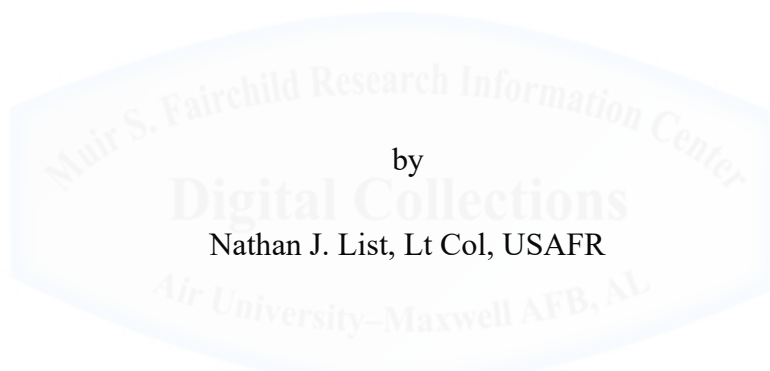


AIR WAR COLLEGE

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CONVENTIONAL NUCLEAR INTEGRATION:  
REINFORCING STRATEGIC STABILITY



by

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A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

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## **Biography**

Lieutenant Colonel Nathan J. List is a United States Air Force Reserve (USAFR) Security Forces officer assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell AFB, AL. He entered the USAF as an enlisted Security Policeman in 1995. In 2001 he graduated from McMurry University with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and in 2014 with a Master of Science in Joint Warfare Operations. He received his commissioning from the Academy of Military Science at McGhee Tyson ANGB, TN in 2003. He has served as a Squadron Commander, Operations Officer, and on a MAJCOM Staff. He has multiple deployments in support of Operations SOUTHERN WATCH, ENDURING FREEDOM and NEW DAWN.



## **Abstract**

With Great Power Competition returning to the globe, the United States Military will have to re-examine its defense posture to ensure it can meet emerging threats that have either a direct or indirect impact on the U.S. or its allies. Russia has been showing concerning behavior as of late as witnessed in Crimea. The United States will need to engage its military in order to overmatch its adversaries to keep the peace in this complex and complicated global environment. Establishing a strong and resilient military response will help to achieve strategic stability to deter further future aggression.

This paper will evaluate the current military posture to make an analysis of how conventional nuclear integration will impact strategic stability during a time of competition between the United States and Russia. This perspective will allow the paper to focus on the problem using qualitative data in order to gain a better understanding of this issue. The goal of this paper is to highlight the impact this action will have and to recommend ways in which to inform the process currently in progress by the Department of Defense. The target audiences that will best benefit from this research are military and civilian leadership.

## Introduction

*“As regional military balances have deteriorated, America’s advantage across a range of operational challenges has diminished. Because of our recent focus on counter-terrorism and counterinsurgency, and because our enemies have developed new ways of defeating U.S. forces, America is losing its advantage in key warfighting areas such as power projection, air and missile defense, cyber and space operations, anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare, long-range ground-based fires, and electronic warfare. Many of the skills necessary to plan for and conduct military operations against capable adversaries—especially China and Russia—have atrophied.”<sup>1</sup>*

Following the end of World War II marked the beginning of the Cold War. Tensions and animosity between Moscow and Washington D.C. deepened and simmered. At times the climate was close to boiling over, but tenuous stability was always restored, and the two superpowers remained ideologically and politically locked into an extended stalemate. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. and NATO have not integrated the use of nuclear weapons into their conventional forces. At that time, the use of nuclear weapons served a strategic and extended deterrence purpose only. Over the last thirty years, established treaties have removed intermediate nuclear weaponry from the battlefield. Nuclear weapons in the form of intermediate-range ground-launched have since been removed from the field in response to the Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) treaty. Submarine-launched intermediate-range nukes were later decreased from the battlespace by the U.S. The pendulum has swung back again. With the world once again returning to the age of Great Power competition, the U.S. military, along with its NATO allies, will have to integrate nuclear weapons into their operational plans and be prepared to fight in, around, and through a nuclear attack in Europe to defeat the enemy.

This research focused on Conventional Nuclear Integration (CNI) and its effects on the strategic stability of the region. The data and sources that went into this research is limited to the unclassified level and gives an overview of the impacts of integration to military forces today

and beyond. There exists today an increased potential for the use of nuclear weapons on the battlefield in conventional warfare between U.S./NATO and Russian forces in Eastern Europe. Russian doctrine and strategy incorporate the use of nuclear weapons into their full spectrum of conflict.<sup>2</sup> “Russia’s leadership has set out an approach to strategic deterrence that relies upon interconnected political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic, informational and other means directed at prevention of the use of military force against Russia.”<sup>3</sup> U.S. forces must adopt a policy that integrates nuclear weapons into their full spectrum warfighting capability to be able to match and ultimately overmatch the enemy’s tactics to deter or, ultimately, de-escalate the conflict and restore strategic stability.

The U.S. should expect a conventional military force to have the capability to face a scenario in competition with Russia that includes nuclear weapons. “DOD and the Congressional committees that oversee national security must focus current and future investments on operational challenges such as...detering, and if necessary, defeating, the use of nuclear or other strategic weapons in ways that fall short of justifying a large-scale nuclear response.”<sup>4</sup> Forces must be equipped and trained to employ credible combat power across the full spectrum of conflict, regardless of the adversities they face. The U.S. ground forces must prepare to fight in, around, and through a nuclear detonation on the battlefield in order to sustain deterrence against its adversaries.

## **Background**

Conventional nuclear integration is not a new concept for the United States Military. However, it is new for the times we are in with the military force we have today. In framing the context at which to describe this, one must understand that the U.S. military fighting force has been fighting limited, prolonged wars against terrorism for the past nineteen years. Moreover,

the U.S. Military has not perceived great power conflict since the fall of the former Soviet Union in 1989. Specific skills have atrophied, and limited thought and funds had gone into this challenge in over thirty years.

Essentially, conventional nuclear integration is the integrating of nuclear weapons into operational plans to use in conjunction with a conventional battle. Herman Kahn's theories will be discussed in this paper, using his work, "thinking about the unthinkable" and "On Escalation." The use of nuclear weapons in a conventional battle would be an effort to confront the adversary's capabilities and retain the strategic credibility of the nuclear triad. This paper will discuss the Russian Military Strategy in the analysis section of this paper and will show how this is a credible course of action that they will prepare to carry out. The use of tactical or limited use nuclear weapons has not genuinely been at the forefront of possibilities since the 1980's when the conflict with Soviet forces had planned to include nuclear weapons as a means to defeat enemy forces if U.S. forces faced overwhelming odds or the possibility of being defeated on the battlefield. The script has now flipped, and the Russians are now prepared for nuclear weapons to escalate to terminate. The context in which conventional nuclear integration will be discussed in this paper is framed around armed conflict, specifically a ground battle between Russian military forces and U.S. military forces in Europe.

What this paper will also address in its analysis is how conventional nuclear integration will impact the strategic stability of the nuclear force in the context of strategic deterrence and extended deterrence. If a conflict breaks out between U.S. and Russian militaries, it would be the first conventional war between two nuclear powers in the history of mankind. There is no precedence to show how each state will behave, only theory. It is vitally important to understand how this strategy will impact the U.S. in terms of the bigger picture and take them down a path

that would remarkably resemble the age of the Cold War in which fears of nuclear Armageddon permeated throughout society.

## **Theory**

Credibility is at the heart of the discussion regarding conventional nuclear integration. During the Cold War, the U.S. maintained its credibility and therefore sustained its strategic stability. This is achieved through mutual vulnerability, that is saying that both sides feared their devastation by retaliation from the other side.<sup>5</sup> Thomas Schelling said that “the willingness to hurt, the credibility of a threat and the ability to exploit the power to hurt will indeed depend on how much the adversary can hurt in return; but there is little or nothing about an adversary’s pain or grief that directly reduces one’s own.”<sup>6</sup> The Soviet Union believed that the U.S. had the will to deliver a nuclear strike and they were aware of U.S. nuclear capability. Stability is the complex future environment where the American way of life is being threatened by the ever-increasing polarity towards adversaries such as China and Russia are dependent on the U.S. evolving its nuclear strategies. Schelling states that “It is a paradox of deterrence that in the threatening to hurt somebody if he misbehaves, it need not make a critical difference how much it would hurt you to-if you can make him believe the threat.”<sup>7</sup> CNI not only to ensures the safety of the homeland but also to ensures allied countries are afforded the security provided from extended deterrence.

In a discussion on conventional nuclear integration, it is important to emphasize that this concept implies the limited use of nuclear weapons to achieve a strategic objective. Both the U.S. and Russia do not currently have a “no first use” policy regarding nuclear weapons, Russia eliminated that policy from their strategy post-Cold War, as will be noted in their current posture



and alignment in the analysis section. The reaction to this action could either lead to a disastrous path or restore balance. To truly explore this option, one must look to the works of Herman Kahn. Kahn was one of the few theorists that advocated for the limited use of nuclear weapons in a conventional war and broke down the potential for escalation into a ladder that theorized a more controlled escalation than that of others that believed any use of nuclear weapons would automatically lead to uncontrolled escalation into total annihilation. He uses the ladder as a metaphor which is intended to provoke discussion about the use of nuclear weapons.<sup>8</sup> In the fourth section of the ladder he categorizes as “Bizarre Crisis”, the first use of nuclear weapons is discussed.<sup>9</sup> This begins with rung 21 which states that it is a “declaration of limited nuclear war.”<sup>10</sup> “Almost every analyst agrees that, with the possible exception of Rung 19-type tactics, the first use of nuclear weapons—even against military targets—is likely to be less for the purpose of destroying the other side’s military forces or handicapping its operations than for redressive, warning, bargaining, punitive, fining, or deterrence purposes.”<sup>11</sup> This is the rung in which limited nuclear weapons are used and will drive the adversary to determine a response. Rung 22 is the declaration of limited nuclear war.<sup>12</sup> “At this point, it might be judged desirable to make a formal declaration of limited nuclear war—perhaps in hope of setting out relatively exact limits and establishing expectations about the types of nuclear action that the declarer intends to initiate and that he is prepared to countenance from the enemy without escalating further himself.”<sup>13</sup> The next step in the ladder describes local nuclear war in rung 23. He states that “it is also possible that nuclear weapons could be used in a local situation for traditional military purposes such as defense, denial, destruction, or degradation of the opponent’s capability, and so on, and that, within the established limits, the scale and targeting would be, and would be acknowledged to be, dictated by wholly military and “tactical” considerations.”<sup>14</sup> Although these rungs were

envisioned to articulate the Cold War, they can be applied to today's age of great power's competition. The adversaries are the same, they both have overwhelming nuclear capability and yet they engage in a limited nuclear conflict. This is what Kahn has to say about nuclear war in his book, "Thinking About the Unthinkable": "Like past wars, nuclear wars could come in different "shapes" and sized, and would require different resources and defenses—and have quite different outcomes."<sup>15</sup> He introduces the concept of mobilization as "the gearing up a nation's economy and society to protect and defend its people—is another notion that precedes, and yet has applications in, the nuclear era."<sup>16</sup> "The critical element in a decision by either side to initiate nuclear war would be the judgment that attacking was less dangerous than not attacking."<sup>17</sup> This would aptly describe the current return to great power competition that the U.S. has entered. In discussing deterrence in two parts, the objective part as described in the concept of mobilization and a subjective part, which is how the adversary views the capability of the opponent.<sup>18</sup> These elements illustrate the credibility of a state as in the equation, will + capability = credibility. These concepts are important in this discussion and will inform the findings and analysis of this paper and test the hypothesis.

The credibility of the U.S. remains intact. The nuclear triad has continued to provide the nation with its nuclear might. U.S. leaders are aware of threats and appear to have the will of the people to act in order to defend the homeland. The dilemma then arises when faced in a conflict with a nuclear state in this age of competition. The U.S. will face a moral challenge if environmental and political conditions remain on the current trajectory, whether to use nuclear weapons or not in a peer conflict. If they do not decisively act, in-kind, it could have an impact on the credibility established and threaten the security of European alliances as well as affect strategic stability.

## **United States Posture**

Considering Russia's posture, what does it mean for the United States posture and its credibility? The U.S. has emerged from its period of prolonged warfare against violent extremist organizations only to realize the global environment has shifted and become a challenging and complex environment. Considering this reality, strategies have been developed and are being developed that would give the U.S. an advantage in this environment. Many of the Cold War adapted skillsets within the military have atrophied over time as the focus has been on gaining the skills needed to fight a counter-insurgency war. Their adversaries have been watching and adapting their skills based on the situations witnessed during this conflict.

The U.S. Military is now preparing to be able to operate within the future complex environment in a multidomain approach. Each branch of the military has examined their current capabilities and has developed notional projections of gains and off-sets to create overmatch capacity to thwart adversarial advantages. The character of war is changing along with the advances in technology and greater dependence on cyber and space assets. Speed, agility, global integration, and multi-domain focused response is at the forefront of concepts designed to penetrate the anti-access/area denial (A2AD) capabilities possessed by adversaries. One of the challenges the U.S. military will face in its modernization efforts is to fund and invest in the right priority areas that will provide them with an advantage on the battlefield. This paper will do an in-depth examination of the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the Nuclear Posture Review to demonstrate how US policy and guidance is being implemented.

## **National Security Strategy (NSS)**

The National Security Strategy comes from the office of the President of the United States. Published in 2017, it set the stage for the Trump administration's "America First" policy.

“We will defend our country, protect our communities, and put the safety of the American people first.”<sup>19</sup> This document is the source for all other strategy documents by outlining the president’s policies and priorities at home and around the world in an age of competition. The NSS stands on four pillars, protect the homeland, promote American prosperity, preserve peace through strength, and advance American influence.<sup>20</sup> In the third pillar, preserve peace through strength, President Trump states “as long as I am President, the servicemen, and women who defend our Nation will have the equipment, the resources, and the funding they need to secure our homeland, to respond to our enemies quickly and decisively, and, when necessary, to fight, to overpower, and to always, always, always win.”<sup>21</sup> It designates countries like China and Russia as well as rogue states such as Iran and North Korea and Jihadist Terrorist groups as rivals to the United States and their allies.<sup>22</sup> It goes on to state that “Russia is investing in new military capabilities, including nuclear systems that remain the most significant existential threat to the United States.”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, in discussing the military, “must retrain overmatch-the combination of capabilities in sufficient scale to prevent enemy success and to ensure that America’s sons and daughters will never be in a fair fight.”<sup>24</sup> The NSS is the impetus for the National Defense Strategy to give the Department of Defense the ability to adjust their budget to provide for the priorities of the President of the United States.

### **National Defense Strategy (NDS)**

The National Defense Strategy is produced by the Department of Defense and derived from the NSS. It begins by describing the military’s mission “to provide combat-credible military needed to deter war and protect the security of our nation.”<sup>25</sup> It goes on to explain the complex global security environment. “Russia has violated the borders of nearby nations and pursues veto power over the economic, diplomatic, and security decisions of its neighbors.”<sup>26</sup> It

stresses the importance of allies and partners working together to restore balance and describes what will happen if not implemented.<sup>27</sup> “Failure to meet our defense objectives will result in decreasing U.S. global influence, eroding cohesion among allies and partners, and reduced access to markets that will contribute to a decline in our prosperity and standard of living.”<sup>28</sup> It further goes on to describe Russia’s “use of emerging technologies to discredit and subvert democratic processes in Georgia, Crimea, and eastern Ukraine is concern enough, but when coupled with its expanding and modernizing the nuclear arsenal, the challenge is clear.”<sup>29</sup> The NSS outlines a series of eleven objectives that cover everything from the defense of the U.S. to the establishment of a modern innovation base on which to sustain operations for the future.<sup>30</sup> It directs the nuclear triad to modernize and develop a flexible option to counter the compellence of adversaries that may use the threat of nuclear weapons.<sup>31</sup> Overall, the document captures the essence of the NSS and sets a vision as well as goes for the military to achieve clearly and concisely.

### **Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)**

The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review was also produced by the Secretary of Defense, at the time it was written, Secretary James Mattis. It is divided into ten sections, and as with the NSS and NDS, it begins by describing the complex global security environment enveloped in uncertainty. Regarding Russia, it states, “Even more troubling has been Russia’s adoption of military strategies and capabilities that rely on nuclear escalation for their success.”<sup>32</sup> It goes on to extend the use of nuclear weapons to protect the national interest and the interests of allies.<sup>33</sup> Further, it clearly describes the nuclear threshold. “In no way does this approach lower the nuclear threshold. Rather, by convincing adversaries that even limited use of nuclear weapons will be more costly than they can tolerate, it in fact raises that threshold.”<sup>34</sup> This line in the NPR is

explicitly addressing the need for conventional nuclear integration in the force. It sets the stage for deterrence in the modern age by illustrating that the aggressor will be held accountable for their actions and that “any nuclear escalation will fail to achieve their objectives, and will instead result in unacceptable consequences for them.”<sup>35</sup> It also assesses the cost to be approximately 6.4 percent of the Department of Defense budget to modernize and sustain the nuclear force.”<sup>36</sup> In the “enhancing deterrence with non-strategic nuclear capabilities,” it states that “the United States will now pursue select supplements to the replacement program to enhance the flexibility and responsiveness of U.S. nuclear forces.”<sup>37</sup> “Russia’s belief that limited nuclear first use, potentially including low-yield weapons, can provide such an advantage is based, in part, on Moscow’s perception that its greater number and variety of non-strategic nuclear systems provide a coercive advantage in crises and at lower levels of conflict.”<sup>38</sup> The Secretary goes on to state regarding flexible deterrence options that “this is not intended to, nor does it enable, nuclear war-fighting.”<sup>39</sup> This is setting the stage for deterrence in the future environment.

After analyzing current U.S. policy guidance, this paper will transition into further discussion about the theory that informed the research. The hypothesis for this research paper derives around the question of the extent to which conventional nuclear integration and the use of nuclear weapons in a conflict with Russia, will impact strategic stability with Russia. This section of the research paper will unpack the research questions that were generated as a result of my research into this topic and discuss the logic behind them and ultimately showing how my hypothesis was derived. The questions addressed in this paper are as follows:

- 1. Will integrating nuclear weapons into the full spectrum of conflict deter Russian aggression?*
- 2. Will the use of tactical nuclear weapons result in the de-escalation of conflict?*
- 3. What implications does this policy have on our NATO allies?*

4. *Will this policy bolster Extended Deterrence in Europe?*
5. *Will this measure counter Russian Hybrid Warfare tactics?*
6. *What is the Russian military policy/strategy on the use of nuclear weapons in conflict?*

Ultimately, what impact of conventional nuclear integration have on strategic stability with Russia? The questions above feed into the research question as the paper goes on, further describing and analyzing the current strategic environment in this recent shift back to great powers competition in a multipolar world. The U.S. will have to face Russian aggression if it continues in order to maintain and strengthen its alliance within NATO. Strategic Stability is another aspect to understand fully in the context of this paper. Strategic Stability can be defined as “the absence of incentives for either side to launch a first nuclear strike.”<sup>40</sup> The conditions in which this definition was framed during the Cold War has changed over the years, however, until new criteria are accepted, it is the definition that was used for the purpose of this paper. The research question will allow for the exploration of the balance of strategic stability in the context of a conventional conflict between two nuclear states in which the stakes are high. It will also analyze the changing character of war during competition and show how Russian hybrid warfare and current nuclear posture creates fog and friction on the battlefield.

The hypothesis reached in this research paper is that conventional nuclear integration will bolster strategic stability. This action, in theory, would allow for a de-escalation of conflict to restore strategic deterrence. The next section describes the methodology to test this hypothesis.

## **Methodology**

This section of the research paper will describe how the hypothesis will be tested to show that the conclusions are valid. Since deterrence happens in the mind of the adversary, one must understand their current tactics. Understanding Russia's Hybrid Warfare tactics as well as their current posture will inform this research paper on how to test the hypothesis in the analysis section.

### **Russian Hybrid Warfare and Current Posture**

As discussed, the United States has officially returned to a period confronted with competition from peer competitors. Russia has taken advantage of the United States while its military was engaged in Conflict and Counter-Terrorism operations in the middle east by developing capability and tactics to counter U.S. military capabilities. It is important to note that in this age of competition, the U.S. has labeled Russia as a pacing threat. Identifying them as pacing threat means, consistent with the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy, that the military is developing capabilities to overmatch the potential threat posed by the adversary. "Russian warfare in the 21st century has ushered in a new paradigm—one in which states are in perpetual conflict with one another in a manner that best operates in the shadows."<sup>41</sup> The description above is what has been called hybrid warfare. "Hybrid warfare, much like any nation's or polity's way of warfare, is explicitly linked to the country from which it derives its power."<sup>42</sup> This tactic is directly linked to Russian military strategy and incorporates all its instruments of power. It's crucial the understand that "hybrid operations are characterized by undeclared action that combines conventional and unconventional military operations while coupling military and nonmilitary actions in an environment in which the distance between strategy and tactics has been significantly reduced and where information is critically

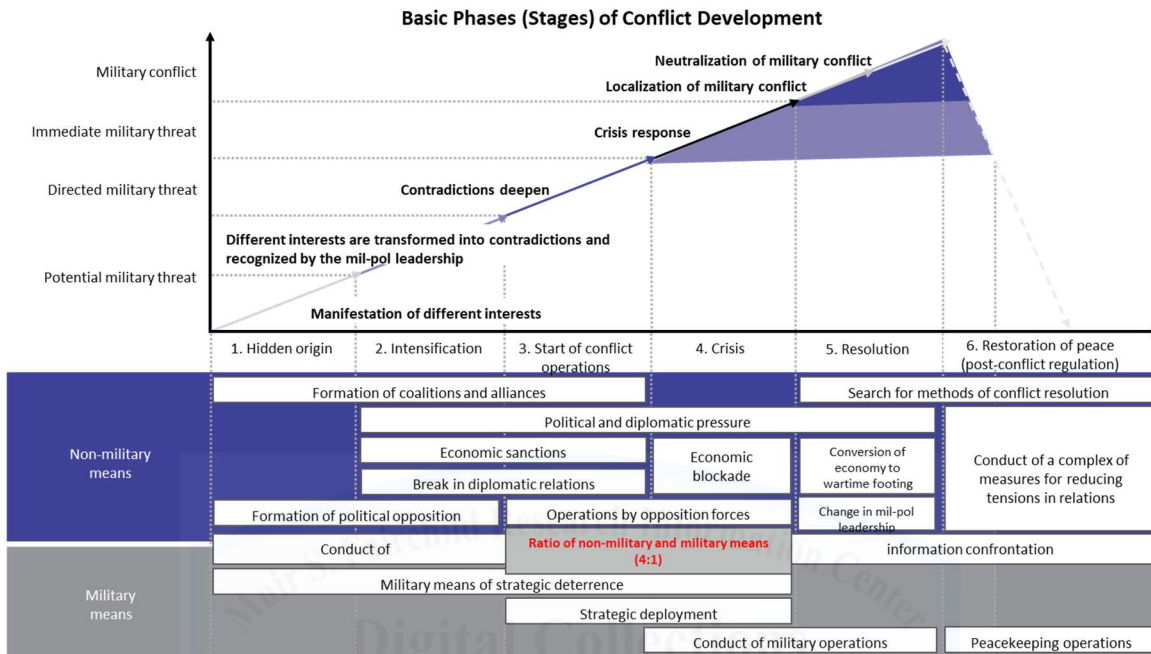


important.”<sup>43</sup> Essentially, this is a gray zone conflict that falls into “the lower end of the conflict spectrum.”<sup>44</sup> Gray zone conflict, as witnessed in Crimea in 2014, increases the potential to lead to conflict between competition states given the right circumstances.

Seven principles characterize Russia’s strategic approach to hybrid warfare.<sup>45</sup> The first is “emphasizing the enemy,” they will analyze their enemy using scientific methods.<sup>46</sup> Second, they develop “coherent strategies” by connecting all military power, integrating nuclear into conventional and irregular warfare, along with their statecraft under a unified command structure that is aligned to their grand strategy.<sup>47</sup> Third, they “execute strategies ambiguously” using a flexible approach that is unpredictable and takes advantage of available opportunities.<sup>48</sup> Fourth, they “challenge the war paradigm of the West” by not officially declaring war and making conflict as short as possible.<sup>49</sup> Fifth, they “adhere to the new paradigm of war amongst the people” through the use of people that directly support political needs by performing information operations, which allows for controlling the narrative.<sup>50</sup> Sixth, they “use time as a strategic advantage” by preparing the battlespace in advance, thereby making it difficult for western states to predict the action and preventing them from taking any steps to stop the action before it takes place. Finally, they “use the military without risking strategic defeat” by integrating their military ways and means in a manner that serves the countries needs through threats and support of civilian groups.<sup>51</sup> They also employ A2AD weapons to thwart retaliation from NATO.<sup>52</sup>

Russia’s recent aggressive behavior leads to further investigation into why they are acting this way. “Russia’s chief aims are to rebuild a security perimeter against perceived external threats (primarily the United States and its NATO allies), to reassert a leading role for itself on the world scene, and to disrupt the current global security architecture to force negotiation of a

new settlement.”<sup>53</sup> After discussing Russia’s successfully refined and executed tactic of hybrid warfare, operating in the gray zone, it’s important to understand their military’s current posture.



Dave Johnson, Russia’s Conventional Precision Strike Capabilities, Regional Crises, and Nuclear Thresholds (2018)<sup>54</sup>

Russia is attempting to change the global order that was created in the post-Cold War.<sup>55</sup> Their overall imperative is “to pre-empt the enemy in actions, as quickly as possible to deploy the Armed Forces, to inflict fire strikes as early as possible, to prepare operations quickly, and to conduct them at a higher tempo than is achievable by the enemy. As in the past, this comprises the main and determining factors to seize and retain in our hands the strategic initiative.”<sup>56</sup> As in the saying, see first-understand first-react first, it is vital that the United States sees through the veil of passive-aggressive behavior shown by the Russian military over the past twenty years and counter their actions with equal or greater force in order to deter such actions in the future.

## Findings/Conclusion

Variable	Strategic Stability
Conventional Nuclear Integration	↑
Adversaries use of Low-Yield Nuclears: with a nuclear response from the U.S.	↑
Adversaries use of Low-Yield Nuclears: with a conventional response from the U.S.	↓

Russia’s hybrid warfare design is a direct threat to strategic stability in Europe. This complex, multi-polar, global environment calls for innovation and preparedness. Flexible options are needed to restore balance and strengthen alliances. Time is an important factor as the Russian strategy included prepping the battlespace and controlling the narrative, all while applying the whole of its instruments of power to achieve their strategic objectives. The diagram above illustrates certain variables presented in this paper that affect strategic stability. The implementation of conventional nuclear integration has a positive effect on strategic stability by keeping the U.S. deterrence intact. It’s a twenty-first-century response to threats presented today and in the future by increasing the lethality of the force. The second line illustrates how a nuclear response from U.S. forces in response to nuclear use by the adversary would favorably support strategic stability. The third line depicts a negative impact on strategic stability if low-yield nuclear weapons were used on U.S. forces by Russian forces, in line with their grand strategy, and the response was conventional—not nuclear. The conclusion reached during the

research is that conventional nuclear integration will bolster U.S. strategic stability through deterrence. It will also positively impact the relationship with allies and partners in Europe by providing them with a flexible, rapid response.

The United States has approached the end of unipolar status. It is now entering a period of competition that will bring new challenges. The national strategy has responded to one of the significant challenges that will face the U.S. and their allies, that posed by Russian aggression. Russia displayed its new tactic in 2014 when it crossed a sovereign border and annexed Crimea.

This research paper defined conventional nuclear integration and conveyed the importance of this policy to defeat Russian strategy and tactics. It presented the research questions that were used to inform this paper and shape the hypothesis. It described, in-depth, the hybrid warfare tactics designed and implemented by Russia as well as its current military posture. Current U.S. posture was also presented to show how the change in policy would allow for the military to better shape the outcomes of a conflict with Russia and how the credibility of its deterrent is at stake. Further, the paper analyzed the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and the Nuclear Posture Review. Finally, an analysis was performed to examine how conventional nuclear integration would impact strategic stability. Therefore, the hypothesis of this paper is valid, research has shown that conventional nuclear integration will bolster strategic deterrence in this modern age of great powers competition.

### **Policy Implications/Recommendations**

The 2018 National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and Nuclear Posture Review implement a change to U.S. security posture. This action implies that there is a credible threat to the United States, its allies, and its partners. This threat, posed by Russian strategy and

refined hybrid warfare tactics, will require the full spectrum of military power to defeat. If faced with this challenge, the U.S. will be faced with a decision of great magnitude that would be to react with equal or greater force or to respond in a different manner. Current U.S. military organizational structure can support implementing conventional nuclear integration into its policies and operational plans. This policy will need to be attached to U.S. strategic deterrence. Exercises that involve NATO forces would need to be conducted in order to display resolve. This policy has the potential to initiate an arms race between the two superpowers in an attempt by both sides to create overmatch capabilities against their opponents. This remains increasing possible with the withdrawal of nuclear treaties such as INF, and Clear Skies.

This policy also has implications on society at large. During the Cold War, general society was aware of the existential threat. The fear of nuclear war permeated popular culture for almost forty years. Civil emergency structures prepared to support the population with fallout shelters and emergency response actions. This may require additional funding or education in order to prepare the populations for a response if deterrence fails.

Strategic messaging toward U.S. adversaries should be developed to include this new posture. The action would not have the same effect on stability if not communicated effectively. Messaging would need to reinforce this twenty-first-century nuclear deterrent posture and in-turn present adversaries with a credible dilemma. Future research on this topic should be focused on the sustainment, posturing, and implementation of this policy. Research on the sustainment of the nuclear enterprise should focus on the ability to develop the capability required by the Global Integrator and Combatant Commander to provide them with proper effects needed on the battlefield. Posturing research should focus on the ways and means to determine how to integrate this capability into the A2AD environment to be able to deliver effects at the right time

and place to meet strategic objectives. Implementation research should focus on organizational structures that minimize the time constraint of delivering nuclear weapons into an active military campaign.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Eric Edelman and Gary Roughead, “Providing for the Common Defense: The Assessment and Recommendations of the National Defense Strategy Commission” (United States Institute of Peace, n.d.), sec. vii, accessed September 6, 2019.
- <sup>2</sup> Dave Johnson, “Russia’s Conventional Precision Strike Capabilities, Regional Crisis, and Nuclear Thresholds” (Livermore Papers on Global Security No. 3, February 2018), 4, <https://cgsr.llnl.gov/content/assets/docs/Precision-Strike-Capabilities-report-v3-7.pdf>.
- <sup>3</sup> Johnson, 23.
- <sup>4</sup> Edelman and Roughead, sec. viii.
- <sup>5</sup> James E. Platte, “China’s Nuclear Weapons: Beyond Minimum Deterrence?” (PowerPoint with Audio File, AY20 TSC IP 6502-15, Online, March 26, 2020), sec. 09:14.
- <sup>6</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, New ed., The Henry L. Stimson Lectures Series (New Haven, Conn. London: Yale University Press, 2008), 3.
- <sup>7</sup> Schelling, 36.
- <sup>8</sup> Herman Kahn, *On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios* (New Brunswick, N. J: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 37.
- <sup>9</sup> Kahn, 45.
- <sup>10</sup> Kahn, 45.
- <sup>11</sup> Kahn, 45.
- <sup>12</sup> Kahn, 45.
- <sup>13</sup> Kahn, 45.
- <sup>14</sup> Kahn, 45.
- <sup>15</sup> Herman Kahn, *Thinking about the Unthinkable in the 1980s* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 39.
- <sup>16</sup> Kahn, 39.
- <sup>17</sup> Kahn, 136.
- <sup>18</sup> Kahn, 37.
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