatest gift to Iran that could be conceived. He was consistently critical of President Bush's foreign policy to right the ship of state from the disastrous Clinton years.

Naturally, as vice president, he supported President Obama's trio of appeasement, apology, and "leading from behind." Many are aware of Obama's Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' quotation: "I think he has been wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades." Gates was right. He opposed moving the American embassy to Jerusalem and advocated a "two-state" solution. The same mantras that the Democratic Party has supported for decades leading to inaction and negative inertia.

He was integral to an administration that allowed the people of Syria to live in a forever nightmare, failed to prosecute the war on terror, opposed the raid that killed Osama Bin Laden, and squandered the successes that President Bush bequeathed them. He continues to advocate a tactical rather than strategic response to counter-terrorism, returning to a Clinton-Obama policy that created the weaknesses in our defenses. As one architect of the Iran deal, he offers no solution to the fundamental problem of the Iranian regime and its imperial dreams.

China was and is Biden's mixed bag; until he decided to run for president, Biden advocated more significant trade relations with China, downplayed their human rights abuses, has been ambiguous about Taiwan, and ignored their military modernization, attempts at dominating space and strategic aggressiveness. His current rhetoric is more hawkish, but his record is the opposite.

Russia is perhaps the strangest odyssey for not just Joe Biden, but also the Democratic party.

One would wish Truman or Kennedy's spirit was pushing them to talk tough, but this would not be accurate. Clinton, Obama and Biden were all part of the group that downplayed the Soviet and then Russian threat. They consistently mocked conservatives and Republicans (Romney-Obama debate) who warned of both. Only when they thought they could use Russia as an election tool against President Trump did they suddenly wake up to a Russian threat.

The very people who exposed the United States to the machinations and aggression of Soviet and then Russian foreign policy now expect the American electorate to believe they have had a change of heart and have morphed into stone-cold realists. The most worrying aspect regarding specific policy is Vice President Biden's total lack of vision regarding space, space policy, the new Space Force and the recognition that all the above will determine the future of American national security.

His vigorous opposition to the Strategic Defense Initiative and national missile defense grants us a window that his attitude here is one of feebleness. Ultimately, we elect someone whose primary job is to manage American grand strategy, not a health adviser, curriculum planner, job officer or tax accountant. This, at a minimum, requires a president to understand the grand arc of American history and its trajectory toward the horizon and the stars. Biden's lack of policy coherence and consistency, combined with his denial of American exceptionalism, will place the Republic on dangerous ground.

Dr. Lamont Colucci has experience as a diplomat with the U.S. Dept. of State and is today a Full Professor of Politics and Government at Ripon College. He has published two books as the sole author entitled "Crusading Realism: The Bush Doctrine and American Core Values After 9/11," and a two-volume series entitled "The National Security Doctrines of the American Presidency: How they Shape our Present and Future." He was contributing author of two books entitled "The Day That Changed Everything: Looking at the Impact of 9/11 at the End of the Decade" and "Homeland Security and Intelligence." He is also Senior Fellow in National Security Affairs at the American Foreign Policy Council, Senior Advisor in National Security for Contingent Security, Advisor on National Security and Foreign Affairs, to the Conference of Defence Associations Institute and member of the National Task Force on National and Homeland Security. Find out more at lamontcolucci.org. Read Dr. Lamont Colucci's Reports

CONGRESSIONAL

By Susan Cornwell

CONTINUING RESOLUTION

- **December 11:** Current CR (HR 8337) will end

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

SASC and HASC have passed their respective Bills

- *ALL ICBM PEs at PB*

AUTHORIZATION CONFERENCE

- **November:** Tentative timeframe for markup

DEFENSE APPROPRIATION

HAC

- **July 8: HAC-D Marked up the FY21 Defense Bill**
 - *GBSD lost \$60M*
 - *Missile Repl/Eq Ballistic lost \$1.53M*
 - *ICBM Fuze Mod lost \$3.458M*
 - *MM Mods lost \$23.684M and transferred \$4.173 to another line*

SAC Markup: TBD

APPROPRIATION CONFERENCE: TBD: Possible that Conference may occur without a SAC bill

TOP MILITARY QUARANTINE AND CONGRESSIONAL RESPONSE

House Democrats worry over top generals' quarantine

Oct. 6, 2020 – 6:08 p.m. By John M. Donnelly, CQ

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley speaks with Vice President Mike Pence after a Medal of Honor ceremony for U.S. Army Sergeant Major Thomas Payne in the East Room of the White House on September 11, 2020. (Andrew Caballero-Raynolds/AFP via Getty)

Top Democrats on the House Armed Services Committee and a former U.S. spy chief expressed concerns about U.S. national security Tuesday after news broke that most of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are quarantining after coming in contact with at least one person who later tested positive for COVID-19.

Seven of the eight members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — the nation’s top military officers — are working from home, according to news reports, though a Pentagon official said Tuesday that none of the officers has tested positive for COVID-19 or shown symptoms.

The Joint Chiefs members had all attended an Oct. 2 meeting at the Pentagon alongside Adm. Charles Ray, vice commandant of the Coast Guard, who had been infected with the virus, said Jonathan Hoffman, the Pentagon spokesman, in a statement on Tuesday.

Army Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is among the top officers in quarantine. In addition to attending the Oct. 2 meeting, Milley and other senior Defense Department officials have gotten tested regularly since a Sept. 27 event at the White House for Gold Star families of fallen troops. Ray attended that event, too, as did President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump, both of whom caught the virus.

Washington Democrat Adam Smith, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, criticized Trump for a “reckless and harmful” approach to both messaging about the disease and failing to adequately protect others when Trump got sick. And Smith expressed concerns about the chiefs’ condition.

“While our military can still operate while leadership is quarantined, the national security implications of the President’s recklessness cannot be overstated,” Smith said in a statement. “Our adversaries are always looking for any weakness to exploit. President Trump’s pathetic attempts to exude strength aren’t fooling anyone – Americans know he is weak and so do those who wish us harm.”

On the other hand, some experts believe the Joint Chiefs' quarantine will not hamper the operations in the Pentagon's top echelon. Gary Roughead, a retired admiral who served on the Joint Chiefs as the Navy's top officer, said the quarantine is an inconvenience but not a cause for worry.

"In fact, the communications situation is similar to when a Chief is on overseas travel for an extended period of time," Roughead said. "It's unusual so many are out at the same time, but connectivity and strong support staffs will keep all cylinders firing."

Questions on safety protocols

California Democrat Jackie Speier, another senior member of the House Armed Services Committee, asked on Twitter why, during a pandemic, the chiefs had met in person in the Pentagon’s “tank” meeting room. And she wondered whether they were wearing masks.

“Why are the joint chiefs not holding their meetings remotely using DoD’s secure conference systems before the exposure?” Speier tweeted. “The Pentagon has had 7 months to implement remote and physically distanced work arrangements. Who’s deciding when to meet in person vs. electronically?”

The Trump administration has frowned on mask-wearing and Milley, for one, has been repeatedly photographed maskless at indoor gatherings of top administration officials, including a Sept. 11 Medal of Honor ceremony at the White House.

“Why are senior military leaders going to WH receptions where no one is wearing a mask during a pandemic?” Speier tweeted. “Why is the White House telling the Pentagon not to disclose positive tests in senior leaders while they downplay the severity of the virus and refuse to take preventive steps?”

James Clapper, a former director of national intelligence, told an audience at the Washington Post on Tuesday that Trump’s illness and the self-isolation of most of the military chiefs puts U.S. security in peril.

"This is an ideal time for foreign intelligence to confuse us," Clapper said. "The Joint Chiefs are in quarantine."

Clapper also said that Trump's health is “a high priority collection” topic for foreign intelligence services.

This is a "vulnerable time,” and an opportunity for adversaries, “while we are not looking, to further sow seeds of disinformation, casting doubt, discord, and distrust in our country,” he added.

Gathering of four-stars

According to NBC News, in addition to Milley, the other quarantining chiefs are: Vice Chairman Gen. John Hyten, Gen. John Raymond of the Space Force, Gen. Charles Q. Brown of the Air Force, Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday and National Guard Chief Gen. Daniel Hokanson.

Director of the National Security Agency Gen. Paul Nakasone is not a member of the Joint Chiefs, but he was also in the meeting and is in self-quarantine, NBC reported.

The only member of the Joint Chiefs who is not in quarantine, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger, did not attend the meeting. However, assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Gary Thomas attended in Berger’s place and is self-isolating, NBC disclosed. Hoffman said in a statement that the department has been following federal guidelines for protecting its workforce.

“There is no change to the operational readiness or mission capability of the U.S. Armed Forces,” Hoffman said. “Senior military leaders are able to remain fully mission capable and perform their duties from an alternative work location.”

Gopal Ratnam contributed to this report.

Smith Statement on the Military Leadership Quarantine for COVID

October 6, 2020

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representative Adam Smith (D-Wash.), Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, today issued the following statement after General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other members of military leadership announced they would be self-isolating because of their recent interaction with the Vice Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, Admiral Charles Ray, who has tested positive for COVID-19.

“For months, the nation has grappled with the effects of COVID-19 as millions of Americans have contracted the virus and more than two hundred thousand have died. All the while, the Trump Administration has done very little to effectively alleviate the strain on our citizens, communities, and the economy. President Trump himself has downplayed the severity of the crisis while frequently contradicting qualified health officials, obfuscating the true nature and threat of the virus.

“Now, after publicly flouting the recommendations of his own medical experts and scientists, the President has contracted COVID-19. Since announcing that he tested positive for the virus, the President’s antics have been downright reckless and harmful. Thanks to diligent reporting, we know that many of the President’s senior staff have also tested positive, and as of today most of our senior military leaders are under quarantine.

“While our military can still operate while leadership is quarantined, the national security implications of the President’s recklessness cannot be overstated. Our adversaries are always looking for any weakness to exploit. President Trump’s pathetic attempts to exude strength aren’t fooling anyone – Americans know he is weak and so do those who wish us harm.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged our nation. How can we ever recover if we can’t even count on our commander in chief to follow the most basic guidelines established by his own government? Instead of leading, President Trump continues to willfully jeopardize the safety and security of the American people and our military apparatus.”

Democrats face internal ‘fight’ on defense spending, says Smith

https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2020/10/07/democrats-face-internal-fight-on-defense-spending-says-smith/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Air%20Force%20DNRm10.7.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Air%20Force%20-%20Daily%20News%20Roundup
By: [Joe Gould](#) for Defense News // 11 hours ago

WASHINGTON — The [Democratic split](#) over the size of future defense budgets will come to a head in the new Congress, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., predicted Tuesday.

The outcome of the long-simmering dispute would take on higher stakes if some pre-election [polling](#) becomes a reality and Democrats retake Congress and the White House. Though President Donald Trump and his supporters claim the Democratic Party has been hijacked by the far left,

Smith's remarks suggest the party's future direction, at least on defense spending, is not yet settled. Instead of slashing next year's \$740 billion defense budget, as some progressives want, Smith is pushing, "a rational Democratic, progressive national security strategy," as he called it.

That stance seems to align Smith with his party's pragmatic standard-bearer, Joe Biden, who's said he doesn't foresee major defense cuts, if elected. "I don't think that rational policy involves 20 percent defense cut, but that fight is going to be had," Smith said at an event hosted by George Mason University. "There are extremists on the right and extremists on the left, and what I'm trying to do is say, 'Let's go for pragmatic problem solving.' I don't see extremism solving problems."

If Democrats are swept into power Nov. 3, it will be by voters opposed to President Donald Trump from across the political spectrum, Smith said. To hold on that mandate, Democrats would need to govern with a broad coalition and not overreach from the left on issues like defense. "Okay, we can win an election because people are appalled by Donald Trump," Smith said, "but that doesn't mean that they're endorsing us in any sort of huge, dramatic way."

After the House passed an early version of last year's defense policy bill without Republicans aboard, negotiations to reconcile it with the White House and GOP-held Senate dragged for months before a compromise bill passed Congress with progressive priorities stripped from it, leaving them [dissatisfied](#). This year, many of the progressives' priorities were deflected from the House's version of the bill, and it passed the chamber with support from more than half of Republicans and more than two-thirds of Democrats.

Military spending remains popular with most Republicans, and they largely opposed progressive amendments in the House and Senate this summer to slash the authorization bill by 10 percent. HASC member Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., called the House amendment, "a deeply irresponsible stunt." Biden and congressional Democrats are already [under pressure](#) from progressives like Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., who have been part of a [campaign](#) to direct spending away from the military in favor of healthcare, education and jobs.

Massive spending on national security, they say, didn't protect the country from COVID-19. "You have a progressive movement in the party now that is really motivated and mobilized around foreign policy and national security issues, and that's not going away," Matt Duss, a Sanders foreign policy aide, told Defense News last month. "That is something a President Biden will have to work with, and I think his team understands that."

As both Biden, Trump and lawmakers of both parties have called for the U.S. to extricate itself from the Mideast and end the "endless wars" in Iraq and Afghanistan, Smith said it's important to educate a war-weary American people about why it's unwise to retreat from the world stage — marked by hotspots in Libya, Syria and West Africa. "We've got to make the case to them: 'Here's why the defense budget is what it is, here's why we're trying to accomplish what we're trying to accomplish, and here's why it's in your best interest,'" Smith said.

"And we're going to be very aggressive about having public hearings and public discussions to listen to people, to listen to those concerns and try to address them." The Pentagon's five-year defense plan indicates it will request flat defense spending after 2021, and — amid pandemic-related expenses and historic deficits — the budget is widely expected to stay flat regardless of who is president. Smith pretty much echoed that view Tuesday.

“I think the reasonable assumption is yeah, the defense budget is going to be flat for a while — and there is no reason on Earth in my view that we cannot defend the United States of America for \$700 to \$740 billion,” Smith said. “So I think the better question, the question to focus on, is how do we get more out of it?” On that one, Smith echoed some ideas from his committee’s bipartisan Future of Defense Task Force.

Its [report](#) emphasized the need, in order to compete with a surging China, to divest from some legacy programs and heavily invest in artificial intelligence, among other potentially game-changing technologies. Citing a spate of acquisition failures, Smith said Washington has to work with its defense contractors “about how we spend our money and the results we get for that money.” He also acknowledged the need to protect key contractors stressed by the pandemic’s economic impacts and strengthen the industrial base overall.

Smith defended the Pentagon’s [allocation](#) of hundreds of millions of dollars in pandemic relief funding for items like jet and submarine parts instead of increasing the country’s supply of medical equipment. The remarks seemed to set him at odds with liberals like Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., who have asked the Defense inspector general to look into the department’s “reported misuse” of funds.

The Democrat-led House Oversight and Reform Committee, Financial Services Committee, and select subcommittee on the coronavirus crisis are conducting a joint investigation. “Three committees in Congress are now investigating this, and I’m not one of them because there’s nothing to investigate here, in my view,” Smith said. “This was part of the CARES Act: We gave a billion dollars to DoD to deal with COVID-related expenses.

Very specifically, it said one of the COVID related expenses you could deal with was the defense industrial base, which they did. And now we’re chewing on them for doing that.” Smith said the Pentagon did “nothing illegal,” but he suggested it’s reasonable to explore whether DoD balanced the money it received appropriately and whether its payments to large contractors are flowing to smaller, more vulnerable firms, as they should. “I think it is important to make sure we keep the industrial base going,” Smith said, “but there’s going to be pressure on that [decision].”

Navy will publish new cost confidence levels for Columbia in next budget request

InsideDefense.com, Oct. 5 | Justin Katz

The Navy is in the process of updating its cost confidence levels for the Columbia-class submarine program and will release the updated estimates in its next budget request.

The service's previous cost confidence levels are outlined in a Navy information paper that was sent to the Congressional Budget Office early this year. The January 2020 information paper was obtained by Inside Defense through a Freedom of Information Act request.

The cost figures are presented in calendar year 2019 dollars. Inside Defense asked the service to convert the dollar amounts into comparable dollars that are used in the service's fiscal year 2021 budget request.

"The Navy Information Paper in question reports cost confidence levels based on the milestone B cost estimate established in January 2017," said Navy spokesman Alan Baribeau.

"A new cost estimate associated with lead ship construction authorization is in progress. The updated cost estimate will be made publicly available as part of the [FY-22] president's budget request," he continued.

The Navy's confidence level describes how likely it is that the boat's actual cost will be less than the service's projected estimate. The information paper stated the service's milestone B cost estimates included confidence levels between 43% and 46%.

However, a Congressional Research Service report on the Columbia-class program indicated the Navy has since adjusted its confidence level to 50% because "certain risk elements affecting the calculation of confidence levels have been retired, and that as a result, the Navy's confidence level for its costs estimates had increased."

"[M]eaning that the Navy as of May 2019 calculated that there is a 50% chance that the procurement costs of Columbia-class boats will turn out to be greater than what the Navy estimates," according to the CRS report, which cited its own briefings from the service.

However, there is also "a 50% chance that it will turn out to be less than what the Navy estimates. Navy officials also stated in May 2019 that a confidence level of 50% is where they want the Navy's estimate to be," the report continued.

A congressional source also told Inside Defense that the service's cost estimates for the program are unlikely to change in the interim until major construction begins.

The Navy in its FY-21 budget request is seeking \$14.3 billion incrementally to buy the first Columbia-class submarine. Although Congress passed and the president recently signed a continuing resolution, the service sought and received a waiver for the submarine program.

Navy acquisition executive Hondo Geurts has repeatedly said the service would ask for an exemption in order to keep the program on schedule and award funding to General Dynamics Electric Boat to begin construction early in FY-21.

U.S. Should Make 'Explicit' Commitment to Defend Taiwan From China

https://freebeacon.com/national-security/cotton-u-s-should-make-explicit-commitment-to-defend-taiwan-from-china/?utm_source=actengage&utm_campaign=FreedomMail&utm_medium=email

By: [Jack Beyrer](#) for the WFB // OCTOBER 8, 2020 2:45 PM

Sen. Tom Cotton (R., Ark.) said Wednesday that the United States should announce an "explicit and unambiguous" commitment to defend Taiwan from a potential Chinese invasion.

For decades, Washington has made it unclear as to how it would respond to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, which Beijing views as its sovereign territory. Cotton said Wednesday that a public defense commitment from the United States would send a message to China and limit the likelihood of an invasion. "The main source of restraint in the minds of Xi Jinping and the Central Military Commission is whether or not an invasion of Taiwan would succeed," the senator said during a Hudson Institute [event](#). The success of an invasion is contingent on the response time from American forces, which may be decreased by a public declaration to defend Taiwanese sovereignty.

In recent months, China has [increased](#) its amphibious capabilities for a possible invasion of Taiwan and has displayed increasing aggression toward the island nation. When Undersecretary of State Keith Krach visited Taiwan in September, more than a dozen Chinese aircraft [stalked](#) Taiwanese airspace in a show of force to Taipei and Washington. Some regional experts believe Cotton's proposal would signal "strategic clarity" to both China and Taiwan.

"Senator Cotton talked about the need to 'restore deterrence,' which is a particularly critical issue in Asia," American Enterprise Institute scholar Zack Cooper told the Washington Free Beacon. "I think there is much to recommend this position, as long as it is carefully and accurately described to both Taipei and Beijing." Cotton also said that Washington should pursue further arms sales with Taiwan.

In the last year, the Trump administration has facilitated the [sale](#) of Patriot missile-defense systems, complex sea mines, and drones to Taiwan to help the island nation defend against a potential invasion from Beijing. Taiwan's spending to defend against Chinese aircraft has [jumped](#) to nearly \$900 million this year alone Secretary of Defense Mark Esper [said](#) Tuesday that a strengthened Taiwan will deter Chinese aggression. "I'm confident we would prevail today in any conflict [across the Taiwan Strait]," Esper said. "We recognize China's direction and we know what we need to do."

AROUND THE WORLD



RUSSIA:

New START 'will die' because of unilateral US actions – Lavrov

TASS (Russia), Oct. 5 | Not Attributed

The US-proposed conditions for extension of the Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START treaty) are unilateral, do not take Russia's interests into account and will lead to the 'death' of the agreement, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Monday.

"Unfortunately, this trend is holding rather firm. They [the US] quit UNESCO, the UN Human Rights Council and withdrew from almost all treaties, and the last strategic offensive arms agreement will die now because the conditions they put forward are completely unilateral, do not take into account either any our interests or experiences of many decades when arms control was carried out to universal satisfaction and was welcomed by all countries in the world," he said.

Lavrov did not rule out the possibility that Washington will next pull out of the WTO. "They were also critical of it and, as far as I understand, are still blocking the [WTO] Dispute Settlement Body's operation by blocking appointment of the members necessary to achieve quorum," the minister noted.

Moscow and Washington signed the Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms in 2010. Under its terms, either country must reduce its strategic offensive arms in such a way that at the end of the seventh year following its entry into force and later on their overall amounts should not exceed 700 units of deployed inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and heavy bombers, 1,550 warheads and 800 operational and non-operational missile launchers and strategic bombers.

The treaty was concluded for a period of ten years (until February 5, 2021). It can be replaced by a follow-up agreement before the deadline expires, or prolonged for no more than five years (until 2026) by mutual consent.

Moscow urges Washington to refrain from procrastinating on the treaty's extension, because in its opinion it is the "gold standard" in the field of disarmament.

US wants agreements with Russia to cover all nuclear warheads - Department of State

WASHINGTON, October 8. /TASS/. The United States wants agreements with Russia to apply to all nuclear warheads, a Department of State spokesperson told TASS on Thursday while commenting on the launch of the hypersonic missile Tsirkon.

"Our goal is to move beyond the bilateral deals of the past and seek to cover all nuclear warheads. We continue to monitor Russian military activity and missile tests, which inform our arms control and security policies," the official said.

Putin calls US withdrawal from INF Treaty a very dangerous step

TASS (Russia), Oct. 7 | Not Attributed

Washington's withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) is a very dangerous step, Russian President Vladimir Putin said in an interview with Rossiya-24 TV channel on Wednesday.

"The incumbent US president's administration withdrew from the INF Treaty and this is a very serious step. After 2002 when the Bush administration pulled out from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, this is the second such major step and in my opinion, a very dangerous one in terms of maintaining international stability and security," Putin said.

The Russian president also expressed concerns over the Trump administration's announcement on launching the procedure of leaving the Open Skies Treaty. Besides, in his words, Moscow and Washington have not yet fulfilled a range of joint projects on creating business and expert councils.

"Nevertheless, our trade during the Trump presidency grew and this growth was notable, despite all restrictions and even despite the pandemic. Maybe there were some adjustments over the pandemic, but in general there is a trend of a rising trade turnover. And this is good because this means jobs and business activity and so on," Putin said.

According to Putin, Russia and the US have carried out a joint effort on stabilizing global energy market. "The United States is certainly interested in maintaining certain stability and ensuring the work of its oil companies and so on. And we managed to achieve a really good mutual result," the Russian leader pointed out.

Russia ready to supply Iran with advanced missile system

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/288389>

Russian Ambassador to Tehran says his country is ready to supply Iran with S-400 system once arms embargo expires.

By: Ben Ariel Israel National News // 05/10/20 06:44

Russian Ambassador to Tehran Levan Dzhagaryan has made clear that his country is ready to supply Iran with its S-400 air defense system once the UN arms embargo against Iran expires on October 18.

“We have said since the very first day that there will be no problem for selling weapons to Iran from October 19,” Dzhagaryan said, according to the semiofficial Iranian Fars news agency. He stressed that Russia does not fear US threats and will remain committed to its undertakings, adding that Moscow is ready to study the Iranian side’s proposals on purchasing weapons from Russia after October 18.

“As you know we have provided Iran with S-300. Russia does not have any problem to deliver S-400 to Iran and it did not have any problem before either,” Dzhagaryan said, according to Fars. [Washington recently started the process](#) of restoring all pre-2015 UN sanctions against Iran. The move to activate the “snapback” came after the UN Security Council [rejected the US resolution](#) to extend the arms embargo on Iran, saying there was no general agreement among council members.

The S-400 anti-missile system, known to NATO as the SA-21 "Growler," is said to have a maximum range of 250 miles, and can bring down airplanes at up to 90,000 feet - more than double the height of a cruising commercial airliner. After the removal of pre-nuclear-deal sanctions against Iran, Russia delivered its S-300 air defense systems to the country under the existing contract. Iran [then designed and developed](#) its own version of the S-300 missile shield, named Bavar 373.

Officials in Tehran [have claimed](#) in the past that the Russian S-300 missile defense system is sufficient to defend Iran and that, as a result it does not intend to purchase the improved S-400 system from Moscow. Russia has [already delivered](#) some shipments of its S-400 system to Turkey, raising the ire of the United States which has threatened Turkey with sanctions in response.

Russian Ambassador Says He Has ‘No Problem’ Selling Missiles To Iran

https://freebeacon.com/national-security/russian-ambassador-says-he-has-no-problem-selling-missiles-to-iran/?utm_source=actengage&utm_campaign=FreedomMail&utm_medium=email

By: Jack Beyrer for the WFB // OCTOBER 6, 2020 7:05 PM

Russian ambassador to Iran Levan Jagarian told Iranian state media he has "no problem" selling state-of-the-art missiles to Tehran following the end of an arms embargo later this month, Fox News reported Monday.

A United Nations embargo currently forbids the sale of Russian S-400 missiles to Iran, though it is set to expire on October 18. The S-400 missile system is effective at one of the highest distance and altitude ranges of any air defense weapon, and has become a highly sought-after device for American rivals. Previous statements from the Kremlin point to a strong likelihood that a sale will come soon after the embargo’s end.

"The Security Council in that resolution said that the supply of arms to Iran and from Iran would be subject to consideration by the Security Council and that on October 18, 2020, this regime of sales to Iran would stop," said Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov in another interview late last month. "There is no embargo, and there would be no limitations whatsoever after the expiration of this timeframe established by the Security Council."

While new rounds of sanctions from Washington—including the unilateral "snapback" sanctions—have curtailed the economy and overall military expansion of Iran, Tehran continues to seek help from American adversaries. This summer, overtures from Tehran for security assistance have

reached dangerous actors such as Moscow and Beijing. The advanced S-400 missile defense system has already been used as a diplomatic ploy by Moscow against the United States.

In August, a report revealed that House Republicans had been quietly halting arms deals with Turkey for the past two years due to Russia's sale of S-400 missiles to Ankara. A bargaining chip used by Moscow, the missile sales led experts to question Turkey's future in NATO. Unconfirmed reports indicate Turkey is set to test the missile system in the coming weeks as tensions between Ankara and neighboring Greece intensify over holdings in the eastern Mediterranean. Accordingly, Turkey's bid to become a European Union member has become an increasingly fraught question.

There is speculation that Iran may hold off on the purchase of its own S-400 system until it has a more favorable political climate in Washington. "American adversaries increasingly understand the fault lines in our political system," Behnam Ben Taleblu, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told Fox News. "If no sale occurs immediately after mid-October—when the original arms embargo date lapses per the JCPOA—this can be chalked up to Russia and China choosing to wait out the Trump administration in the hopes of a different approach to Iran under a potential Biden administration."



CHINA:

NSTR



NORTH KOREA:

North Korea's Kim lays out 80-day campaign to attain goals this year

<https://www.reuters.com/article/northkorea-politics/nkoreas-kim-lays-out-80-day-campaign-to-attain-goals-this-year-idUSL4N2GW3FO>

By [Sangmi Cha](#) for Reuters News Wire // OCTOBER 5, 2020 6:55 PM - UPDATED 2 HOURS AGO

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has called on his country to embark on an 80-day campaign to attain its goals in every sector before a congress in January to decide a new five-year plan, state news agency KCNA said on Tuesday.

Kim made the announcement in a politburo meeting of the ruling Workers' Party on Monday. The meeting comes during a difficult year for North Korea as the coronavirus pandemic puts more pressure on a economy hurt by recent storms and flooding. "We have performed historical feats with our costly efforts, boldly overcoming unprecedentedly grave trials and difficulties this year, but we should not rest on our laurels," KCNA said.

“We still face the challenges that cannot be overlooked and there are many goals we have to attain within this year.” In August, Kim had announced that the ruling party will hold a congress in January to decide a new five-year plan, with a party meeting noting serious delays in improving the national economy. Last year, Kim vowed to make a “frontal breakthrough” in the country’s campaign to build a self-reliant economy in the face of tightening sanctions aimed at curbing its nuclear and missile programmes.

Security officials were watching for signs that North Korea may use an upcoming holiday to unveil new weapons or test fire a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) on Oct. 10, the 75th anniversary of the ruling workers party.

Reporting by Sangmi Cha; editing by Richard Pullin



SOUTH KOREA:

NSTR



IRAN:

Zarif (IRAN): World must force Israel to destroy its nuclear arsenal

<https://www.msn.com/en-xl/news/other/zarif-world-must-force-israel-to-destroy-its-nuclear-arsenal/ar-BB19FcuG>

From the Tehran Times of Iran // 1 day ago

TEHRAN – Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said the international community must compel Israel—which has aggression in its very DNA—to promptly accede to the NPT and destroy its nuclear arsenal.

“Given its six decades of deception and clandestine development of nuclear weapons, it (Israel) must be compelled to submit to the most intrusive inspection regime that law-abiding members of the NPT observe,” Zarif said at the Virtual Meeting of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on Friday. The 75th high-level plenary meeting was attended by nearly 100 foreign ministers to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

“75 years after the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on innocent civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki—the first and only use of such horrific weapons—this meeting provides a unique opportunity to mobilize the world to liberate humanity from the nuclear nightmare,” Zarif suggested. “25 years after the NPT Review and Extension Conference called for reduced reliance on nuclear weapons and the ICJ ordered good faith efforts towards nuclear disarmament, the U.S. is developing new nuclear weapons and recklessly lowering the threshold of their deployment.

It has further caused immense damage to the NPT by unlawfully withdrawing from the INF and the JCPOA,” he added. The foreign minister noted that the world’s lone perpetrator of a nuclear attack “extends blind support to the sole possessor of nuclear arsenal in our region.” He referred to Israel as an outlaw regime that has openly threatened others with nuclear annihilation, while crying wolf about proliferation.

“The U.S. is developing new nuclear weapons and recklessly lowering the threshold of their deployment. It has further caused immense damage to the NPT by unlawfully withdrawing from the INF and the JCPOA.”

“We also call on the General Assembly to declare as a binding norm of international law that a nuclear war cannot be won—and must never be fought,” he stated, adding that this should be followed by a long-overdue, concrete program for time-bound nuclear disarmament and provision of security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon states in the interim. The chief Iranian diplomat concluded his remarks by saying that “last year, \$72.9 billion was spent on nuclear weapons—half of it by the U.S. alone.

This is higher than the GDP of most countries. Just imagine if the billions wasted on instruments of global annihilation were allocated to help fund the fight against COVID-19.” Enough is enough, he added. The remarks came days after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that Iran poses the greatest threat to peace in West Asia. He accused the Islamic Republic of attacking its neighbors and fomenting violence in the region.

In his speech at the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, Netanyahu lauded U.S. President Donald Trump for leaving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and reimposing the sanctions that had been lifted against Tehran under the pact. He also claimed that Iran was seeking nuclear weapons. Israel is not a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and has refused to either confirm or deny the possession of nuclear weapons in its arsenal.

The regime is believed to possess 200 nuclear warheads, making it the only country in West Asia that has nuclear weapons. This is while Iran has signed the NPT and its nuclear program is inspected regularly by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The IAEA has in numerous occasions certified the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear program. IAEA director-general Rafael Grossi has said that the UN nuclear watchdog carried out more than 400 inspections in Iran last year.

“We carried out more than 400 inspections in Iran last year,” Grossi said in an interview with Der Spiegel published on September 30. In response to Netanyahu’s speech, Tehran said it was part of a serial of “puppet shows” that originate from the Israeli premier’s conspiratorial mind and from the counter-intelligence campaign run by the Zionist regime’s espionage services. “The prime minister of the fake, usurper and child-murdering Zionist regime continues to tell lies by taking the podium at international circles, and is trying to deceive public opinion and the global circles with ridiculous shows in order to prevent trial of the regime’s criminal leaders at the international courts,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Wednesday.



INDIA:

India reiterates 'no first use' policy on nuclear weapons

<https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/trending/india-reiterates-no-first-use-policy-on-nuclear-weapons/ar-BB19FSOx>

From the DNA Web Desk // 1 day ago

India has reiterated its 'no first use' policy on Nuclear weapons, this time at the United Nations at the high-level meeting to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

India's Foreign Secretary Harsh V Shringla said, "India espouses the policy of 'no first use' against nuclear weapon states and non-use against non-nuclear-weapon states." India adopted the No First Use (NFU) policy in 1998 after the nuclear tests in Pokhran. China is the other country to have adopted NFU in 1964. Pakistan, the other state to possess nuclear weapons in the Indian subcontinent, does not follow the NFU policy.

FS reiterated India's "long-standing and unwavering commitment" to "universal, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament" leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. He explained, "We believe that nuclear disarmament can be achieved through a step-by-step process, underwritten by a universal commitment and an agreed multilateral framework", calling for "meaningful dialogue" among all states possessing nuclear weapons "for building trust and confidence."

India since 1998 has tabled an annual resolution in the UNGA on 'Reducing Nuclear Danger' that calls for immediate steps to reduce the risks of "unintentional and accidental" use of nuclear weapons. At the UN meeting, that coincided with the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, India also called for "immediate commencement" of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty at the Conference on Disarmament, a multilateral disarmament negotiating forum based in Geneva.

Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty calls for halting the production of key "fissile" elements for nuclear weapons. The terms of the treaty are still to be negotiated, but Pakistan has been blocking much of the movement, saying the treaty will impact its nuclear weapon production. FS highlighted that "India is a key partner in global efforts towards disarmament and strengthening the non-proliferation order" hoping the international community will "mobilise global will towards a nuclear-weapons-free world."

India successfully tests nuclear-capable Shaurya missile

<https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/other/india-successfully-tests-nuclear-capable-shaurya-missile/ar-BB19Fkei>

By: Debabrata Mohanty, Rahul Singh | Edited by Sparshita Saxena for the Hindustan Times // 1 day ago

India on Saturday successfully test-fired a new version of the nuclear-capable hypersonic Shaurya missile with a range of 750 kilometres from a defence facility off the Odisha coast on Saturday, officials said.

The launch is the latest in a string of recent weapons tests amid military tensions with China in the Ladakh sector. The launch came three days after India test-fired an extended-range BrahMos surface-to-surface supersonic cruise missile from the Integrated Test Range at Balasore in Odisha. The cruise missile can hit targets 400 kilometres away - its range increased from the existing 290 kilometres.

The surface-to-surface medium range Shaurya missile, that can reach speeds of 7.5 Mach (seven and half times the speed of sound), blasted off from a canister from the Abdul Kalam Island test range off Dhamra at about 12.10 pm, the officials said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. There was no official word from the government on the successful launch. The missile, equipped with multiple advanced computing technology and high accuracy navigation, efficient propulsion, sophisticated control and guidance systems, successfully followed its target in the Bay of Bengal, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) officials said.

“This kind of demonstration of capability/power is extremely important to give a loud message to another nuclear-powered country that they should not take us for granted. This will bring in inherent dissuasion that will further discourage our adversaries from using nuclear weapons (against us),” said former Northern Army commander Lieutenant General BS Jaswal (retired). The indigenously-developed missile was tracked and monitored through an integrated system of sophisticated radars, electro-optical tracking instruments and a chain of telemetry stations positioned in different points, they said.

It performed a manoeuvre in the terminal phase and hit the impact point. It was the first user-specific trial of the missile that is a land variant of submarine-launched ballistic missile K-15, the officials said. The two-stage missile that uses solid propellants can deceive enemy radars after launch, the officials said. The 10 metre-long missile - weighing 6.2 tonne - can carry both nuclear and conventional warheads weighing up to 1,000 kilograms.

The DRDO officials said once launched, Shaurya would be difficult to track by radars as the window for detection, tracking and interception is only 400 seconds. Like the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, Shaurya can be stored in a composite canister, making it easier to handle and transport. Like a ballistic missile, it is powered by solid fuel, but can guide itself up to the target like a cruise missile, the officials added.

On September 7, India took the first steps towards developing a new class of ultra-modern weapons that can travel six times faster than the speed of sound (Mach 6) and penetrate any missile defence, with the DRDO carrying out a successful flight test of the hypersonic technology demonstrator vehicle (HSTDV) for the first time from a launch facility off the Odisha coast. Only the United States, Russia and China have developed technologies to field fast-maneuvring hypersonic missiles that fly at lower altitudes and are extremely hard to track and intercept. India could develop hypersonic cruise missiles powered by air-breathing scramjet engines in about four years.

India's Ties to North Korea

<https://www.38north.org/2020/09/jpanda093020/>

Can New Delhi Overcome Challenges to Its Maturing Engagement?

BY: [JAGANNATH PANDA](#) for .38 North // SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

India's ties with North Korea are a key aspect of New Delhi's Act East Policy and the country's post-Cold War outlook. Its decision two months ago to extend [\\$1 million](#) in humanitarian aid to North Korea underscores India's commitment to maintain a dialogue with the North. Although this maturing engagement looks promising, it is unclear whether it can be sustained in the face of multiple challenges and the wide chasm between the reclusive authoritarian state, the Western world and the world's largest democracy.

India-DPRK Growing Contacts

Unlike the Western countries who have barely had any diplomatic relations with North Korea, New Delhi has sustained ties with Pyongyang for over 47 years, largely reflecting the legacy of India's commitment to the Non-Alignment Movement. India is one of only [25 countries](#) in the world (which include Germany, Sweden, the UK, China, Russia and Pakistan to name a few) with an embassy in the North. The two countries have concluded [multiple](#) bilateral agreements and understandings in science, technology, cultural exchanges and information technology. India's gesture in July of providing medicinal products, comprised chiefly of anti-tuberculosis medicines and carried out under the aegis of the World Health Organization, highlights India's longstanding medical diplomacy with North Korea.

Instead of trying to exclude and isolate the frequently criticized North Korea, India has made active efforts to engage in “[dialogue diplomacy](#)” to establish peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula while hoping to act as a bridge between North Korea and the West. In May 2018, India's Minister of State for External Affairs, General V.K. Singh (Retd.), [visited](#) Pyongyang at the DPRK's invitation to mark 45 years of diplomatic ties. The much-lauded trip raised immense speculation about the prospects of New Delhi's renewed interests in reviving relations. The trip was followed by a [second meeting with the DPRK's Foreign Minister](#) Ri Yong Ho in August 2018 on the sidelines of the ASEAN Regional Forum in Singapore. Prior to Singh's visit, India appointed a Foreign Service officer to North Korea, [Atul Malhari Gotsurve](#), as the new ambassador. Recently, Gotsurve was [featured prominently](#) in North Korean news when he presented Kim Jong Un with a basket of flowers and a congratulatory note to mark the “[Day of the Sun](#)” (the birth anniversary of the country's founder Kim Il Sung), symbolizing continued strong bilateral ties.

Humanitarian Aid

New Delhi has often come to Pyongyang's assistance in difficult times by providing food items, blankets, polythene sheets and medical supplies. Notably, New Delhi has [responded](#) to food shortages in North Korea caused by natural calamities over the past 20 years as well as the [Ryongchon train blast](#) of 2004. Amidst the coronavirus pandemic's devastating impact on the region's population at large—including India—New Delhi has [significantly accelerated](#) its [aid diplomacy](#) in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region. Increased aid to North Korea could emerge as a critical aspect of this humanitarian outreach. Despite the DPRK's [stringent emergency measures](#), including [strengthened border crackdowns](#), a nationwide lockdown and a declaration of a state of emergency, the country's economic and health conditions are “[reaching dangerously new low points](#),” particularly as the death rate from chronic illnesses is set to [increase](#) in 2020. [Sources](#) have also reported several outbreaks of the virus in the country. If the situation becomes alarmed or tensed, India's engagement with North Korea could develop into one effective medium of communication to the advantage of important actors such as the United States and South Korea.

Technical and Economic Assistance

While it has been a [controversial](#) decision in some quarters, New Delhi accepted Pyongyang's officials under the [Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation](#) Program (ITEC). The North has been a [partner state](#) since 1993 and has [availed the grant](#) to send representatives to India for professional training and [participation](#) in programs in English language, education planning, administration, and development as well as implementation and management of computer software applications. New Delhi has also, on occasion, [approved](#) North Korean diplomats in its Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) at India's Foreign Service Institute. Since 2016, in response to [global concerns](#) that North Korean participation in space and satellite technology courses may have involved transferring knowledge that could be applied to the DPRK's nuclear program, India [severely limited](#) these training activities. However, New Delhi can explore ways to continue engagement through PCFD programs, which would help it build ties with future North Korean diplomats.

Trade and Economic Ties

India has, until recently, ranked as North Korea's second-largest trading partner, although in terms of absolute trade value, it remained [far below China](#). In 2016, [India's exports to and imports from the DPRK](#) stood at \$54.1 million and \$65.9 million USD, respectively. However, amidst mounting tensions between North Korea and the US and South Korea, India brought its [policies](#) into line with the [United Nation's economic sanctions](#) and [halted all trade](#) with North Korea in April 2017, with an exemption for essential food and medicine. As a result, in [2018](#), India's exports fell to \$31.3 million and imports to \$4.17 million USD. A revival of healthy trade relations will not be easy against the backdrop of the DPRK's nuclear weapon proliferation and the likely continuation of UN sanctions. Still, India's ties with North Korea post-COVID-19 could see stronger trade relations under their food and medical trade links.

Challenges Ahead for Expanding India-DPRK Engagement

Deepening India's involvement with North Korea in the areas described above might be easier said than done in the face of several glaring challenges and concerns for India: Pyongyang's Nuclear Ambitions One of the biggest hindrances towards deeper engagement lies in North Korea's increasing commitment to its nuclear program. Despite maintaining diplomatic ties, India has repeatedly condemned the DPRK's nuclear activities and articulated its concerns over the country's belligerence. In several circumstances, this has translated to [confiscation acts against North Korean ships](#) and support of US activities to, for instance, [counter a North Korean aircraft](#) believed to be carrying advanced ballistic missile technology to Iran. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has adopted an even stronger stance (as evidenced by the 2017 trade ban) against the DPRK's proliferation of nuclear weapons in South Asia. India is increasingly treating North Korea's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program as a [threat to Indian national security](#), giving it a greater [stake](#) in the North's denuclearization and regional stability. However, North Korea will not abandon its nuclear weapons in the immediate future or its further development of longer-range ballistic missiles. Hence, it is unlikely India can exercise much leverage over North Korea, or emerge as an effective intermediary.

The Pakistan Connection

Even more worrying for India is North Korea's swiftly rising relationship with Pakistan. Singh's 2018 visit to Pyongyang highlighted New Delhi's concerns regarding this matter. In response, the DPRK [stressed](#) that "as a friendly country," North Korea would "never allow any action that would create concerns for India's security." Despite such reassurances, there is a longstanding "[illegitimate nuclear technological nexus](#)" between Pyongyang and Islamabad, including Pakistan's transfer of nuclear technology to the DPRK, that has always concerned India. (This nuclear trade has possibly taken place [with](#) the facilitation and approval of China, which is a critical ally for both partners.) The Pakistan-DPRK connection could become more robust as the North seeks to emulate [Pakistan's model](#) rather than the Libyan example. Following India's trade ban in 2017, Pakistan enhanced its trade volume with the DPRK and became one of its [largest export destinations](#) (exports in 2018 were valued at \$7.05 million USD). New Delhi's enhanced engagement could give Pyongyang an incentive to disentangle the Pakistan-DPRK nuclear connection.

India's Ties with the US and South Korea

India has become increasingly proactive in pursuing the [ambitious goal](#) of expanding its influence in the Indo-Pacific region. It is also working to develop deeper linkages and political alignment with the US, Japan and [South Korea](#) in the face of China's assertive nationalism and unilateral attempts to change the territorial status quo, from its border with India to its illegal claims in the South China Sea. At a time when US-DPRK ties are deeply strained (or at least not moving ahead before the new US president is elected), India's special strategic partnerships with these three countries

can make engagement with North Korea a challenging diplomatic maneuver. In fact, a gradual shift away from Pyongyang and an increasingly hardened stand against its missile tests might be more attractive for New Delhi as it looks towards becoming a critical alternative link to Beijing in the supply chain nexus emerging post-COVID-19.

Yet, New Delhi could try to position itself as a critical channel of communication with Pyongyang. This will admittedly not be easy—it is difficult to imagine any of the major players on the peninsula turning to India to play an intermediary role with the DPRK in the near future. However, as India rises and invariably emerges as a key Asian power, its aspirations to play a more influential mediating role among the key protagonists may become more realistic if New Delhi continues to expand its bilateral ties with Pyongyang, particularly in the fields of trade, investments, economic assistance and diplomatic exchanges. In fact, in 2017, India’s former Minister of External Affairs brought up this very point when then US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson [broached](#) the topic of India’s continued official presence in the DPRK. India conveyed the need for the presence of a Western-friendly state to facilitate necessary “[mutual dialogue](#)” to resolve issues. New Delhi’s relations with Pyongyang and its alignment with Washington and Seoul could be of possible use as they look to lower tensions with Pyongyang and make progress toward denuclearization. The extent to which India can carve out such a role for itself, however, would invariably depend on the North’s willingness to abandon, or at least pause, its WMD program—which seems unlikely at the moment.

Conclusion

With the post-COVID geopolitical order undergoing major changes and global economic conditions deteriorating, North Korea will want to focus on strengthening its already weak economy, especially if the country is hit hard by COVID-19. Furthermore, at some point, dialogue between North Korea, the United States, South Korea, Japan and other stakeholders on the Korean Peninsula will reopen; at that juncture, India would be [poised](#) to play a constructive role in promoting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. Continuing India’s engagement with North Korean leadership will pay off in these foreseeable situations.



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