

Is China Seeking Nuclear Superiority? Unpacking 2025 Developments with Rick Fisher

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Abstract:

This seminar, hosted by the National Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS) and moderated by **Peter Huessy**, features **Rick Fisher** (International Assessment and Strategy Center) assessing whether China is pursuing **nuclear superiority** and the strategic implications for the United States and its allies. Fisher synthesizes new open-source insights, including a rare **DIA 2035 projection** and recently surfaced research on Chinese **small-yield, lightweight warheads** (e.g., “535” and “5×5”), to estimate potential warhead totals if paired with China’s expanding **ICBM** force and **JL-3–armed SSBN** fleet. He examines the rapid modernization across all three legs of China’s triad—land (silo fields, mobile ICBMs, hypersonic and FOBS concepts), sea (Type 094/096 SSBNs), and air (a projected stealth bomber family, including an unmanned variant)—as well as the buildup of **boost-glide** and **reusable space-launch-enabled global strike** capabilities.

Beyond force structure, Fisher explores China’s evolving **deterrence concept**, arguing it emphasizes **compellence**—the ability to coerce adversary decision-making—while simultaneously supporting domestic regime control and great-power ambitions. He also highlights China’s activation of **nuclear-armed proxies** (notably **North Korea** and **Pakistan**) and the emergence of a potential “**Islamic NATO**” framework, alongside early indicators of a **national missile defense** architecture (e.g., HQ-29–class interceptors, early warning). The Q&A addresses China’s declared **no-first-use** posture, Russia–China dynamics, demographic/economic constraints, drone warfare’s interaction with nuclear deterrence,

and NATO-related ripple effects—framing how Beijing’s trajectory could reshape **global deterrence stability** in the 2025–2035 window.

Executive Summary

This National Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS) seminar examines whether the People’s Republic of China is pursuing **nuclear superiority**, rather than a traditional posture of minimum deterrence. Presented by **Rick Fisher**, Senior Fellow at the International Assessment and Strategy Center, the discussion draws on newly released U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency projections, rare academic research with privileged access to Chinese nuclear data, and observable force modernization trends across China’s strategic arsenal.

The seminar finds that China’s nuclear buildup is **broad, rapid, and multidimensional**, spanning land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), air-delivered systems, hypersonic weapons, fractional orbital bombardment concepts, and emerging national missile defense capabilities. Recent assessments suggest China may be able to field **thousands of nuclear warheads** by the 2030s, enabled in part by the development of smaller, lighter warheads compatible with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs).

Fisher argues that these developments point toward a strategy centered on **compellence** — the ability to coerce adversary decision-making—rather than mere retaliation. Nuclear superiority, in this framing, would allow China to deter U.S. intervention in regional conflicts (notably Taiwan), reinforce internal regime legitimacy, and assert leadership over aligned or dependent states. The seminar highlights particular concern over China’s growing coordination with **nuclear-armed proxies and partners**, including North Korea and Pakistan, and the potential emergence of a broader coalition that could challenge U.S. and allied interests across multiple theaters.

The presentation also underscores the strategic significance of China’s investments in **reusable space launch vehicles**, hypersonic glide systems, and long-range non-nuclear strike capabilities, which may blur the line between nuclear and conventional deterrence while complicating warning and defense. In parallel, China’s public confirmation of advanced interceptor systems and early-warning infrastructure suggests the early stages of a **national missile defense**, potentially enabling more risk-tolerant behavior in future crises.

During the question-and-answer session, Fisher addresses China’s declared **no-first-use** policy, demographic and economic constraints, relations with Russia, and claims that emerging technologies such as drones diminish the relevance of nuclear weapons. He concludes that nuclear deterrence remains central to great-power competition and that China’s current trajectory poses **serious and growing challenges** to U.S. and allied security.

Overall, the seminar concludes that China's nuclear modernization is not incremental or defensive in nature, but part of a deliberate effort to reshape the global strategic balance—demanding sustained attention, clearer deterrence strategies, and renewed investment in U.S. and allied capabilities.

Unabridged Transcript

(Note: A.I. created, there will invariably be some word errors in the following transcript.)

00:00:23:14 - 00:01:00:14

Kimberly Cherington

Welcome, everyone. Good morning. I'm Kimberly Cherington, and on behalf of the National Institute for Deterrence Studies, or NIDS, it's my pleasure to welcome you to today's Huessy seminar; *Is China Seeking Nuclear Superiority? Unpacking 2025 developments with Rick Fisher*, author and senior fellow at International Assessment and Strategy Center. If you'd like to explore more of our work, including upcoming events, publications in *Global Security Review*, research reports and podcast, please visit us at Thinkdeterrence.com.

00:01:01:01 - 00:01:32:02

Kimberly Cherington

We're adding new speakers and content weekly, so be sure to check back often and follow us on social media to stay informed. If you and your colleagues would like to receive future invitations right to your inbox, just email us at NIDS at ThinkDeterrence.com and we will get you on our invite list. Throughout today's presentation, we encourage you to submit your questions using the chat or the Q&A button at the top of your screen will address them during the Q&A portion of the seminar.

00:01:32:03 - 00:01:47:03

Kimberly Cherington

Now, I'm delighted to introduce our host for today's discussion, Mr. Peter Huessy, President and Senior Director of Strategic Deterrence Studies at Geo Strategic Analysis and a senior fellow here at NIDS. Peter, over to you.

00:01:47:05 - 00:02:13:07

Peter Huessy

Oh, thank you very much, Kimberly, I appreciate it. I want to welcome our guests today, in particular, our speaker, Rick Fisher. Asked Rick to discuss five things. One is, what are the numbers? What China is doing in terms of its strategic nuclear forces, and then what are their objectives or ambitions that flow from that? What are they going to do with this stuff?

00:02:13:08 - 00:02:47:11

Peter Huessy

And therefore, what's the purpose of their buildup? Is it simply what many people think? They're just deterring their adversaries, whomever they may be? And then the fourth point is impact on their security and our security, which is why we should be concerned. And the final point is, which I hope Rick addresses to some degree, is China going to ally with other adversaries in terms of taking on the United States, whether that is North Korea or whether it's Russia or, God forbid, a nuclear armed Iran.

00:02:47:11 - 00:03:08:05

Peter Huessy

So, Dr. Fisher, I want to thank you for joining us today. This is a regular occurrence. Every year we do a threat briefing from you, and next week we'll hear from our friends, Mark Schneider and Steve Blank about what the Russians are up to in terms of numbers and their forces, as well as what's the purpose, which is which.

00:03:08:05 - 00:03:26:10

Peter Huessy

Steve will go in some detail about what threats they're seeing. So, Rick, on behalf of, Jim Petrosky, who's our president and our staff here at, NIDS and myself, I want to thank you for taking the time and coming to talk to us today. Over to you, sir.

00:03:26:12 - 00:03:44:03

Rick Fisher

Peter, as well as, Kimberly and Jim, thanks once again for, this invitation to review Chinese. Strategic nuclear developments. Kimberly, first slide, please.

00:03:44:04 - 00:04:51:13

Rick Fisher

Yeah. I'm going to try to push through about 11 slides today. And. The summary is, is simply that I'll be looking at why China seeks nuclear supremacy. I'll then I'll be reviewing, the defense intelligence agencies. Rare but very interesting revelation from, May of 20, 25. A threat projection, a rare future threat projection, that, gave us specific Chinese numbers, and, then I, attempt to combine, a a projection based on the DEA numbers with the, very, interesting and unprecedented, information provided by, Doctor Wee Zhang, PhD, University of Beijing.

00:04:51:14 - 00:05:19:06

Rick Fisher

Now, an expert at the Harvard Belfer Center who was given privileged au unique at a minimum, access to Chinese information on nuclear warhead development, and provides details that have not yet been, covered in any American, especially U.S government, open source, sources.

00:05:19:07 - 00:05:54:11

Rick Fisher

I'll then, be looking at nuclear, naval nuclear er developments, and this year looking at, potential FOBs capabilities, FOBs not just, the, single use, DFC or, or other missiles that, that we can see today. But also, how FOBs is being expanded, potentially across a much larger fleet of reusable space launch vehicles.

00:05:54:12 - 00:06:20:02

Rick Fisher

And then, I'll be I'll be looking at how China is energizing its proxies. First, North Korea and the last year, very interestingly, how it has been energizing and projecting, its nuclear proxy, Pakistan. And then finally some comments on PLA efforts to build, a national missile defense or, or a red dome, if you will.

00:06:20:04 - 00:06:21:15

Rick Fisher

Next slide, please.

00:06:22:00 - 00:07:13:07

Rick Fisher

Okay. Why does the Chinese Communist Party and its People's Liberation Army seek nuclear superiority? And what is... what is that? In our pre-event discussions, Peter Hussey very correctly pointed me to that question what would be nuclear superiority? And, and quite simply, it would be enough nuclear weapons, either on its own or in combination, especially with Russia, North Korea, Pakistan, enough nuclear weapons to, call up, the American leadership and compel them to act as the party, dictates.

00:07:13:08 - 00:07:51:07

Rick Fisher

That's what nuclear security would be. Now. Nuclear superiority is also very important for the internal maintenance of the Chinese Communist Party's dictatorship. By having nuclear superiority, it can project to the Chinese people that it can produce that level of victory. And impress average Chinese, that its power is unassailable, that they that they dare not challenge the dictatorship of the Chinese Communist Party.

00:07:51:08 - 00:08:30:12

Rick Fisher

Nuclear superiority, of course, would be, a determinant, in, future confrontations with the United States over Taiwan. Japan, has been a target of veiled Chinese nuclear threats over the past two months. In the and in the future, China requires nuclear superiority in order to sustain its leadership of its early axis of evil coalition.

00:08:30:13 - 00:09:06:15

Rick Fisher

And acknowledgment of private primacy and other loser coalitions like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICs, plus, or a future Islamic NATO that it is currently underwriting, as well as nuclear deterrent to cover future aggression by Russia beyond Ukraine, North Korea against South and Japan. And again, aggression by Islamic NATO, potentially against Israel. Should American leadership fade?

00:09:07:01 - 00:10:00:00

Rick Fisher

Of course, nuclear superiority would bolster the Chinese Communist Party's claim to take America's place. And as China more vocally promotes its model as superior and more desirable to that of American Western, pluralist, democratic models, achievement of nuclear superiority reinforces that claim at a raw power level. And then finally, as the Chinese Communist Party projects its power into space, the moon, Mars and beyond, I mean, they have plans to occupy the solar system, nuclear superiority on Earth helps deter and control potential conflicts on the moon and beyond.

00:10:00:01 - 00:10:06:13

Rick Fisher

Okay. Next slide please.

00:10:06:14 - 00:10:42:05

Rick Fisher

Now, I am most grateful for the defense intelligence agencies. May 2025. Future threat projection, revealed. And in a in a single form. Page, pdf that I'm sure most of you have seen and studied and, what I, what I'd like to do is, is offer some comments on, on the, the Chinese numbers at least.

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00:10:42:07 - 00:11:23:12

Rick Fisher

700 ICBMs, 132 SVMs by 2035. I would simply offer that that's perhaps a bit low. I would expect the Chinese to be, capable of achieving higher numbers than that over the next decade. And, you know, looking at, for example, the SLB, BMS, 132 albums work out to 11 spins. If they continue to simply arm those bombers with just 12 missiles.

00:11:23:14 - 00:12:14:11

Rick Fisher

However, the next generation type O9 six is assessed by multiple analysts as likely being larger, carrying more SVMs. Thus, that total would naturally grow. The number for boosted hypersonic weapons is quite attention grabbing. 4000 of course that would include non-nuclear theater level platforms and I wonder if I don't know, but I wonder if that also includes potential delivery of hypersonic glide vehicles on.

00:12:14:12 - 00:12:47:00

Rick Fisher

Space launch reusable space launch vehicles configured for FOBs missions. And I'll discuss that in in in in a later slide. There are 16, Chinese space launch vehicle companies developing reusable sleeves. That's something that we have to really pay attention to. And a future DIA projection if it comes to pass. And I certainly hope it does.

00:12:47:02 - 00:13:07:13

Rick Fisher

I hope that they include an assessment of, North Korean SLB DMs, seeing as they've just revealed their first SBN and of course, Pakistan now has an ICBM program and is looking for a second-strike capability. Next slide please.

00:13:07:14 - 00:14:08:03

Rick Fisher

Okay. In November, the PLA strategic wash watching community was done. An enormous service by Doctor Wee Zhang, who received his PhD from the University of Beijing, did a stint at, Princeton and is now in residence as a China nuclear and policy expert at Harvard's Belfer Center. Kind of following on the example of, a guy named, Hua D who in the 1980s struck up a relationship with well-known authors at Stanford University, gained a chair at Stanford, and then went on to produce unprecedented in detail analysis of PLA missile programs.

00:14:08:04 - 00:14:38:09

Rick Fisher

Using his unique privileged access. At the time, Weide was trained as a rocket scientist by the Soviets in the 1950s. And that's how he was able to basically educate the world about, the Chinese missile program, which also enhanced China's deterrent credibility. But when he went back to China in 1998, he was jailed.

00:14:38:11 - 00:15:14:07

Rick Fisher

That's kind of another story. Well, he's run has also been given some kind of unique access to the history of Chinese nuclear testing and nuclear warhead development, filling, major gap. And at least the open sector understanding of China's nuclear weapons potential. And that is that. His book was released for sale on Amazon the same week that China revealed its latest State Council, nuclear policy.

00:15:14:07 - 00:15:20:03

Rick Fisher

White paper is also, shall we say, most interesting.

00:15:20:04 - 00:16:11:04

Rick Fisher

Now, region has offered a couple of particular details. He has outlined the development of two small warheads that are now in use by the PLA. One is a 200 kilogram warhead, 425 kilotons, yield, called the 535 warhead. And then a smaller 110 kilogram warhead, 95 kiloton yield, called the five by five warhead. Now, in early December, Carnegie Foundation hosted a program for Doctor Zhang hosted by his compatriot Doctor Tong Zhao.

00:16:11:05 - 00:16:53:00

Rick Fisher

Those who follow the debate over China's nuclear arsenal should be quite familiar with, Dr. Zhao and Dr. Zhang. His book is well worth acquiring now. I've also included taken liberties. I attended the briefing and took a picture of one of his charts in which, Wei Zhang speculates or provides an example to illustrate the potential multiple warhead capabilities of, current Chinese ICBMs and, the JL 3 SLB.

00:16:53:02 - 00:16:54:09

Rick Fisher

Next slide please.

00:16:54:10 - 00:17:18:14

Rick Fisher

Now, I knew this was coming. I knew this was a demand from the listening audience that what would happen if we put the DIA and Hui Zhang around the same table? What kind of picture could they come up with? You know, provided they wanted to work towards that goal, and the such. I don't know that that will ever happen.

00:17:18:14 - 00:18:05:15

Rick Fisher

We certainly shouldn't hold our breath waiting for that to happen. So, I've taken a stab at it here. And, what I, what I've done is I've taken the DIA projections of, 700 ICBMs, 132 albums for 20, 35, worked out a potential breakdown in terms of, current and possible future, Missiles. And then taken Hui Zhang's, projected, Merv totals for the five, three, five, and the five by five warheads to work out subtotals for these missiles and their numbers.

00:18:06:00 - 00:18:57:04

Rick Fisher

Now I understand, of course, this is this is speculation. But hopefully you will agree. Marginally informed speculation. And of course, the total numbers are just that, It doesn't, doesn't account for how many would be used for decoys, for example. Just to just to give us a, a sort of ballpark estimate of, where they could be headed again, provided they had the physical materials, and the manufacturing capacity to achieve these numbers, a fully separate issue that that I really do not cover in this brief.

00:18:57:04 - 00:19:33:10

Rick Fisher

But at any rate, if the ICBM numbers were married with estimates based on Hui Jhang's Merv warhead, totals, I arrive at a warhead total, for the 535 warhead between, 3000 and 4100 for the five by five warhead. It's higher, of course. Smaller warhead, over 6000 to just over 8000.

00:19:33:12 - 00:19:55:09

Rick Fisher

Now, these are large numbers, but not too far off from estimates that I've offered in previous years. And, in the ballpark of the numbers offered by, the esteemed, Mark Schneider, who you will hear from, next week.

00:19:55:10 - 00:20:33:00

Rick Fisher

All right. Moving on to, naval nuclear trends. It is my analysis that the PLA Navy is approaching eight modern boomers, type O94 type 094 A's. The projection for eight is something that has been around at least since 2015. Congressional testimony by Admiral Locklear and more recent research by Doctor Sarah Hershberger.

00:20:33:01 - 00:21:02:07

Rick Fisher

There is at least one Chinese source from earlier this year that asserts the number of, oh nine forces reached nine. But what's also important is that the latest version of the 094A uses a pump jet to achieve far greater stealth. Now, in 2023, General Anthony Cotton told us that the 094s are being equipped with a new SLBM and JL3. Wei Zhang, estimates Okay, 5 to 8 five by five warheads, which for the for the total fleet of six, or 11, I mean, 094s That would bump them up to either 660 or 1056 warheads.

00:21:32:05 - 00:21:47:09

Rick Fisher

The next generation type 096 is reported to be larger, possibly up to 16. So, SLBM tubes

00:21:47:10 - 00:22:36:03

Rick Fisher

Earlier in the decade, China greatly increased the, the submarine nuclear submarine production capacity of its, Bohai construction yard. And it is now, turning off nuclear submarines, particularly new, type 093B nuclear attack submarines to be followed by the type 095. The numbers that are being examined point me to the conclusion that by the early 2030s, the Chinese navy could be pursuing a considerable anti-American SSBN strategy in addition to protecting its own SSBNs.

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Rick Fisher

Next slide, please.

00:22:42:11 - 00:23:28:00

Rick Fisher

One huge revelation, for 2025, in terms of the airborne leg of, China's nuclear arsenal, is that, it's projected, next generation, potentially stealthy, flying wing, often called H20 strategic bomber. It will likely be preceded by an unmanned bomber, almost the same size as the American next generation B-21 flying wing stealth bomber.

00:23:28:01 - 00:24:05:05

Rick Fisher

A number of images of this aircraft, taken by private sector satellites on the runway and, images of this aircraft in flight have been released. And, of course, generous Chinese artist propaganda bots have done usual projections indicating that this unmanned bomber could have intercontinental range and also carry the new JL1 air launched, ballistic missile that we've been seeing.

00:24:05:05 - 00:24:45:10

Rick Fisher

And Chinese internet revealed images hanging from the H. 6th November. And of course, recently revealed in far greater detail at the September 3rd PLA parade in Beijing. You know, this this simply adds to projections of numbers, complicates the defensive task of the United States and its allies. And on top of this, China is also producing aerial tankers.

00:24:45:12 - 00:25:20:14

Rick Fisher

A few days ago, the Lowy Institute and all of Australia produced an estimate that, the PLA Air Force could have about 100 aerial tankers by 2035. And China has long had an interest in flying boom tankers, in addition to Hogan drove tankers. I would watch for modifications of the future C 929 Chinese civil air liner which is going to be about the same size of about as a Boeing 787.

00:25:21:00 - 00:25:22:09

Rick Fisher

Next slide please.

00:25:22:10 - 00:26:14:07

Rick Fisher

Okay. Reusable space launch vehicles. DIA projected that in 2035, China would have 60 fobs platforms. During the September parade, announcers described the Dongfeng 5 Charlie in a way that described it may have, a FOBs variant. Be that as it may, there is a far more important potential FOBs capability that is going to be quickly emerging over the next five years.

00:26:14:08 - 00:26:57:06

Rick Fisher

And that is, the truly a kind of tidal wave of Chinese reusable space launch vehicles. China is doing to this sector what it has done to so many other sectors, unmanned systems. Artificial intelligence, electric vehicles. This basically providing the backing to any grouping corporation, existing new corporation that wants to produce this capability can prove that it can produce this capability here to take this lunch money, take this R&D money and just go do it.

00:26:57:07 - 00:27:36:03

Rick Fisher

There are at least 16 Chinese companies that are now developing reusable space launch vehicles. And the smart ones are already lining up mega satellite constellations to justify subsidies and investment capital. It's not happening with all of them yet. So this sector could see some shaking out. I mean, the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation ,CASIC, recently sold its, sort of commercial solid space launch vehicle company.

00:27:36:05 - 00:28:19:07

Rick Fisher

Not clear who bought it yet, but, I mean, it's been released to, to survive in, in the Chinese controlled market, if you will. So, it has more flexibility and that may have a better chance of succeeding. But, how many space launch vehicles will China try to make? I mean, if you if you consider that all of these companies think they're going to be a potential space X, that's quite a bit to get your head around and, there are at least two of these companies that are developing Starship size, first stage, reusable, SLBs.

00:28:19:08 - 00:28:55:15

Rick Fisher

Now, we also have to consider that this sector is also completely controlled by the People's Liberation Army. So, it will serve People's Liberation Army goals. And that could include that each of these companies develop a militarized the military mission. Second stage, for these first stage, reusable SLBs. And that second stage could do so many things, contribute to military satellite repopulation.

00:28:56:00 - 00:29:56:02

Rick Fisher

Put loft, space combat platforms or move the PLA missile capability from one of ever larger one way nuclear strikes to even more massive, non-nuclear reusable SLB strikes. Non-nuclear, hypersonic glide vehicles or other warheads would possibly, in the PLA calculation, run a lower risk of nuclear retaliation. But, it also heralds a very uncertain age when, global strike can be undertaken from the homeland and can be very accurate and very tailored.

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Rick Fisher

For example, they know where I live. They can turn off this program by simply taking out my house. It's that level of specificity that, that we're looking at and, the, the DIA's projection of 4000 Chinese boosted hypersonic weapons, by 2035, is to me, an indication of the breadth of this future threat that we that we have to consider.

00:30:32:15 - 00:30:35:07

Rick Fisher

All right. Next slide, please.

00:30:35:08 - 00:31:06:15

Rick Fisher

Okay. China also spent 2025 activating, its two major, current major, nuclear proxies. The big development for North Korea of course was the revelation around Christmas Eve, Christmas Day of their nuclear SSBN. It was revealed in a brief snip of a picture, earlier in March of last year.

00:31:06:15 - 00:31:58:11

Rick Fisher

But the full image of this SSBN, was, was given out on Chinese state media or North Korean state media on Christmas. Thank you. Thank you, Kim Jong-un, for that present. It's a very uniquely configured SSBN. I, I'm very taken by H.I. Sutton's, analysis of what this portends eight very large, SLBM tubes, the size of which suggests that the missile could be much longer than existing north Korean SLBNs and potentially even based on, the, for example, the Hua song 18.

00:31:58:12 - 00:32:46:06

Rick Fisher

It kind of what I assess to be a DS41 size, solid fuel ICBM. Now, there is also considerable reporting

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about, a potential covert take out of a Russian cargo ship that was carrying two, salvaged, nuclear power plants from a retired Russian, Delta class SSBN. No telling who, sunk the, the Russian ship, although, Spanish, investigators believe it was taken out by a super cavity torpedo.

00:32:46:07 - 00:33:24:02

Rick Fisher

Who has those? It's a very short list. But, there are 37 retired Deltas. So, if the Russians indeed are supplying the power plants for the North Korean SSBN, there's quite an inventory for them to draw from. And, you know, they could start shipping them, much and, over rail or in oversea in, in regions much closer, to, to North Korea.

00:33:24:03 - 00:34:02:10

Rick Fisher

The North Korean SSBN also has, kind of unique, very large flank sonar arrays. I, I wonder if these are intended for active sonar use to just flood a future SSBN bastion with noise so that the new North Korean 96 missile destroyer, and potential assistance from, Chinese or Russian forces close to North Korean SSBN bastions can come in and assist the defense.

00:34:02:12 - 00:34:12:15

Rick Fisher

And of course, this SSBN is now a proliferation option. And, Pakistan is, in the market. Next slide please.

00:34:13:01 - 00:35:00:15

Rick Fisher

And one of the amazing China related nuclear developments of the last year has been the energy energizing of the Pakistani proxy nuclear relationship. This was declared on September 17th of last year when Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed their strategic mutual defense agreement, SMDA. It had been under discussion for years, according to some, some commentary. And Pakistani officials made clear very quickly that it included the commitment of Pakistan's nuclear weapons to the defense of Saudi Arabia.

00:35:01:01 - 00:35:14:06

Rick Fisher

Very quickly, Iranian officials, made statements that they would like to join the SMDA and suggested it could grow into a regional pact.

00:35:14:07 - 00:35:53:12

Rick Fisher

In early January, noise began building that Turkey had already made an attempt to join the pact. And then on January 15th, Reuters cited Pakistani sources saying that a draft of a tripartite Saudi Pakistan Turkey defense agreement has been around for at least ten months. Egypt apparently had been part of these discussions. So, for once, once this tripartite agreement is realized, perhaps Egypt will be a quick, quick, join.

00:35:53:13 - 00:36:42:09

Rick Fisher

The Gulf states may take a little longer, but chances are good that they will also join. Iran, if the theocratic dictatorship survives, at least, could be invited by Saudi Arabia, given their China brokered rapprochement of 2023 or perhaps a post theocratic Iran may be interested in joining. Now, it's China that gains tremendously from this growing, shall we say, Islamic NATO, if that's what it becomes,

because its nuclear deterrent capability has been provided largely by China.

00:36:42:10 - 00:37:28:04

Rick Fisher

You look at the images of the Chinese or the Pakistani... missile and this all the Nasser, tactical nuclear system, these the jet that's carrying the rod, cruise missile, these are all made possible by, by China. So, the tells especially by Kazakh, and it's in as much as the Biden administration revealed in December 2024 that Pakistan had an ICBM program, it's certainly logical to presume that Chinese technology will be at the base of that future capability.

00:37:28:05 - 00:38:06:03

Rick Fisher

And there are also, interesting reports that Pakistan has been looking for a second-strike capability and that North Korean SSBN must be looking, quite attractive. But Pakistan is also going to be co-producing, non-nuclear conventional Chinese attack submarines. So, perhaps, that could form the basis of a non-nuclear ballistic missile capability looking sort of similar to the Chinese type 032 conventional, ballistic missile launching test submarine.

00:38:06:05 - 00:38:45:15

Rick Fisher

And it's also very interesting that in early 2025, China has sold Pakistan a private, commercial 20 surveillance satellite network that most likely will enable Pakistan to conduct global targeting of its future, strategic nuclear systems. So, what did Islamic, nuclear, Islamic, NATO take the place of, China's proxy, the theoretic theocratic Iranian dictatorship in leading regional conflict against Israel?

00:38:46:01 - 00:39:07:15

Rick Fisher

Would it be the vehicle that China uses to displace American influence in the Middle East. An Islamic NATO readily deploy military assistance to Pakistan in future conflicts with India? All questions that come to mind. And then, the next slide, please. The last slide.

00:39:08:00 - 00:39:49:14

Rick Fisher

PLA made a great, very important reveal in the September parade, confirming publicly the existence of its HQ 29, anti-missile, interceptor, unconfirmed Chinese sources, on X soon after the parade, held that it's a three stage missile. Could have a 5000 kilometer range and an interception altitude out to 2500km and being armed with a kinetic kill vehicle.

00:39:50:00 - 00:40:37:00

Rick Fisher

So we have essentially, a kind of, something approaching a mid-course, ABM and we can expect there'll be ground launch versions, including the tel-launch versions and follow on missiles. China has at least five long range phased array missiles, and its satellite early warning network consists of about 7 or 8 satellites. Now, these could support China's developing launch on warning strategies, but it also signals the potential breakout of a early national missile defense capability, a sort of red dome, if you will.

00:40:37:01 - 00:41:09:01

Rick Fisher

And this this capability has been assisted in, no small part by Russia. And I've reviewed statements in

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previous presentations and include them in this slide. Okay. Well, I've, I've been droning on for, for close to 40 minutes now and I'll stop and, and thank you for tuning in. I wish all of you a safe weekend, especially if you're in the path of Snowmageddon.

00:41:09:02 - 00:41:16:10

Rick Fisher

And, now, Peter, thank you again. And I'll. I'll answer any questions.

00:41:16:11 - 00:41:46:10

Peter Huessy

Thank you very much. Rick. I have a series of questions. Let me walk through them. We talked about this earlier. How does the CCP and China view deterrence? Is it stopping adversary from attacking them, or is it stopping in a country like America from coming to the defense of our allies, which have been attacked by China?

00:41:46:12 - 00:42:18:03

Rick Fisher

Yeah, Peter, it's both. But, those who analyze, this this question in greater depth than I, always come back to the compelling aspect of what the Chinese hope to achieve. So, yes, they're very much in the business of forcing adversaries to comply with desired action, usually, very detrimental to the interests of, of, of the enemy.

00:42:18:05 - 00:42:41:12

Peter Huessy

Let me ask you a question that came up in the chat was if the Chinese are seeking superiority, which is implicitly says more warheads than the United States has, how does bumping up against Russian limits affect where China is going to go? Do they stopped short of being superior to Russia? Or do they not care?

00:42:41:13 - 00:43:38:14

Rick Fisher

No. Russia is very much a future adversary. The, the, current alliance as it is with Russia is, is, in my opinion, based on purely on transactional, for the moment, goals. Everybody remembers, the Hitler /Stalin pact. No one, no one, in Beijing or Moscow has any illusions that, if, you know, after this alliance puts the Americans in a in a far worse position, that, they will be squaring off against each other, that China will be going after access and control, of, of, a lot of Siberia.

00:43:38:15 - 00:44:01:02

Rick Fisher

Reclaiming, lost territories in the such and, I'm sure I'm sure both the Russians and the Chinese are looking at the recent history of, of, Greenland to, look for ways, to, to potentially sort that out.

00:44:01:04 - 00:44:27:08

Peter Huessy

Okay. I have a question on... China has said its narrative has been we have a we China have a policy of minimal deterrence, no. First use, and a retaliatory only strategy or to what's your what's your sense as to whether this narrative is correct?

00:44:27:09 - 00:45:05:03

Rick Fisher

Oh, Peter, even if it's 1,000% true and XI Jinping next week takes President Trump on a tour of all PLA rocket force missile bases to prove that, the warheads are all separately, stored under quadruple lock and key. We still cannot base our own security, on anything they say or do. That's sort of an absolutist perspective.

00:45:05:04 - 00:45:37:15

Rick Fisher

One that I would, I would hope occurs naturally to any serious, American security planner. But that said, they certainly want us to believe in their declaratory policies. And, you know, just like they wanted us to believe since, the Strategic Defense Initiative, that missile defense was, was the worst initiative ever that any power could conceive in terms of the future strategic balance.

00:45:38:01 - 00:46:11:06

Rick Fisher

And, that we were we were basically, evil and wrong for even thinking about missile defense, only to find out that for at least the last 15 years, the Chinese have been developing their own missile defense capabilities. So, when they, you know, we also have to consider the far longer Chinese history of incorporating deception into all levels of statecraft.

00:46:11:08 - 00:46:20:10

Rick Fisher

Yes. And, that is in my opinion, what is really at the basis of their declaratory nuclear policies.

00:46:20:11 - 00:46:58:09

Peter Huessy

I have a two part question, and that is a couple people. One is a gentleman who is at the University of Chicago, who has been looking very seriously at the Chinese demographic problems. And he's he says China is really not a threat because demographically, they're about to fall off a cliff. That's number one. Number two, he also says that economically, they're in such dire straits that economically they won't be able to pose much of a threat to the United States despite of offshoring our manufacturing.

00:46:58:11 - 00:47:08:07

Peter Huessy

I don't agree with his view on this, but it's a view held by some where well, in a few years, we won't have to worry about this. What's your sense of this?

00:47:08:09 - 00:47:38:07

Rick Fisher

When you're looking at a tsunami wave, it's really hard to, look beyond it and consider that it's, it's going to evaporate before it reaches the reaches the shore. Even if your colleague is correct. And, into the 2030s, China begins to experience great demographic and economic disruption.

00:47:38:09 - 00:48:19:04

Rick Fisher

Well, that'll be that'll certainly be a release relief in terms of the long term. But in the shorter term, we still have to win the Battle of Taiwan. The battle of, the ruckus. India has to win the battle of... We have to win the battle of the Philippines, potentially. And if China obtains new populations, it already has Communist China already has a history of using conquered populations for military adventures.

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00:48:19:05 - 00:48:49:10

Rick Fisher

I mean, the first wave of, of Chinese invaders in Korea in 1950, 51 were, surrendered, captured ...soldiers that lost, the Chinese revolution. And we can expect that the youth of Taiwan will be deployed and in multiple directions if perhaps the, the demographics effects PLA recruiting, at some point in the not too distant future.

00:48:49:11 - 00:49:15:14

Rick Fisher

So I'm, I'm, I'm looking at, at the Chinese Communist Party, its capacity to survive, its capacity to do far worse than what the Iranian dictatorship has done in the last two weeks, in order to survive and, and its ability to mobilize captured populations for, for future military adventures.

00:49:16:00 - 00:49:24:13

Peter Huessy

What is the Chinese view of missile defense? Both ours and theirs?

00:49:24:14 - 00:50:03:07

Rick Fisher

Well, I think for, for most of the last 40 years, they've preferred that we not have it, which to some degree, you know, others may disagree, but, in, in a sense, we specifically, limited our missile defense capabilities over the last 20 years to accommodate Chinese concerns. We limited our own missile defense to, targeting the North Korean capability in the hopes of not prompting the Chinese also to follow suit.

00:50:03:08 - 00:50:47:05

Rick Fisher

Or the Russians, for that matter. That that was that was, in my opinion, an unfortunate calculus, because I don't think the Chinese had any intention of, denying missile defense capabilities for themselves. I mean, since the mid 1990s, they've been developing ground-based interceptors, ground based lasers and, and now the degree of missile defense capability they're deploying is basically the first round, of a national missile defense system that will become more complex and deeper in the coming decade.

00:50:47:06 - 00:51:17:02

Peter Huessy

There's another... it's currently on the web. I was listening to it the other day. Is that there's a sense that the new form of warfare is going to be primarily drones being launched each other from, controlled by, from space, and that it makes nuclear deterrence nuclear weapons irrelevant, primarily because the speed with which the drones can get to where they're going, which is basically the and that you can't shoot them all down.

00:51:17:03 - 00:51:36:09

Peter Huessy

And therefore that's a new form of warfare that makes it somewhat irrelevant. Whether you have nuclear weapons or not. I'm curious. I know in that I asked you didn't ask you originally, but this is not an uncommon refrain that you hear now, even military analysts, making that case.

00:51:36:10 - 00:52:11:13

Rick Fisher

Well, nuclear deterrence is alive and well in Ukraine. The Russians have not yet used, the tactical nuclear weapons. I'd like to think that they've been deterred from doing that. All the while, the most, dangerous and complex drone warfare has, has been unfolding since 2022.

00:52:11:14 - 00:52:49:15

Rick Fisher

Drone warfare is, is simply, an additional burden on humanity. Peter, I don't I don't think that it replaces the nuclear burden. The nuclear burden, actually, as we see in Ukraine, makes it makes it more possible inasmuch as we're not, delivering tailored, sub kiloton weapons yet against the core centers of drone capacity.

00:52:50:00 - 00:54:11:02

Rick Fisher

I'm, I'm far more worried about massive nuclear warhead exchanges being succeeded by massive exchanges of non-nuclear warheads. This is something that could combine the intimate precision of a drone with the protection of launching warfare from your homeland and hypersonic speeds that greatly challenge defensive systems. And frankly, you know, we're not we're not contracting space to build, 500 Falcon reusable launchers for this for this level of warfare, I, I greatly am greatly concerned that the People's Liberation Army definitely has plans to contract the 16 or however many future reusable space launch vehicle companies to in addition to their commercial ambitions, also fulfill the PLA's weaponized, reusable SLBM ambitions.

00:54:13:07 - 00:54:23:15

Peter Huessy

I'm going to turn the chat over to my boss, Jim Petrosky, our president, and see if he has some questions for you.

00:54:24:01 - 00:54:48:07

James Petrosky

Yeah. Thanks, Rick. This is really enlightening. And we're getting a lot of, input from folks and looking at the difference between China's and the U.S. deterrence. There's a lot going on. It wasn't really hit here in terms of, in terms of some of the work that's being done in the, in NATO. You know, it's hit the news this week, obviously, with Greenland and some of the work there.

00:54:48:07 - 00:55:02:01

James Petrosky

What are you what are you finding out is, is China's reaction to all this from, from the deterrence standpoint, but also from an aggression standpoint? And where do you think that all fits in?

00:55:02:02 - 00:55:39:12

Rick Fisher

Great question. I, I spend a bit of time on the third level Chinese, state media website called Guangzhou. Guangzhou is different from Global Times and, you know, the, you know, the more, usual people's Daily, China Daily and the such that Guangzhou reaches out to approved academic, rash analyzers and spokespeople for the objectives and policies of the Chinese Communist Party.

00:55:39:13 - 00:56:14:10

Rick Fisher

They don't ever tell us directly what they're going to do, what they mean. I mean, that's the essence of a of

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a of a Chinese Communist Party. That's what you do. And for, for on with 5000 years of Chinese strategic, statecraft on top of that, it's just doubly impenetrable. But on Guanzhou you see a lot of cheering about how the Greenland episode has surfaced fissures in the NATO alliance.

00:56:14:11 - 00:56:50:13

Rick Fisher

A great amount of cheering about how the capture of Maduro, is ending the rules based order. So, the Chinese are using our actions, as they have for decades, using our actions to create political warfare pressure to advance their goals. What they're not really talking about is, is how they are, creating nuclear armed, alliance structures that could very quickly challenge or even displace the alliance and proto alliance structures of the United States. They've been they've been testing... every Shanghai cooperation organization has been around for quite a while, but it is essentially taught the potential Islamic NATO how to come together for the future. Islamic NATO has already been sitting around the same table of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

00:57:28:00 - 00:58:02:05

Rick Fisher

And, the dialog partner, Middle Eastern dialog partners of the SCO are the potential first round members of the Islamic NATO, if you will. And China's arming of the Islamic NATO, I think, has been a long-term plan. It is it is certainly being facilitated by the arming of Pakistan, which could move to include other members of the Islamic, NATO, probably starting with, with the Saudis.

00:58:02:06 - 00:58:22:06

Rick Fisher

That is not something that has gone into great depth on, on. Guanzhou But, it is definitely an agenda that also seeks to exploit the, the so-called mistakes of the United States and our allies.

00:58:22:07 - 00:58:42:10

James Petrosky

Yeah. Rick, it sounds like your work and the work of many of these, hands are going to be full for the for the next decade or so. So, you know, given the upcoming weather and such, since you won't be able to go out and drive, we'll look forward to you. Your continued interest in this area. Could you, maybe some time on your hands for this?

00:58:42:11 - 00:59:01:10

James Petrosky

You know, we've reached our end hour at 11:00, unfortunately, Kimberly's, it seems like we're having some technical problems with the Kimberley getting back in, so I'm going to close this out, right now, and I won't be able to do it as nicely as our producer, Kimberly, does. But I want to thank our audience for coming in.

00:59:01:11 - 00:59:29:02

James Petrosky

And, I tell everyone, get the word out on these seminars. They're extremely important to get the word out. And our organization's responsibility is to make people aware of the challenges, concepts that are related to deterrence and how deterrence keeps us peaceful and prosperous. But there are a lot of people that are a lot of organizations, a lot of countries, a lot of things out there that are just trying to push back on that.

00:59:29:03 - 00:59:48:04

James Petrosky

So I, you know, again, my sincere thanks to Rick Fisher for doing this, Peter Hughes as always, you are such a great guy at doing this. And so I'm going to close this out by saying, if you want to know what's going on at NIDS, come to our website at Thinkdeterrence.com find out what's going on.

00:59:48:04 - 01:00:11:13

James Petrosky

This will be posted on our YouTube channel, along with the ability to get the slides. If you have questions, further questions, you can address them on the YouTube, or send us those questions back at NIDS@Thinkdeterrence.com. And we will address them. And so, without any further ado, stay warm. Stay safe. Rick. As always, we always look forward to this.

01:00:12:01 - 01:00:16:07

James Petrosky

So, have a good day. And remember to think deterrence.

01:00:16:08 - 01:00:31:09

Peter Huessy

Thank you very much, Rick. I really appreciate it. Thank you, Jim, for closing us out and want to thank our audience. We will see you next week, next Friday. And so, take care and we'll see you in a week. All right. Thank you.