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China's Strategic Trajectory

Implications for Nuclear Stability and Global Order

BY
DAVID SANTORO





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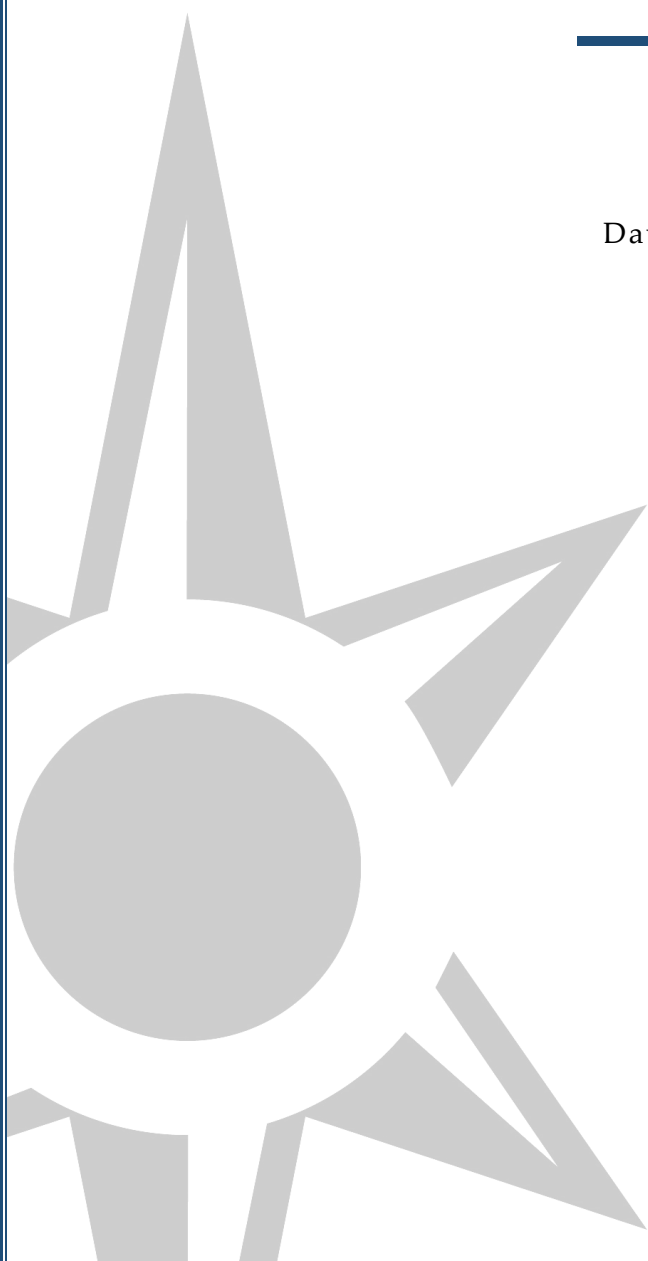
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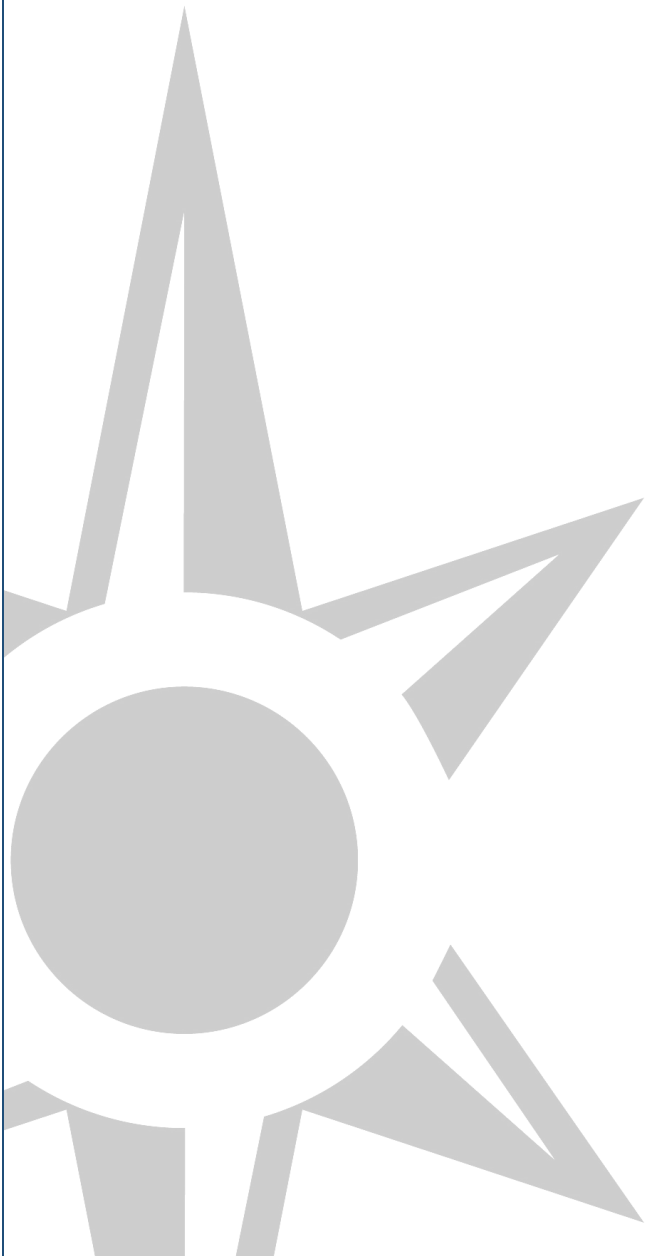


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Introduction

The rise of China as a major global power is one of the defining geopolitical developments of the twenty-first century. While often analyzed primarily through the lens of military capability, China's strategic identity is far more complex. With the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) at its center, it operates simultaneously as a nuclear-armed power, an economic engine, a technological innovator, and an increasingly influential diplomatic actor that employs a comprehensive suite of instruments of national power to achieve its goals. Its global reach extends across trade networks, infrastructure development, political partnerships, and security relationships, making it a multidimensional strategic competitor to the United States and the West.

Understanding China's nuclear posture, therefore, requires situating it within this much broader strategic framework, rather than treating it as an isolated military phenomenon.

This paper examines China's identity and behavior, including its efforts to be perceived as a strategic actor, emphasizing how its historical experiences and cultural traditions have shaped its contemporary approach to power. It also considers how China compares to Russia, particularly in relation to nuclear strategy, and it explores the implications for future global security dynamics.

David Santoro
President and CEO
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Historical Context

Early Foundations

Chinese strategic culture draws from multiple intellectual traditions that collectively emphasize patience, hierarchy, and long-term planning. Classical philosophy, especially ideas associated with social harmony and political order, contributed to a worldview that prioritizes stability and the maintenance of internal cohesion. Chinese military theory, most famously articulated by Sun Tzu, reinforced concepts such as strategic deception, indirect approaches, and victory achieved through positioning rather than brute force. These intellectual traditions helped cultivate a preference for calculated risk-taking and incremental advantage rather than rapid escalation.

Twentieth-century revolutionary experience added another layer to this strategic culture. Under Mao Zedong, Chinese military thinking incorporated guerrilla warfare principles, mass mobilization, and ideological commitment. Mao's concept of "people's war" emphasized endurance, resilience, and the ability to outlast stronger adversaries through asymmetric strategies. Although modern China has moved far beyond Maoist doctrine in operational terms, the legacy of self-reliance and strategic perseverance continues to influence CCP policy thinking and action.

These intellectual and historical influences contributed to a national security outlook that is simultaneously cautious and ambitious. China tends to avoid direct confrontation when possible, preferring gradual shifts in the balance of power. Yet it also pursues long-term strategic objectives with considerable determination, often integrating economic, technological, and diplomatic tools alongside military modernization.

The Cold War Era and the Origins of China's Nuclear Strategy

China's nuclear program emerged from a context of insecurity and geopolitical isolation. Following the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the country entered military conflicts with Western powers and faced growing tensions with the Soviet Union, particularly as Moscow sought rapprochement with the West. China's military confrontations in the Korean Peninsula and across the Taiwan Straits that nearly drew the Soviet Union into nuclear confrontation with the United States led to the Sino-Soviet split in the late 1950s and early 1960s, removing a key source of technological assistance and heightening fears of external coercion. Nuclear weapons thus became a symbol of sovereignty as well as a practical deterrent against potential aggression.

China's first nuclear test in 1964 marked its arrival as a nuclear-armed state. Its decision was driven in part by the goal of breaking the "nuclear monopoly" of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, which were negotiating a partial-test-ban treaty to prevent other countries from developing nuclear weapons.¹ At the outset, however, China's strategic doctrine differed significantly from those of the superpowers. Rather than pursuing numerical parity with the United States or the Soviet Union, China adopted a "minimum deterrence" posture (and declared a no-first-use policy). China stated that its nuclear force was to maintain a survivable retaliatory capability sufficient to deter nuclear attack and not to compete in large-scale arms races.²

Importantly, nuclear weapons also served political purposes. Demonstrating nuclear capability enhanced China's international status, reinforced domestic legitimacy, and signaled independence from both superpower blocs. The nuclear program thus functioned as a political instrument of national identity as much as military defense.

This historical preference for a lean but highly survivable arsenal was deeply tied to the structural mechanics of early Chinese military organization. Unlike the Soviet model, which decentralized tactical nuclear custody across various theater commands, Beijing established a highly centralized, strict command loop directly subordinate to the Central Military Commission. This organizational choice ensured that nuclear weapons were treated purely as political instruments of existential retaliation rather than tools for tactical battlefield deployment. The early Second Artillery Corps was structurally isolated from conventional military planning, operating under strict instructions to endure a first strike before extracting warheads from deeply fortified, subterranean storage networks for a delayed retaliatory blow.

This structural patience minimized the risk of inadvertent escalation during early Cold War crises, but it also required an intense reliance on geographic concealment and strategic deception. Because early Chinese liquid-fueled missiles required lengthy fueling processes that left them acutely vulnerable to preemption, Beijing compensated for technological inferiority by mastering the art of physical denial, utilizing extensive underground tunnel complexes, later dubbed the "Underground Great Wall."

This operational culture established a foundational precedent: strategic stability was maintained not through numerical parity or visible readiness, but through the adversary's calculated uncertainty regarding the precise location and survivability of China's retaliatory force.

¹ K. Peach, *Opportunities and Challenges for U.S.-China Nuclear Arms Control and Risk Reduction* (Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2026).

² H. Shin, "The Evolution of China's Assured Retaliation: An Analysis Focusing on the Development of China's Strategic Nuclear Submarines," *The Korean Journal of International Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2024.

Consequently, early Chinese strategic thinking viewed arms control invitations not as avenues for stabilizing transparency, but as dangerous mechanisms designed to map and compromise China's purposefully opaque defensive posture.³ This deep-seated suspicion regarding foreign transparency demands remains a core psychological driver of Beijing's contemporary refusal to engage in formal trilateral arms limitation frameworks.

Post-1978 Transformation

A major transformation began after 1978 under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Deng's reforms prioritized development, technological modernization, and integration into the global economy. National power was increasingly defined in economic and technological terms rather than purely military ones. Defense modernization continued unabated, but at a relatively measured pace, reflecting the belief that economic strength would provide the foundation for security and international influence.

During this period, i.e., in the 1980s and 1990s, China maintained its relatively modest nuclear posture while improving the survivability and reliability of its forces. Investments focused on secure second-strike capabilities, including mobile missile systems and hardened infrastructure.⁴ China held that its nuclear forces remained for defensive purposes and that its nuclear weapons were intended to prevent coercion, not to enable aggressive strategies.

Economic growth dramatically expanded China's global influence. Trade relationships, foreign investment, and participation in international institutions allowed China to reshape its external environment without direct military confrontation. This period reinforced a strategic pattern that persists today: the blending of economic statecraft with military modernization to achieve its long-term geopolitical objectives (and which Beijing would later use as leverage against others, including in a coercive manner).

Significantly, as Beijing anchored its economic foundation, it also systematically leveraged its historical affinity with the Non-Aligned Movement and the broader Global South to construct a parallel diplomatic architecture. By promoting itself as a fellow developing nation that understood the burdens of colonial history, China built diplomatic relations across Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, which it leveraged to advance its objectives. This alignment served as a critical defensive buffer in international forums, ensuring that as China grew into a major power, it maintained a structural network of partners

that viewed Beijing not as an aggressive hegemon, but as a crucial counterweight to Western geopolitical dominance.

This long-term diplomatic cultivation laid the groundwork for a highly structured, deliberate attempt to build a parallel international architecture independent of Western norms. Through initiatives like the Global Development Initiative and Global Security Initiative, Beijing today systematically exploits the historical grievances, infrastructure deficits, and development needs of Global South states. By anchoring these nations into structural dependencies via Chinese capital, telecommunications hardware, and surveillance architectures, the CCP secures a reliable voting bloc in multilateral forums. This network serves as a critical defensive buffer, insulating Beijing from Western human rights and security criticisms while gradually hollowing out the international order from within. A range of soft power tools, such as development assistance, educational exchanges, cultural outreach, and party-to-party engagements, complement traditional statecraft.

Of note, this multidomain approach distinguishes China from Russia, whose global influence relies more heavily on energy exports, arms sales, and military intervention.

Strategic Culture and Long-Term Planning

Historical experiences across the Cold War and reform eras reinforced three enduring characteristics of Chinese strategy. First, Soviet-style long-term planning became central to national policy, meaning that Chinese leaders often articulate goals in decades rather than years, emphasizing gradual progress toward national rejuvenation.⁵ Second, China developed a preference for asymmetric advantages, seeking leverage in areas where competitors are vulnerable rather than competing head-to-head in every domain.⁶ Third, policymakers increasingly recognized the interdependence of military, economic, and technological power under a unified security architecture.⁷

These patterns contrast vividly with the strategic culture of Russia, which historically has relied more heavily on military instruments, coercive diplomacy, and rapid escalation to offset economic limitations.⁸ China's approach under Deng's dictum of "bide your time and hide your capabilities," by comparison, tends to integrate multiple dimensions of power simultaneously, often prioritizing economic and technological gains instead of, or before, military conflict or confrontation.

³ David Santoro, "Getting Past No: Developing a Nuclear Arms Control Relationship with China," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2023, 68-86.

⁴ Shin.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Fiona S. Cunningham, "Escalate to Survive?" *International Security*, vol. 50, no. 4, (2024), 74-112.

⁷ V. B. Kashin, *The New Great Wall: The Logic of China's Foreign Policy Behavior* (Moscow: Russian International Affairs Council, 2024).

⁸ Cunningham, 82.

The Xi Jinping Era: Assertiveness, Comprehensive Power, Multi-Polarity

Since 2012, under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China has entered a new phase characterized by much greater confidence and assertiveness. In addition to rolling back several of the economic reforms China undertook from the 1980s, Xi consolidated political authority domestically while promoting an ambitious vision of national rejuvenation internationally.⁹

At the core of this structural transition is the re-assertion and reinvigoration of the CCP's absolute authority over all sectors of public, state, and corporate life. Under Xi's doctrine of "the Party leads everything," the CCP has systematically eliminated the previous institutional boundaries separating commercial enterprise, civil technological research, and military defense. Modern China's strategic identity is the direct manifestation of this centralization.

Significantly, Beijing conceptualizes national power not as a collection of separate military, diplomatic, and commercial capabilities, but as an indivisible, weaponized continuum.¹⁰ As a result, economic statecraft, tech supply chains, infrastructure investments, and military deployments are dual-use instruments explicitly orchestrated by the CCP to shape global environments to its advantage, displace Western institutional dominance, and enforce political compliance abroad without prematurely triggering conventional armed conflict. Under the Party's pervasive ideological and organizational framework, there is no meaningful separation between civilian commercial success, technological advancement, and military capability. The CCP views all instruments of statecraft as inherently unified, non-linear mechanisms engineered to ensure regime survival, enforce internal stability, and realize national rejuvenation on a global scale.

In that context, military modernization accelerated, including significant investments in advanced missile systems, space capabilities, cyber warfare, and nuclear forces.¹¹

China's nuclear posture has been now evolving from a minimal deterrent toward a more robust and diversified arsenal, despite Beijing's continual denial that its posture and doctrine have changed.¹² Developments include new missile silos, improved submarine-launched ballistic

missiles, early warning capabilities and advanced delivery systems, such as hypersonic glide vehicles, among others.¹³ Although officially China continues to endorse a no-first-use policy, the scale and sophistication of modernization efforts suggest a desire for greater strategic flexibility and survivability in a multipolar nuclear environment.¹⁴

At the same time, China has further expanded its global economic and diplomatic footprint. The Belt-and-Road Initiative exemplifies this strategy, combining infrastructure investment, financial influence, and political partnerships across Asia, Europe, Africa, and beyond. Technology policy has also become central, with efforts to achieve leadership in artificial intelligence, telecommunications, and advanced manufacturing. These initiatives reinforce China's broader strategy of integrating economic and technological strength with military capability.

Diplomatically, China increasingly portrays itself as a leader of the developing world and an alternative model of governance to the United States and the West. A range of soft power tools—such as development assistance, educational exchanges, cultural outreach, and party-to-party engagements—complement traditional statecraft.

This multidimensional approach distinguishes China from Russia, whose global influence relies more heavily on energy exports, arms sales, and military intervention.¹⁵

Accordingly, China's emergence as a global power cannot be understood solely through the lens of military capability. Its strategic behavior reflects centuries of intellectual tradition, revolutionary experience, and decades of economic transformation. From the early influences of classical philosophy and Maoist doctrine to the modernization efforts of Deng Xiaoping and the assertive policies of Xi Jinping, China has developed a distinctive approach to national power characterized by a deliberative, transactional, long-term strategy that exploits asymmetric leverage and exploitation of vulnerabilities, particularly in its region.

Comparisons with Russia underscore the uniqueness of this model. While both states challenge US and Western dominance and rely on nuclear deterrence, China's strategy places much greater emphasis on economic and technological influence alongside military strength.¹⁶ This multidimensional approach has profound implications for

⁹ Kashin, "The New Great Wall."

¹⁰ Erik R. Quam, "PRC Conceptions of Comprehensive National Power: Part 1," *China Brief*, Sep. 5, 2025; "CNP Part II: Seven National Development Strategies," *China Brief*, Sep. 26, 2025; and "CNP Part III: Growing CNP Drove Foreign Policy Shift," *China Brief*, Jan. 6, 2026.

¹¹ Hans M. Kristensen et al., "Chinese Nuclear Weapons, 2024," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 80, no. 1, 2024, 49-72.

¹² Nicola Leveringhaus, *The Domestic Politics Behind China's Strategic Force Improvements* (Baltimore: Project MUSE, 2024).

¹³ Kristensen et al., 55.

¹⁴ Peach

¹⁵ Cunningham, 90.

¹⁶ Ibid.

global security, particularly as China's nuclear capabilities expand and interact with advanced conventional technologies.

Understanding China's historical context and strategic culture is thus essential for anticipating future developments. Nuclear competition will remain a critical issue, but it will unfold within a broader contest encompassing trade, technology, diplomacy, and ideology. Policymakers and analysts must recognize that China's power is not confined to any single domain. On the contrary, it is the product of an integrated national strategy shaped by history, culture, and evolving geopolitical ambitions.

China Today and Tomorrow: Strategic Identity, Behavior, and Future Trajectories

The contemporary rise of China represents a transformation not only in global power distribution but also in the nature of strategic competition itself. China today operates as a multidimensional strategic actor that integrates military strength, economic leverage, technological innovation, and diplomatic influence into a coherent national strategy. Its nuclear arsenal, while historically limited compared to those of the United States and Russia, is undergoing modernization and expansion, which of late has proceeded at unprecedented scale and speed, reaching an estimated 600 warheads.¹⁷ Still, nuclear weapons remain only one component of a much broader security architecture that combines conventional forces, global economic engagement, and technological development to enhance deterrence as well as international influence.

Understanding China's current strategic identity and likely future trajectory thus requires analyzing how these instruments interact and reinforce one another.

Strategic Identity

China's strategic identity is shaped by its perception of itself as a rising great power seeking both security and status. National objectives include maintaining territorial sovereignty, achieving regional primacy in Asia, securing technological and economic leadership, and expanding global influence. These goals reflect both historical grievances—such as memories of foreign occupation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—and contemporary ambitions associated with national rejuvenation, as portrayed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

China's nuclear forces play a supporting but increasingly significant role in this identity. Historically characterized

by minimum deterrence and a declared no-first-use policy, the arsenal is now evolving toward a considerably more sophisticated and survivable posture.¹⁸ Investments in mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and advanced delivery systems increase credibility while preserving a primarily defensive orientation.¹⁹ In Chinese thinking, nuclear modernization is thus less about numerical parity with other powers and more about ensuring that China cannot be coerced or strategically marginalized.²⁰

Beyond nuclear weapons, China's conventional military modernization has been substantial. The People's Liberation Army has shifted from a large, manpower-intensive force toward a technologically advanced military capable of precision strike, joint operations, and power projection. Naval expansion, anti-access/area denial systems, cyber warfare units, and space capabilities contribute to a layered deterrence framework designed to complicate adversary intervention in regional conflicts.

Economic strength is perhaps the most distinctive element of China's strategic identity. Decades of rapid growth have transformed the country into a central node of global trade and manufacturing. Infrastructure investment initiatives, foreign direct investment, and financial lending programs extend Chinese influence across multiple continents. These economic tools create relationships of dependency and partnership that can reinforce political leverage without direct military confrontation.

Technological development is similarly central. China has invested heavily in artificial intelligence, telecommunications, quantum computing, and advanced manufacturing. Technological leadership enhances both civilian economic competitiveness and military capability, blurring the line between commercial innovation and national security strategy. As a result, China's strategic identity cannot be separated into military and civilian spheres. Rather, it reflects an integrated model of national power, led by the CCP.

Strategic Behavior

China's behavior in international politics reflects a preference for reputation, transactionalism, deniability. Rather than initiating confrontation, Chinese policymakers often favor sub-threshold actions that shift realities over time instead of opting for outright military escalation.²¹ This approach aligns with its longstanding traditions that typically emphasize patience, indirect methods, and psychological advantage.

Regional assertiveness demonstrates how this strategy operates in practice. In the Taiwan Strait, China combines

¹⁷ Peach.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Kristensen et al., 58.

²⁰ Shin.

²¹ Kashin.

military pressure, economic incentives, disinformation efforts, and diplomatic isolation to influence political outcomes without triggering large-scale conflict.²² Military exercises, air and naval patrols, as well as missile deployments signal capability and resolve, while remaining below the threshold of war.²³ Nuclear deterrence, meanwhile, implicitly underpins all these actions by discouraging external intervention.²⁴

Similar patterns appear in the South China Sea and along contested borders with regional neighbors. Infrastructure construction, maritime patrols, and legal claims are accompanied by diplomatic engagement and economic partnerships.

The goal is to establish facts on the ground—or at sea—gradually, making reversal increasingly costly for opponents. Conventional military modernization enhances credibility, while nuclear forces provide a strategic backdrop that discourages escalation by major powers.²⁵

This gray-zone behavior relies heavily on the deliberate synchronization of paramilitary forces and civil-maritime agencies, which blurs the lines between law enforcement and military assertion.²⁶ In the maritime domain, this strategy is executed through the employment of the People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia operating alongside the China Coast Guard. By utilizing non-naval vessels to swarm contested features, ram civilian hulls, and block lawful economic activity within regional exclusive economic zones, Beijing shifts the burden of escalation onto its neighbors and their security guarantors. If an adversary responds to these gray-zone provocations with conventional naval assets, Beijing weaponizes that reaction in the information domain, portraying the adversary as the aggressive revisionist while deploying its own nearby naval strike groups under the guise of defensive stabilization.

Underpinning this entire operational layer is a highly calculated integration of theater conventional missiles designed to enforce regional anti-access/area-denial envelopes. The deployment of precise, long-range conventional strike systems, such as the DF-21D and DF-26 ballistic missiles, is strategically calibrated to hold at risk Western carrier strike groups and forward operating bases well beyond the first island chain. By creating a credible conventional threat to foreign intervention forces, Beijing seeks to establish a local theater of operations where it can safely coerce regional states into political compliance.

Nuclear weapons perform a silent but vital function in this matrix. They act as a strategic umbrella that structurally isolates regional conventional conflicts, signaling to extra-regional powers that any direct, high-intensity conventional intervention to defend regional allies risks triggering a catastrophic strategic escalation that outweighs the immediate geopolitical stakes.

Economic initiatives play a major role in strategic behavior. Programs such as the Belt-and-Road Initiative extend infrastructure networks across Asia, Europe, and Africa, creating transportation corridors, energy pipelines, and digital connectivity. These projects generate influence by linking participating countries to Chinese markets and financing. Economic engagement thus becomes a form of geopolitical positioning, shaping political alignments without direct coercion.

Technological competition further reinforces strategic behavior. Advances in cyber capabilities allow China to gather intelligence, protect domestic systems, and potentially disrupt adversary infrastructure. Space programs—including satellite networks and anti-satellite technologies—enhance communication, navigation, and surveillance while contributing to military readiness. These capabilities expand China's ability to project power across domains beyond traditional battlefield environments.

Diplomatically, China adopts a pragmatic and selective approach. Bilateral partnerships, participation in international organizations, and engagement with developing countries complement military and economic initiatives. Soft power tools such as cultural exchanges, educational programs, and development assistance contribute to China's global image. Rather than acting as a substitute for military power, diplomacy works alongside it, reinforcing China's multidimensional strategy.

Foundations for the Future

Recent Developments

Recent years have seen accelerated modernization across multiple domains. Nuclear expansion includes the construction of new missile silos across fields in Yumen, Hami, and Jilantai, deployment of advanced solid-fuel ICBMs like the DF-41, and improvements in submarine-based deterrents via JL-3 SLBM retrofits.²⁷ Hypersonic glide vehicles and maneuverable reentry technologies complicate missile defense systems, enhancing deterrence credibility.²⁸ These developments suggest a shift toward a

²² M. Sweeney, *Why a Taiwan Conflict Could Go Nuclear* (Washington DC: Defense Priorities, 2024).

²³ B. Burack, *China – Special Report* (Washington DC: The Heritage Foundation, 2026).

²⁴ Sweeney.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Andrew S. Erickson, "Essence of Distinction: The Ends, Ways, and Means of China's Military Maritime Quest," *Frontiers in Political Science*, vol. 6, Sep. 2024.

²⁷ Leveringhaus and Kristensen, 51.

²⁸ Kristensen et al., 62.

more resilient and flexible nuclear posture capable of surviving first strikes and ensuring retaliation.²⁹

Crucially, the combination of extensive silo construction, advanced space-based early warning satellite constellations, and modernized command-and-control architectures indicates that China is adopting, *de facto*, a launch-on-warning posture. By shifting toward an operational stance where its strategic nuclear forces are kept at an exceptionally high state of readiness, prepared to execute a retaliatory nuclear counterstrike immediately upon sensor-based data confirming an incoming enemy attack, Beijing fundamentally upends its traditional, relaxed approach to nuclear storage and handling. Historically, China stored its warheads separately from delivery systems. Yet under this new posture, warheads are mated to solid-fuel missiles in a state of constant operational alert.

The strategic implications of this operational transition are profound. A launch-on-warning posture drastically compresses the window available to top-level political decision-makers during an acute crisis, elevating the risk of inadvertent nuclear escalation stemming from technical glitches, false early-warning alarms, or cyber interference with telemetry systems. Furthermore, this posture creates an acute “use-it-or-lose-it” dynamic among operational commanders. By linking highly alert strategic systems to local command loops, it increases the likelihood that regional conventional flashpoints, such as a maritime crisis or an escalating air clash in the Taiwan Strait, could cross the nuclear threshold. The resulting compressed timeline degrades the utility of traditional crisis communications channels between Washington and Beijing, as technical anomalies could trigger an automated response before diplomatic verification can occur.

Conventional military advancements have also been significant. Investments in aircraft carriers, stealth aircraft, long-range precision weapons, and integrated command systems improve China’s ability to operate beyond its immediate region. Cyber warfare units and electronic warfare capabilities expand options for non-kinetic conflict, potentially disabling adversary systems without direct physical confrontation. Space-based assets—including reconnaissance satellites and navigation networks—support both civilian infrastructure and military operations.

Strategic signaling accompanies modernization. China seeks to demonstrate capability without provoking unnecessary escalation, balancing deterrence with cautious behavior.³⁰ Military exercises near contested regions, public announcements of technological achievements, and diplomatic messaging all contribute to reputation building.

The objective is to shape perceptions of power and resolve among both adversaries and partners.

Economic expansion continues to reinforce strategic options. Trade relationships, infrastructure financing, and supply chain integration create leverage in diplomatic negotiations. Countries dependent on Chinese markets or investment now hesitate to confront Beijing directly, providing indirect security benefits. Economic influence thus complements military deterrence, creating multiple layers of strategic advantage.

Diplomatic outreach further broadens China’s influence. Partnerships with states such as Pakistan or North Korea as well as engagement across Africa and Latin America extend China’s global presence. Cooperation with Russia reflects shared interests in counterbalancing US and Western dominance, though the relationship remains seemingly highly pragmatic rather than fully aligned.³¹ These diplomatic relationships allow China to shape international norms and institutions without direct confrontation.

Possible Futures: A Full Spectrum of Outcomes

Looking ahead, China’s trajectory could evolve along several pathways depending on geopolitical pressures, domestic conditions, and technological developments.

One possibility is a more assertive posture in response to perceived containment by the United States and its allies. Increased military presence, expanded nuclear forces, and stronger regional coercion could reshape the security environment in Asia. Such developments might trigger countermeasures, including alliance strengthening and arms competition.

Alternatively, China may maintain a relatively restrained nuclear doctrine, while focusing on asymmetric advantages. Technological leadership, cyber capabilities, economic influence, and space dominance could provide strategic leverage without requiring large nuclear arsenals.³² In this scenario, competition would occur primarily in non-military domains, with nuclear weapons serving as a stabilizing backdrop rather than an active instrument of policy.³³

Regional tensions represent another variable. Disputes involving Taiwan, India, Japan, or the Korean Peninsula could escalate into crises with broader implications.³⁴ Even limited conflicts might stimulate regional arms races, including missile defense systems, advanced conventional weapons, and potentially nuclear proliferation pressures.

²⁹ Shin.

³⁰ Kashin.

³¹ Cunningham, 94.

³² Ibid.

³³ Peach.

³⁴ Sweeney.

The interaction between regional disputes and great-power rivalry would significantly influence global stability.³⁵

China will likely continue its efforts to portray itself as a leader in global governance despite advancing positions that challenge directly the current international order. Participation in arms control negotiations, leadership in international organizations, and promotion of alternative norms might reshape existing frameworks.³⁶ Economic and technological influence would provide bargaining power, allowing China to advocate policies aligned with its interests while portraying itself as a responsible global leader.

Technological and economic expansion will likely continue reinforcing nuclear signaling. A country with strong industrial capacity, advanced research infrastructure, and global economic ties possesses greater resilience in crises. These factors enhance credibility in deterrence relationships by demonstrating the ability to sustain competition over time. Plainly, non-military achievements indirectly strengthen nuclear posture.

Likely Futures: Narrower Probabilities

There are both near-term and longer-term probabilities. In the near-term, China appears determined to meet its military modernization and strategic capabilities goals. With a greater ability to hold conventional military targets at risk in the Indo-Pacific, and an upgraded nuclear weapons posture that could include the elements of an early warning counterstrike, China's nuclear weapons modernization will likely embolden China's efforts to dictate or, at a minimum, influence more assertively the terms of global trade and governance from the Indo-Pacific.

Long-term planning and strategic patience will also likely remain central. Chinese leaders historically emphasize steady progress rather than sudden escalation and will likely use diplomacy and outreach to draw this contrast with the West. Even as capabilities grow faster than before and the temptation to shift from assertiveness to aggressiveness increases, China will probably seek to tread carefully when crises emerge and prevent disruptions to economic development and domestic stability. In that spirit, strategic signaling, i.e., demonstrating strength without crossing escalation thresholds, will remain a key behavioral pattern.

Integration of multiple instruments of power, meanwhile, will persist. Conventional military capability, nuclear deterrence, economic engagement, soft power, technological innovation, and diplomacy will continue

reinforcing one another. This multidimensional approach enhances flexibility, allowing China to respond to challenges across domains rather than relying solely on the use or the threat of military force.

As a result, China's regional and global position is likely to strengthen gradually. Influence in Asia will expand through economic interdependence and military modernization, while global presence will grow through infrastructure investment and diplomatic outreach. Strategic stability may be preserved if competition remains managed and communication channels remain open, though risks of miscalculation will persist.³⁷

Broader Implications

China's trajectory carries implications extending beyond nuclear strategy. The interaction of nuclear posture, conventional forces, economic leverage, and technological influence creates a comprehensive strategic footprint that affects alliances, geographic boundaries, regional security frameworks, and global norms.³⁸

Economic leverage provides non-military means of influence that can reinforce deterrence through market access and infrastructure ties, while technological dominance shapes information environments.³⁹

The evolution of China's power, meanwhile, transforms international institutions, embedding nuclear issues within broader debates about technology regulation, economic standards, and international law.⁴⁰

Ultimately, China's rise represents a shift toward multidimensional competition in which military capability is only one component of national power. Nuclear deterrence is important in that equation and its role will likely increase, but it also interacts with economic resilience, technological innovation, and diplomatic influence in complex ways. Understanding this integration is essential for anticipating future security dynamics.

China today is thus a strategic actor defined by integration—of military modernization, nuclear deterrence, economic strength, technological advancement, and diplomatic engagement. Its behavior reflects a combination of historical strategic culture and contemporary ambition, emphasizing incremental progress, risk management, and long-term planning.

Recent developments in nuclear and conventional capabilities provide foundations for expanded influence, while economic and technological initiatives broaden

³⁵ L. van der Horst and Q. Niu, "Navigating Multipolarity: Reimagining Process Design for Future Strategic Stability Frameworks," *St. Antony's International Review*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2026, 60-84.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Kashin.

³⁸ van der Horst and Niu, 71.

³⁹ Kasin.

⁴⁰ van der Horst and Niu, 75.

strategic options beyond traditional military competition. Possible futures range from increased assertiveness and regional arms competition to continued restraint combined with asymmetric advantages. The most likely trajectory involves gradual modernization and integrated power projection, strengthening China's position while attempting to preserve stability. Regardless of the specific path, however, China's rise will reshape global power dynamics across multiple domains.

For policymakers and analysts, the central challenge is recognizing that China's nuclear strategy cannot be understood in isolation. It is embedded within a broader national strategy that blends economic, technological, diplomatic, and military tools. The future of international security, therefore, will depend not only on nuclear balances, but also on how states adapt to this multidimensional form of competition and cooperation in an evolving global order.

Comparison with Russia

Strategic Culture and Doctrine

Both China and Russia occupy positions as major nuclear powers whose national security strategies rely heavily on deterrence, strategic signaling, and the preservation of great-power status. In both countries, nuclear weapons serve not only as instruments of military power but also as symbols of technological sophistication, political legitimacy, and international influence. Nuclear capability reinforces perceptions of sovereignty and autonomy, particularly in an international system that is still shaped by competition among major powers, and it also can be a tool for coercion.

Despite these shared characteristics, important differences in strategic culture and doctrine shape how each state conceptualizes deterrence, manages risk, and integrates nuclear forces into broader national strategy.

Historically, China's strategic culture has emphasized caution, patience, and defensive orientation. Its nuclear doctrine, as mentioned, has long been rooted in the concept of minimum deterrence, prioritizing survivability and assured retaliation over numerical superiority or warfighting utility.⁴¹ Even as modernization accelerates, China continues to emphasize second-strike capability as the core of its nuclear posture.⁴²

The Chinese approach, as seen, reflects a broader worldview in which national strength is accumulated gradually through economic development, technological advancement, and institutional consolidation. Military power, including nuclear forces, is viewed as only one

component of a comprehensive national strategy rather than the dominant instrument of influence. Long-term planning horizons and incremental capability development are consistent features of Chinese strategic behavior.

Russia's strategic culture differs in several important respects.

Historically shaped by repeated invasions, geopolitical vulnerability, and the legacy of superpower competition, Russian doctrine exhibits a higher tolerance for risk and a more prominent role for military power.

Nuclear weapons occupy a central place in Russian security planning, serving both deterrent and coercive functions. Russian military thought has even incorporated concepts of escalation management in which limited nuclear use could potentially shape conflict outcomes or compel adversary restraint.⁴³ While the operational realities of such concepts remain debated, their existence illustrates a willingness to integrate nuclear capabilities more directly into operational planning than is evident in Chinese doctrine.⁴⁴ Russia's reliance on nuclear forces is also influenced by perceptions of conventional imbalance relative to technologically advanced adversaries, reinforcing the importance of nuclear capabilities as equalizers.

Another distinction lies in the integration of non-military tools. China has systematically combined military modernization with economic statecraft, technological innovation, and diplomatic engagement. Infrastructure investments, trade relationships, and technological partnerships expand China's influence while reducing reliance on overt coercion.

Russia, by contrast, relies more heavily on military capabilities and energy leverage, partly because of structural economic constraints and geopolitical circumstances.⁴⁵ As a result, China's doctrine appears multidimensional and long-term oriented, whereas Russia's appears more directly centered on military power as the primary mechanism for geopolitical competition.⁴⁶

These differences do not eliminate similarities between the two states. Both seek to avoid nuclear vulnerability, maintain credible deterrence against technologically advanced adversaries, and preserve strategic autonomy in an uncertain international environment.

The contrast in strategic culture, however, produces distinct approaches to modernization priorities, signaling behavior, and crisis management that shape their respective roles in the global strategic landscape.

⁴¹ Peach.

⁴² Shin.

⁴³ Cunningham, 101.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 105.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

International Behavior

Differences in doctrine and strategic culture translate into observable variations in behavior on the international stage.

Historically, Russia has engaged actively in bilateral arms control agreements with the United States, viewing such treaties as mechanisms to preserve parity and predictability while managing resource limitations. Participation in formal arms control frameworks reinforces Russia's identity as a nuclear superpower equal to the United States and provides transparency that can reduce uncertainty and stabilize competition.

China, in contrast, has remained selective in its engagement with arms control and nonproliferation regimes. Chinese leaders argue that their nuclear arsenal is significantly smaller than those of established superpowers even as they are expanding it and, therefore, they stress that it should not be subject to identical constraints.⁴⁷ This position allows China to preserve flexibility during a period of modernization while avoiding commitments that could limit future strategic options. At the same time, China participates in nonproliferation efforts and a range of confidence-building measures consistent with its diplomatic objectives, demonstrating a nuanced approach that balances autonomy with international responsibility.

Crisis management behavior further highlights divergence. Chinese signaling tends to be calibrated and incremental, combining demonstrations of resolve with diplomatic engagement intended to prevent uncontrolled escalation.⁴⁸ Russia, however, has shown a greater willingness to escalate tensions rapidly to drive change and shape outcomes, employing military force or nuclear rhetoric to compel adversary attention or concessions, including getting them to back down.⁴⁹ This difference reflects not only distinct doctrine but also differing threat perceptions as well as geopolitical environments.

Geographic orientation also influences behavior. China combines a strong regional focus with expanding global economic engagement, linking its security interests to international trade networks and technological ecosystems. Russia remains more regionally concentrated, with primary concerns centered on Europe and its near abroad, even as Moscow is paying increasing attention to the Indo-Pacific.⁵⁰

Although Russia seeks global influence, its economic reach is comparatively limited, constraining its ability to sustain long-term partnerships compared with China's extensive economic networks.

Non-military instruments further differentiate the two countries. China's use of economic incentives,

technological cooperation, and diplomatic initiatives provides multiple avenues for shaping strategic environments without direct military confrontation. Russia's toolkit, while including information operations and energy diplomacy, offers fewer options for subtle influence and shaping. China, as a result, often appears more flexible in peacetime competition, whereas Russia may rely more heavily on military pressure when pursuing geopolitical objectives.⁵¹ These behavioral differences contribute to varying perceptions among other states regarding predictability, risk tolerance, and long-term intentions.

Avenues for Coherence and Collaboration

Despite these differences, substantial avenues for strategic coherence and deep tactical collaboration have rapidly emerged between China and Russia. Bound together by a shared autocratic governance model and an overarching geopolitical objective to erode Western global hegemony, the two powers are translating their pragmatic alignment into highly institutionalized military and technological linkages. They are building a collaborative framework designed to exploit regional vulnerabilities and stretch Western response capabilities.

A primary vector of this growing coherence is found in advanced military technology sharing and joint early-warning design. Russia, possessing extensive operational experience in ballistic missile defense and automated command-and-control loops, has assisted China in constructing its advanced space-based early warning architecture. This high-level technical cooperation bridges the structural gaps between their separate strategic monitoring systems, directly accelerating China's own operational shift toward a launch-on-warning posture. Furthermore, joint ventures in hypersonic propulsion engineering, submarine noise-reduction technologies, and artificial intelligence-driven electronic warfare systems allow both nations to pool technical risk and successfully circumvent restrictive Western technology sanctions.

Beyond technical research, China and Russia have institutionalized highly sophisticated, routine joint military maneuvers that exhibit genuine tactical interoperability. These exercises have transitioned from symbolic anti-terrorism drills into integrated deep-sea naval patrols across the Pacific, synchronized strategic bomber flights through East Asian air defense identification zones, and combined live-fire maritime maneuvers in critical global sea lanes such as the Mediterranean and the South China Sea.

These joint operations create a profound multi-theater challenge for Western defense planners. By coordinating

⁴⁷ Peach.

⁴⁸ Kashin.

⁴⁹ Cunningham, 108.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

concurrent military theater pressures—such as Russia ramping up naval maneuvers and nuclear rhetoric in Northern Europe while China spikes air and maritime pressure around Taiwan and the first island chain—the two autocracies dilute the United States’ ability to focus resources on any single geographic crisis. This coordination forces the West to plan for complex, simultaneous conflicts, multiplying the strategic options available to both China and Russia while stretching Western intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets to their limits.

Implications for Strategic Nuclear Issues

Deterrence

China’s ongoing nuclear modernization has significant implications for deterrence dynamics at both regional and global levels. Improvements in missile accuracy, survivability, and delivery diversity strengthen China’s second-strike capability, reducing vulnerability to preemptive attack.⁵² Mobile missile systems, hardened infrastructure, and sea-based platforms contribute to resilience, complicating adversary targeting and reinforcing deterrence credibility.⁵³ A more survivable force enhances confidence that retaliation would remain possible even under adverse conditions, thereby strengthening deterrent effectiveness.

Deterrence effectiveness depends not only on capabilities but also on perceptions. As China’s nuclear forces become more sophisticated, potential adversaries must assume that retaliation would be both possible and effective across a wide range of scenarios. This perception reduces incentives for coercion or preventive strikes, reinforcing stability through uncertainty regarding escalation consequences. In other words, the psychological dimension of deterrence—belief in credible response—becomes as important as material capability.⁵⁴

Integration with conventional forces and emerging technologies further amplifies deterrence. Advances in space-based surveillance, cyber operations, and precision conventional strike capabilities create a layered strategic environment in which nuclear and non-military tools interact. Such integration increases complexity for adversaries attempting to calculate risks, potentially strengthening deterrence by raising the perceived costs of conflict.⁵⁵ Economic influence also plays an indirect role, as deep interdependence can increase the perceived consequences of military confrontation and reinforce incentives for restraint.

This interaction is further complicated by the rapid integration of artificial intelligence and automated systems into China’s strategic reconnaissance and processing

networks. The People’s Liberation Army’s conceptual framework for multi-domain precision warfare relies on using advanced algorithm suites to synthesize data across the space, cyber, electromagnetic, and kinetic domains, creating a highly accelerated data-to-strike loop. While this digital optimization enhances conventional theater deterrence by making Chinese strike systems exceptionally lethal and responsive, it introduces acute vulnerabilities into the strategic deterrence calculation. The automated processing of early warning telemetry can generate a false sense of certainty among decision-makers, tempting them to rely on algorithmic conclusions rather than deliberative verification during the chaotic opening hours of a high-intensity theater crisis.

Furthermore, the deep interweaving of conventional and nuclear capabilities within the People’s Liberation Army’s Rocket Force creates severe operational ambiguities that have the potential to threaten strategic stability. A significant portion of China’s intermediate- and medium-range ballistic missile systems, most notably the DF-26, are dual-capable platforms capable of rapidly swapping between conventional precision payloads and nuclear warheads within identical launch architectures. In a high-intensity conventional conflict, an adversary attempting to strike conventional Rocket Force launch battalions to protect its forward forces could thus inadvertently target systems slated for nuclear missions or misinterpret a conventional deployment as the onset of a theater nuclear first-strike. This structural entanglement lowers the threshold for accidental escalation, as both sides are forced to operate under severe informational deficits, making the preservation of stable, predictable deterrence boundaries exceptionally difficult to maintain in a fluid, multi-domain environment.

In this context, regional deterrence dynamics are particularly significant. China’s growing capabilities may discourage external intervention in regional disputes by increasing the risks associated with escalation.⁵⁶ At the same time, modernization could stimulate counterbalancing measures by neighboring states or alliances, illustrating the inherently interactive nature of deterrence relationships. The overall impact, therefore, depends on how other actors interpret China’s intentions, capabilities, and long-term trajectory.

Strategic Stability

Strategic stability, as a general rule, is shaped by perceptions of vulnerability, incentives for preemption, and the reliability of communication during crises. China’s modernization, as mentioned, introduces both stabilizing and destabilizing elements into this equation. To be sure, enhanced survivability reduces incentives for adversaries

⁵² Shin.

⁵³ Kristensen et al., 64.

⁵⁴ Shin.

⁵⁵ Leveringhaus.

⁵⁶ Sweeney.

to strike first, potentially strengthening crisis stability. But rapid expansion and technological innovation also create uncertainty about future capabilities and doctrinal intentions, complicating strategic calculations and potentially increasing mistrust.⁵⁷

China's relatively cautious strategic culture may contribute to stability through deliberate planning and emphasis on retaliation rather than first use.⁵⁸ Long-term modernization goals suggest a preference for gradual capability development rather than abrupt doctrinal shifts. Nevertheless, stability is not determined solely by intentions; misperceptions, signaling ambiguity, and technological uncertainty can generate risks even among cautious actors.⁵⁹ Non-military tools such as economic coercion or technological competition may also influence crisis dynamics by shaping incentives and perceptions in unpredictable ways.

Regional tensions intersect with nuclear considerations in ways that increase complexity. Territorial disputes, alliance commitments, and forward military deployments could generate crises in which conventional conflict risks escalation.⁶⁰ Asymmetric capabilities—such as missile defense systems or advanced conventional strike technologies—may alter perceptions of advantage, potentially increasing incentives for preemptive action under certain conditions.⁶¹ The interaction between conventional and nuclear domains therefore becomes a critical factor in stability assessments.⁶²

The emergence of a trilateral strategic environment involving China, Russia, and the United States further complicates stability dynamics.⁶³ Divergent doctrines, force structures, and political relationships create a more complex deterrence landscape than the bipolar system of the Cold War. Managing stability in this environment requires accounting for multiple actors with differing priorities, threat perceptions, and escalation thresholds. Misperception risks may increase when communication channels are less institutionalized than during earlier Cold War periods of superpower competition.⁶⁴

The trilateral dynamic between China, Russia, and the United States creates a profound mathematical and operational imbalance that severely strains traditional concepts of strategic stability. In a bipolar system, stability is maintained through a relatively straightforward calculation of mutual vulnerability and assured destruction. In a trilateral architecture, however, any qualitative or

quantitative adjustments made by one actor to stabilize its relationship with a second actor can inadvertently trigger severe insecurities in the third. For instance, Western investments in theater missile defenses and long-range precision conventional strike systems—designed primarily to deter regional coercion by China—are viewed by Moscow as direct threats to its own strategic retaliatory capability, prompting Russia to field highly asymmetric, non-strategic nuclear delivery vehicles that further destabilize the European security theater.⁶⁵

Conversely, China's rapid expansion of its silo-based intercontinental missile force, while intended to secure a credible second-strike capability against Western missile defense developments, forces Western planners to calculate a combined threat model where they must simultaneously deter two structurally aligned, nuclear-armed competitors.⁶⁶ This dynamic incentivizes arms expansion rather than stabilization, as no actor can afford to optimize its forces for one adversary without leaving itself dangerously exposed to the other. The resulting multi-layered arms competition is highly volatile because it lacks the institutionalized guardrails, shared definitions of strategic stability, and verified communication networks that took decades to negotiate during the Cold War. Consequently, a localized diplomatic breakdown or conventional clash between any two of these actors can generate cascading misperceptions that immediately destabilize the entire global nuclear architecture, making trilateral crisis management uniquely perilous.

Arms Control and Nonproliferation

China's selective participation in arms control and nonproliferation presents both challenges and opportunities for global nuclear governance. By avoiding binding constraints during a period of modernization, China preserves flexibility to shape its force structure according to national priorities. The problem is that limited engagement complicates efforts to develop comprehensive multilateral frameworks that include all major nuclear powers and address emerging technologies.⁶⁷

Future arms control initiatives may require innovative approaches that recognize asymmetries in arsenal size and doctrine while still promoting transparency and predictability. Confidence-building measures, transparency mechanisms, and risk reduction agreements could provide intermediate steps toward broader arrangements.⁶⁸ China's participation in such efforts will

⁵⁷ Kristensen et al., 67.

⁵⁸ Cunningham, 110.

⁵⁹ Leveringhaus.

⁶⁰ Burack.

⁶¹ Peach.

⁶² Leveringhaus.

⁶³ van der Horst and Niu, 78.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ David Santoro, *US-China Nuclear Relations – The Impact of Strategic Triangles* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2021).

⁶⁶ CGSR Report, *China's Emergence as a Second Nuclear Peer – Implications for US Nuclear Deterrence Strategy* (Livermore, CA: CGSR, 2023).

⁶⁷ van der Horst and Niu, 82.

⁶⁸ Peach.

likely depend on perceptions of fairness, reciprocity, and strategic benefit, as well as broader political relationships with other major powers.

Regional proliferation dynamics are closely connected to China's posture. The nuclear policies of neighboring states—including India, Pakistan, and North Korea—are influenced by perceptions of Chinese capabilities, conventional balances, and political relationships.⁶⁹ Economic partnerships and diplomatic engagement provide China with tools to influence nonproliferation outcomes beyond military measures alone, demonstrating the importance of integrating multiple instruments of national power.

Technological competition adds another layer of complexity. Advances in hypersonic delivery systems, artificial intelligence, and cyber capabilities blur traditional distinctions between nuclear and conventional domains, complicating verification and stability frameworks. Effective nonproliferation efforts may therefore require expanded conceptual approaches that address emerging technologies alongside traditional nuclear forces, as well as greater cooperation among major powers.⁷⁰

Conclusions

China's evolution as a strategic actor reflects the integration of nuclear modernization with conventional military development, economic expansion, technological innovation, and diplomatic engagement. The strength of China's multidimensional approach distinguishes it markedly from Russia, despite shared characteristics as major nuclear powers.⁷¹ Whereas Russia relies more heavily on military power and risk-tolerant signaling, China combines more cautious doctrine with broad national instruments that extend influence across multiple domains.⁷²

The comparison highlights both convergence and divergence in great-power behavior. Both states maintain nuclear deterrence as a central pillar of national security, yet their strategic cultures shape how those capabilities are developed and employed. China's emphasis on survivability, long-term planning, and integration with non-military tools produces a posture that is simultaneously cautious and assertive.⁷³ Russia's approach places greater emphasis on military leverage and escalation management, reflecting different historical experiences and structural conditions.⁷⁴

Implications for strategic nuclear issues are substantial. China's modernization strengthens deterrence credibility while introducing uncertainty into global stability

calculations.⁷⁵ Regional dynamics, technological change, and trilateral (China-Russia-US) interactions among major powers create a complex environment in which traditional deterrence concepts must adapt.⁷⁶ Arms control and nonproliferation efforts face new challenges as emerging capabilities blur established categories and participation remains uneven.

Understanding China's trajectory, therefore, requires a holistic perspective. Nuclear forces cannot be analyzed in isolation from economic power, technological development, and diplomatic strategy. The interplay among these elements shapes both China's behavior and the responses of other states, influencing the broader international system. As China continues to expand its capabilities and global reach, its role as a strategic actor will depend not only on the size of its arsenal, but also on how effectively it integrates multiple instruments of national power to achieve long-term objectives. In this context, comparison with Russia provides valuable insight into alternative pathways of great-power strategy and the evolving nature of strategic competition in the twenty-first century.

One final point: as China modernizes and scales its military forces—systematically building out precision long-range conventional assets while explicitly transitioning its nuclear architecture toward an operational launch-on-warning posture—its behavior on the world stage will highly likely become increasingly assertive, not less. Emboldened by a comprehensive arsenal that can hold adversary networks at risk, growing cooperation with Russia, and operating under the absolute, undisputed authority of the CCP, Beijing will likely show less willingness to accept status quo constraints.

The result is that the international security landscape is poised to become significantly more rocky, unpredictable, and competitive. The combination of highly automated, high-readiness nuclear command frameworks and assertive regional geopolitical ambitions ensures that the future will feature acute systemic frictions. Great-power crises will suffer from compressed verification timelines and an elevated risk of rapid, unintended escalation. Managing international stability will thus grow fundamentally more difficult, requiring unprecedented vigilance from global policymakers to prevent localized conventional skirmishes from rapidly escalating into strategic nuclear exchanges.

⁶⁹ Kristensen et al., 70.

⁷⁰ van der Horst and Niu, 84.

⁷¹ Cunningham.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Shin.

⁷⁴ Cunningham.

⁷⁵ Kristensen et al.

⁷⁶ van der Horst and Niu.

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