

00;00;09;08 - 00;00;39;09

Kimberly Cherington

Good morning and welcome. I'm Kimberly Cherington, the Director of Operations here at the National Institute for Deterrence Studies. And it's my pleasure to welcome each of you here today for today's Huessy seminar with our special guest, Paige Gasser, Senior Fellow at the center for Global Security Research at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Her work examines U.S. deterrence strategy and policy, extended deterrence, strategic stability, nonproliferation, and arms control.

00;00;39;12 - 00;01;12;29

Kimberly Cherington

Previously, she served as the Senior Policy Advisor in the Strategy, Plans, and Policy Directorate within the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Department of War. And we're so fortunate to have her here today. Next week, we'll be hosting The Honorable Frank Miller and Ambassador Eric Edelman, who will examine the 2026 strategic landscape as the United States confronts simultaneous nuclear competition and ongoing threats from Iran and North Korea, and the erosion of post-Cold War stability.

00;01;13;02 - 00;01;44;18

Kimberly Cherington

To register, you can visit our website at [www.thinkdeterrence.com](http://www.thinkdeterrence.com). Throughout today's presentation, we encourage you to submit your questions in the chat function or the Q&A button at the top of your screen, and we will address them during the dedicated Q&A portion of today's seminar. Now, I am pleased to introduce our host and moderator for today's discussion, Mr. Peter Huessy, President of Geo Strategic Analysis and a Senior fellow here at NIDS.

00;01;44;20 - 00;01;46;23

Kimberly Cherington

Peter, over to you.

00;01;46;26 - 00;02;11;25

Peter Huessy

Thank you very much, Kimberly, and I want to welcome our guests here today and in particular, our speaker page, who is was recommended by Brad Roberts when I was out there at Lawrence Livermore. And what she's going to talk about today is an issue which is high on the list of what our military officers and civilian leaders are worried about, which is called conventional nuclear integration.

00;02;11;28 - 00;02;35;29

Peter Huessy

That's a fancy way of saying in a conventional conflict, what do you do if someone starts using nuclear weapons? Because that's never happened before in the history of our country and certainly in the world. And the key that she's also going to talk about is not just extended deterrence, which involves Ukraine and involves, of course, Taiwan, potentially. The issue is how do you restore deterrence if you lose it?

00;02;36;01 - 00;02;59;12

Peter Huessy

And how do you know you got it? And that's one of the things that if you go through, go all the way back to either World War two, or if you don't want to do that, go to Korea. And it's this is a very tough job, and she's going to take on the issue, which I'm very glad you're here and want to thank you for coming to talk to, because I've taken a look at your slides and you have a great deal of food for thought.

00;02;59;15 - 00;03;10;12

Peter Huessy

So, take it away and welcome on behalf of NIDS. And I want to thank you and all your friends at

Lawrence Livermore for you... for coming on.

00;03;10;15 - 00;03;32;11

Paige Gasser

Well, wonderful. Well, thank you so much, Peter, and thank you, Kimberly and Jim. Good morning. Thank you, everyone, for being here today. A special thank you for NIDS for the opportunity to kind of join you in this discussion. I'm Paige Gasser, I'm a senior fellow at the center for Global Security Research at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

00;03;32;14 - 00;03;47;28

Paige Gasser

And, the views I'm expressing today are my personal views, not those of the lab or any other organization I've been affiliated with. Just to be clear. Kimberly, if you have my slides, I'll ask that you bring those up.

00;03;48;00 - 00;04;01;27

Paige Gasser

And share those with the group. Perfect. So, as Peter mentioned, today I'm going to be discussing, toward, a new strategic approach to U.S. extended nuclear deterrence.

00;04;01;29 - 00;04;31;08

Paige Gasser

It certainly encompasses several of the topics that Peter was just discussing. Next slide please. But we wanted to kind of talk about how the United States should think about the future of its extended deterrence commitments in this changing, strategic, strategic environment. So, I'll be organizing my presentation in, six different parts. First, I'll briefly outline the purpose and scope of the study, which you can see here.

00;04;31;11 - 00;05;01;28

Paige Gasser

This was, Lawrence Livermore paper on global security, that was released this last August. You can download this on our website. I believe Kimberly can maybe put this in the chat function as well. And, you know, I'll explore. I'll explain the core questions I set out to answer in this paper. Second, I'll frame the discussion in a historical context and briefly review some of the foundations of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence.

00;05;02;01 - 00;05;29;20

Paige Gasser

Then I'll turn to kind of regional practices in Europe and the Indo-Pacific here. I'll compare how extended deterrence is implemented in these two different regions. There's many differences in the alliance structures. Forward presence, nuclear sharing agreements, even conventional force postures. And then I'll discuss how the rise of the two nuclear armed major power competitors changes the strategic context for U.S. extended deterrence.

00;05;29;20 - 00;06;00;15

Paige Gasser

I'll focus on implications for planning, for sizing crisis, stability. And why kind of legacy assumptions may no longer be sufficient. And then, I'll present four different strategic options for how the United States could adapt its approach in light of this new environment. We'll discuss the trade offs and benefits and costs. And lastly, I'll close with practical steps, which will lead to what I hope will be a really robust discussion with this community.

00;06;00;18 - 00;06;23;18

Paige Gasser

So, by the end of this presentation, I really hope that, the group here will leave with a clear picture of some of the challenges that we're being faced with. A structure of set strategic choices, and some practical ideas of how policymakers and practitioners might be able to, address some of

them. So next slide please.

00;06;23;21 - 00;06;52;10

Paige Gasser

So, I think the conversation on extended nuclear deterrence is both timely and essential. You know, the U.S. really stands at a nuclear crossroads while our allies find themselves in the nuclear crosshairs. So for over 75 years, the US nuclear umbrella has served as a cornerstone of global security, deterring adversaries and assuring allies. But today, that foundation really faces unprecedented stress.

00;06;52;12 - 00;07;20;28

Paige Gasser

So, I wanted to examine three questions. First, are our longstanding assumptions about extended nuclear deterrence still valid as the security context changes? Second, how could plausible future scenarios in the coming decade impact our practices for extended deterrence and assurance? And then lastly, what do we do about it? Is our current course sufficient? Do we need a revised strategy?

00;07;21;00 - 00;07;52;23

Paige Gasser

Next slide please. So, my bottom line up front here is really that the strategic environment that once shaped America's approach has fundamentally changed. It's demanding that we move beyond the vintage version of the U.S. nuclear umbrella. I argue in my paper that our extended nuclear deterrence strategy is actually no longer fit for purpose. Allies are not only more anxious in this environment, but they're eager and willing to do more.

00;07;52;25 - 00;08;13;27

Paige Gasser

And so therefore, I think a deliberate, strategy driven, a strategy driven division of labor is needed, to credibly sustain extended nuclear deterrence in this two nuclear power world we're finding ourselves in. So, we'll discuss that. Next slide please.

00;08;13;29 - 00;08;37;07

Paige Gasser

So, this is kind of getting back to the basics, but I wanted to examine why extended nuclear deterrence even matters, because I felt like I heard a shift in the conversation, questioning kind of the value of allies, the role of our allies. And it's really important because the United States asks more of its nuclear weapons arsenal than any other nuclear weapon state.

00;08;37;09 - 00;09;03;06

Paige Gasser

Our nuclear arsenal has a very unique role of providing security guarantees to a global network of over 30 U.S. allies. And extended nuclear deterrence has been based on two key U.S. policy imperatives for the last 70 plus years. First, maintaining regional security, which includes deterring adversaries from launching an attack on US allies that would threaten U.S. vital interests.

00;09;03;08 - 00;09;37;01

Paige Gasser

And second, ensuring that other countries don't actually seek their own nuclear capabilities. So, think about the North Country problem during the Cold War. Kind of reflecting our fears that allied nuclear acquisition could provoke a broader proliferation cascade where multiple countries might feel compelled to develop their own arsenals. Such a scenario would not only undermine U.S. efforts to maintain regional stability, but it also would lead to very unpredictable security dilemmas and potentially heightening the risk of nuclear conflict.

00;09;37;03 - 00;10;09;08

Paige Gasser

The. Additionally, the United States has long worried that nuclear armed allies might act independently, potentially initiating conflicts that the United States would not have chosen or dragging America into some sort of dangerous confrontation. So, both then and now, the credibility of extended nuclear deterrence has been seen as essential for preventing these risks. And, both of these imperatives were seen not only as an US nuclear or a US strategic interests, but also in the interests of our allies.

00;10;09;08 - 00;10;47;19

Paige Gasser

And partners, as this practice has protected U.S. allies from potential aggression. And it's underpinned the global stability and security order since the end of World War two. Next slide please. So I go in the paper, I go through a very large lit review. And so, there's more there's more there for those who are interested and kind of, yeah, interested in the academic piece, but Paul Huth, clearly articulates that extended deterrence refers to a broader protective measures provided to allies and partners.

00;10;47;22 - 00;11;24;00

Paige Gasser

And he defines it as kind of protecting other countries and territories from attack. So, it's distinct from preventing a direct attack on one's own national territory. The key thing here is that there's two distinct audiences the allies state, allied state facing a threat, and then the adversary posing that threat. Whereas extended nuclear deterrence is a specific subset of extended deterrence, and it focuses exclusively on the role of U.S. nuclear weapons and deterring adversaries.

00;11;24;02 - 00;11;58;28

Paige Gasser

What's often, you know, the primary goal of this is obviously to deter attacks on allies that threaten U.S. vital interests, as I've mentioned. What's often kind of conflated is the complementary, concept of assurance, which aims to address and alleviate the security concerns of U.S. allies and partners. This is important because, sometimes what it takes to assure an ally may actually be different than what it would take to deter an adversary in a regional context.

00;11;59;01 - 00;12;39;08

Paige Gasser

And so, assurance really involves convincing allies that the United States can guarantee their safety from intimidation, coercion, or attack. And so often through commitments such as the use of military force or even visible military exercises, to kind of demonstrate resolve. Some experts have written and noted that extended nuclear deterrence is the most difficult and challenging aspect of deterrence, that it's much harder to establish credibility and deny an attack far from home, because you are projecting force thousands of miles away, right?

00;12;39;10 - 00;13;03;15

Paige Gasser

Versus central or direct deterrence focuses on the U.S. homeland. It's in our own backyard. So, some experts have called it even illogical. Or sometimes they describe it as a leaky umbrella. So, if you think about during the Cold War, these are questions of, you know, will Washington sacrifice New York for Paris? We've all heard those questions.

00;13;03;18 - 00;13;38;21

Paige Gasser

The Healy theorem that was argued famously by British Defense Minister Denis Healey in the late 1960s. He is often quoted by saying that it takes only 5% credibility of American retaliation to deter the Russians, but 95% credibility to reassure the Europeans. And so, as I mentioned, this is really, a key difference is that those requirements of what it takes to deter the Russians or the Chinese, it may not be the same requirements for assuring European allies or, Japan.

00;13;38;22 - 00;14;07;00

Paige Gasser

So from my experience at the Pentagon, extended nuclear deterrence is honestly more of an art than a science. Next slide please. And I think it's really important to recognize that there's several benefits and risks. When I went through the literature to see how opponents and critics describe the costs and advantages, there were many things, kind of in this chart for the for that are often overlooked.

00;14;07;02 - 00;14;37;24

Paige Gasser

For example, there's greater economic benefits. Some something often discussed, specifically in this administration is that, you know, if there's, yes, there's trust and cooperation and that's a benefit, but also this may lead to an overreliance on the United States and potential complacency among allies regarding their own security in terms of strategic advantage. Think about resource sharing.

00;14;37;24 - 00;15;03;06

Paige Gasser

But also comes the challenge of coordination, making sure we are in lockstep with our allies. Why we deem this type of work. That's kind of why we deem this type of work as alliance management. It's not a static relationship. We are managing these relationships, on both ends. And there's no doubt that this is risky business to extend nuclear deterrence.

00;15;03;08 - 00;15;27;25

Paige Gasser

But I would also argue it's really risky benefit, business to receive extended nuclear deterrence commitments and to trust the United States will actually come to, our allies aid. So, the key takeaway here is that there are mutual benefits, but there's mutual risks from an ally perspective. Can we trust the U.S. to uphold its commitments? Even if it puts the U.S. homeland at risk?

00;15;27;27 - 00;15;54;10

Paige Gasser

Some critics kind of say that U.S. allies are not valuable assets or their transmission belts for war. And again, that the U.S. may be drawn into a conflict. Other critics say that they're free riders. And so we're kind of seeing that a little bit with, this administration kind of shifting the thinking around, from burden sharing to burden shifting, which we can discuss later.

00;15;54;12 - 00;16;18;04

Paige Gasser

And then there's other arguments that even have led scholars to support, kind of what we call friendly proliferation among allies. The bottom line here is that these have these, topics have always been part of the discussion. But it's important to note that we are seeing an influx of these sorts of debates. So next slide, please.

00;16;18;06 - 00;16;41;11

Paige Gasser

So, when we look at Europe, obviously we have the North Atlantic treaty that everyone's familiar with, also known as the Washington Treaty, signed in 1949. And it derives authority from the UN charter, article 51, affirming the right to collective defense. Article five is the most discussed. So, the idea that an armed attack on one is an attack on all.

00;16;41;13 - 00;17;12;09

Paige Gasser

The important thing here is that in July of 1953, the U.S. committed to it, or nuclear weapons to NATO as a key part of forward defense. With the first US nuclear weapons arriving in Europe in September of 1954. So, this has been a practice for a very long time. For those who are interested, you know, the policy priorities of these deployments are really outlined in the NATO military Committee document 48, MC48.

00;17;12;11 - 00;17;47;29

Paige Gasser

It's declassified, very interesting read, but it basically authorizes the use of nuclear weapons in a conflict with the Soviet Union, including in response to a Soviet conventional attack on Western Europe. Of course, this was a full debate. And can continue throughout the 1950s. Nuclear sharing was specifically introduced in 1957, but nuclear weapons were really seen as the only means to defend Allied territory against the conventional superiority of Moscow's conventional forces.

00;17;48;01 - 00;18;17;24

Paige Gasser

Now, during the Cold War, NATO ended up adopting the dual capable aircraft concept. So, it kind of sought to address fears of strategic decoupling from the US and its allies and the potential loss of political control over nuclear weapons. European allies were concerned that the United States might hesitate to defend Europe if it risked a Soviet attack on American soil.

00;18;17;27 - 00;18;46;12

Paige Gasser

And the fear was really heightened by the Soviet Union's growing ICBM capabilities, which the US homeland. And so, to ensure credible deterrence and to demonstrate a shared commitment, NATO sought a nuclear posture that distributed responsibilities across the alliance. And so, we had U.S. nuclear deployments, to Europe that actually had multiple delivery types. It wasn't just DCA.

00;18;46;15 - 00;19;20;27

Paige Gasser

But this posture really evolved over time, and DCA ended up becoming the primary, remaining European delivery arrangement after the Cold War. And so, we also obviously have our U.S. strategic weapons that, can be used as well in a crisis or a conflict and definitely have a deterrent role in the European theater. But most people kind of discussed the DCA and the delivery, as the delivery system as well as the B61, such we can discuss later.

00;19;20;27 - 00;19;48;15

Paige Gasser

When thinking about extended nuclear deterrence, we talk a lot about the hardware and the software. And so, hardware, I think about capabilities, as I just mentioned, software, think about kind of these, other mechanisms. So, the 19 in 1966, the nuclear planning group and NATO was established. And this, for those who aren't familiar, is the senior body on nuclear matters. It continually reviews and adapts the alliance's nuclear posture.

00;19;48;16 - 00;20;15;14

Paige Gasser

It's chaired by the NATO secretary general. The NPT generally meets at the defense minister level at least once a year, and when necessary, at that, ambassador or even perm rep level, permanent representative level. So the NAC holds the ultimate authority within NATO, but the NPT kind of addresses those specific policy issues. For those who aren't familiar, all allies except for France participate.

00;20;15;17 - 00;20;42;26

Paige Gasser

And the work that is prepared by the NPT staff group and works closely with the NATO high level group. For my experience of supporting, the at least at the working level, I would say that the NATO high level group is, it's chaired by the United States and really is, it serves as a platform, I would say, for continued U.S. leadership on nuclear issues.

00;20;42;27 - 00;21;17;02

Paige Gasser

It meets two times a year, if not more. It's really become embedded in the permanent decision-

making structure at NATO. And so, any name is formed in 1977, but to specifically examine modernization and survivability and safety of nuclear weapons. But it's really, it's really, kind of shifted in, in its role. And so, yeah, I think it's a just a it's kind of a little bit of a mechanism that people don't necessarily talk about very much.

00:21;17;05 - 00:21;44;11

Paige Gasser

As I said, on the hardware side, the strategic nuclear force of the alliance, particularly the United States, is what we call the supreme guarantee of the security of the alliance, as well as France and British, independent strategic nuclear forces. And, I already briefly mentioned this, but again, we have the DCA along with air delivered nuclear gravity bombs.

00:21;44;13 - 00:22;11;11

Paige Gasser

That the B61 12 life extension program, replaced kind of the B61 gravity bomb, the legacy gravity bombs, that LEP, was actually completed recently. And then we have the F-35, a fifth generation DCA, which is, will replace the aging US and NATO ally, fourth generation fighter aircraft. So, a little bit of details, but next slide please.

00:22;11;13 - 00:22;38;08

Paige Gasser

But really important because the DCA mission, again, is shared with, very specific allies and really remains important today over the decades, really following the Cold War. There's we've seen significant shifts. We went from cooperative threat reduction, the presidential nuclear initiatives, where we, really reduce the size of our arsenal and, Europe arms control agreements to inf violations.

00:22;38;11 - 00:23;06;14

Paige Gasser

NATO strategic concept in 2010, obviously Ukraine in 2014 and 2022. I would say that the biggest thing for, NATO today, is I mean, there's many things obviously going on in Ukraine, for example. But again, to remind people that Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons, they still maintain an arsenal of between 1000 to 2000 non-strategic nuclear warheads, not limited by any treaty.

00:23;06;16 - 00:23;36;26

Paige Gasser

Not to mention, China is increased increasingly important for the alliance. So, we've seen, enhanced exercises, stronger integrated air and missile defense as well. This is a picture of a German, tornado, actually, practicing during the annual exercises such as noon. So, yeah, the the security environment has changed drastically for Europe, as we all know.

00:23;36;29 - 00:24;18;13

Paige Gasser

Next slide please. The extended nuclear deterrence relationships with our allies in the Indo-Pacific are actually really different. The alliance is similar to NATO in the sense that these are longstanding treaties. Since the 1950s, that Japan, South Korea and Australia. But the alliance structure, it really differs from what we see in Europe as it relies on these bilateral relationships and the agreements are really shaped by historical, geopolitical and strategic factors.

00:24;18;16 - 00:24;42;26

Paige Gasser

And so, the US nuclear posture also differs. We've never had nuclear sharing arrangements with Asian allies. Following the end of the Cold War, U.S. removed all nuclear weapons in the region and instead relied on strategic capabilities, complemented by TLAM-N, which was retired in 2010. The US has made a fleet of nuclear capable fighter bombs globally available.

00:24;42;26 - 00:25;14;27

Paige Gasser

So, F-15s, F-16s, plus, relies on the Ohio class submarines. But the capabilities are really different. Which we can discuss more, later. And then additionally, in terms of the software, again, these consultation mechanisms are, I would say fairly new. They're fairly nascent. So, they really were established in the early to mid-20 tens versus, again, these treaties are from the 1950s, 1961.

00;25;14;29 - 00;25;41;11

Paige Gasser

And then, so, Japan and the US in South Korea, the consultation mechanisms were established in 20 tens and then Australia was even more recent. Was 2019. I kind of lay out all of the different, mechanisms. But with Japan, we have the extended deterrence dialog. And then, with South Korea, we have a slew of things.

00;25;41;11 - 00;26;14;12

Paige Gasser

But the most recent thing that was agreed upon was in April 2023, through the Washington Declaration, the Nuclear Consultative Group. And then we have a strategic policy dialog with, with Australia. And that's run by delegations from State Department. It's not as robust, but, it's really because there's kind of a lack of demand from Australia. And there's still, I mean, really this depth of engagement and partnership, with our allies in Australia, particularly through Aukus.

00;26;14;18 - 00;26;46;16

Paige Gasser

Next slide please. And us extended nuclear deterrence commitments in the Indo-Pacific are really driven by the strategic importance economic dynamism and the growing competition among major powers. Obviously, primary drivers are China's rise. And, unprecedented military buildup. But North Korea's frequent missile tests and nuclear threats against U.S. allies on the peninsula, obviously, our main factor as well.

00;26;46;19 - 00;27;20;10

Paige Gasser

And so, there's also been, I think, a lot of doubt about US credibility and kind of we see hedging, in this environment. So, US allies and, and, Japan and South Korea. I think it's important to note that they don't share identical views of the regional threat environment. If you read their national security strategies, there are differences, and that's shaped by varying perceptions of the threats from North Korea and China and other regional actors.

00;27;20;12 - 00;27;36;01

Paige Gasser

And so, as well as, kind of differing levels of trust in US commitments. So it's been really a story of a delicate balance, I would say. And the Indo-Pacific. Next slide please.

00;27;36;03 - 00;28;17;26

Paige Gasser

So back in 2018, the National Defense Strategy Commission was really the first to acknowledge that, the United States might struggle to win and actually may potentially lose, conflict against China and Russia. And, and then obviously in the 2022 and PR, we also had statements in there that you see, kind of highlighting that by the 2030s, the U.S, well, for the first time in history, faced two major nuclear powers as strategic competitors and potential adversaries.

00;28;17;29 - 00;28;45;16

Paige Gasser

And I think the recent 2026 and RDS also touches on this. I think the that they touch, they kind of phrase it as the issue of simultaneity. The Strategic Posture Commission also, you can see this quote here, but really has outlined that the United States has a one major war construct, but we have a very different problem, right?

00;28;45;16 - 00;29;11;27

Paige Gasser

A two nuclear power problem. So next slide please. From my perspective, there have really been four tectonic shifts in the strategic environment. So first, as we mentioned, China is rapidly challenging long standing assumptions by undertaking the largest nuclear build up in history. It's expanding its arsenal at a pace that we have not seen since the U.S. Sophia Arms race of the 1950s and 1960s.

00;29;12;00 - 00;29;45;23

Paige Gasser

Russia and increasingly, China are also driving a rise in what I would call nuclear risk taking. And coercion. With Russia placing nuclear weapons at the core of its doctrine, broadening scenarios for potential use, leveraging nuclear threats to intimidate the West and hinder military aid as seen in Ukraine. Third, North Korea is evolving. Nuclear challenge is really rooted in its view that nuclear weapons are essential for regime survival and leverage.

00;29;45;26 - 00;30;09;27

Paige Gasser

With Kim Jong UN to determine to expand at the size and the sophistication of his arsenal, including tactical nuclear weapons. And then the fourth tectonic shift I would describe as this axis of adversaries. I go into a lot of depth and the paper over this, but we obviously see this deepening of partnerships among China, Russia, North Korea and Iran.

00;30;10;00 - 00;30;36;08

Paige Gasser

Although it is very interesting to kind of see how China and Russia are not really being very engaged in the Iran, conflict in crisis right now. But, you know, I think it shows that adversaries and competitors are increasingly thinking in cross-regional and interconnected terms. And I think that that's really requiring the United States to rethink its extended nuclear deterrence strategies.

00;30;36;10 - 00;31;10;13

Paige Gasser

There's several implications for this. As the U.S. faces kind of this critical juncture regarding its global role, the purpose of its nuclear arsenal, allies and Europe and Indo-Pacific are increasingly exposed to nuclear threats. And they're becoming more complicated, right? I don't think we ever, you know, if someone had told me that are now five, six years ago that we would have North Korean soldiers fighting on the ground with Russian soldiers, in Ukraine, I don't think I would have necessarily believed them.

00;31;10;15 - 00;31;33;09

Paige Gasser

And so I think meeting this moment demands a fundamental assessment and modernization of U.S. extended deterrence to ensure it remains robust, adaptive, and capable of addressing some of these complex challenges. I'm happy to kind of go into these types of alignment later in Q&A if, those are if anyone's interested. But as I mentioned, I go into a lot of depth, in the paper over this.

00;31;33;11 - 00;31;57;07

Paige Gasser

So next slide, please. So, from my view, and mind you, I did kind of write this, in the early days of the Trump administration. So, a lot has unfolded, but I was really trying to take this long view of the next decade. What are our four different potential futures or strategies? We could kind of, yeah, be thinking about in the United States.

00;31;57;09 - 00;32;33;09

Paige Gasser

I think that the U.S. faces a series of strategic choices, each with its own risks, benefits, far reaching implications. So, first, we the U.S., could potentially reduce its nuclear extended

deterrence commitments, encouraging allies to rely more on conventional forces for self-defense. I think that one positive thing, it might ease the burden of American resources, but it risks weakening alliances, emboldening adversaries and prompting allies to consider their own nuclear arsenals.

00:32:33;11 - 00:33:00;13

Paige Gasser

The U.S. credibility would be called into question, and the global security architecture could unravel. Now, we may see that they would rely more on conventional and that increased Allied interest. Could also, be seen in terms of indigenous nuclear programs that I have, in my view of that. I think that's a really large risk with this potential choice.

00:33:00;15 - 00:33:29;08

Paige Gasser

We could see reduced U.S. nuclear forces in Europe and potential heightened instability as, this may become a vacuum for Russia and China to exploit. Next slide, please. So this is really, again, option one. Kind of looking at there could be severe damage to the nonproliferation norms and NPT regime. But there's a lot of potential advantages, right.

00:33:29;08 - 00:34:03;23

Paige Gasser

If we scale back, there could be potential stronger pressure on allies to invest in self-defense and possibly their own regional frameworks, which we can certainly discuss with Macron speech and kind of this idea of European deterrence and what that looks like. Next slide please. Another option I explored was potentially expanding our guarantees. What if the US broadened its nuclear and extended deterrence to include new allies or regions, signaling enhanced commitments?

00:34:03;25 - 00:34:30;14

Paige Gasser

At the beginning of this presentation, Peter mentioned, Ukraine, Taiwan. We don't necessarily... we have, obviously, a treaty with Taiwan. But we don't necessarily explicitly state that we extend nuclear deterrence to that. We've been very ambiguous with that. And same with Ukraine. We have not explicitly stated, as they're not a member of NATO.

00:34:30;16 - 00:34:54;19

Paige Gasser

So, in the paper, I actually don't look at those cases. I look at I really look at the Middle East, I look at Saudi Arabia. And another really important case to look at is the Philippines. We have a really robust defense relationship with the Philippines. From my experience, the Philippines has never actually asked for extended nuclear deterrence commitments, from the United States.

00:34:54;19 - 00:35:20;17

Paige Gasser

But, that doesn't mean that it couldn't happen in the future. So, there's potential advantages, of, you know, obviously potential counterweight of emerging Russian and Chinese deterrence ties to some of these states, stronger reassurance for some of these additional partners. But I really argue in the paper that there's a lot of risks and costs with this choice.

00:35:20;20 - 00:35:46;13

Paige Gasser

So, the more promises America makes, the harder it likely would become to keep, especially in a crisis. Adversaries may respond with arms build ups or, or provoking some of these allies even more. There could be increased deterrence. Absolutely. But it kind of comes with a high cost. I think there's a risk of overextension in an already overextended environment.

00:35:46;16 - 00:36:09;01

Paige Gasser

Obviously going to be rising defense budgets. There'd be a lot of aspects. And then I think there'd

be a mixed impact on the nonproliferation regime. Allies and partners could still decide to eventually proliferate, potentially as well. So I kind of talk about those cascading effects, especially in the Middle East in the paper. Next slide please.

00:36:09:04 - 00:36:36:03

Paige Gasser

A third option is to maintain the status quo. So, this is kind of the steady as she goes option. The US maintains its... so that the US just kind of maintains its extended nuclear deterrence commitments with no significant changes in posture. We've modernized the triad. Modernized the DCA, B61 as planned. Continue these software consultation mechanisms, which I talked about maybe improved CNI.

00:36:36:06 - 00:37:05:17

Paige Gasser

There's really a strain though here. If allies end up demanding more and if adversaries continue to modernize, there's a risk that are extended. Deterrence posture doesn't actually address the security environment. And then there's obviously possible simultaneous challenges from Russia and China. There. It could be politically acceptable. It's very predictable. This has actually been, I would say for the last I don't know, several administrations for administration.

00:37:05:17 - 00:37:32:07

Paige Gasser

This has been the approach of the United States, but it also really risks not going far enough for assurance. And deterrence purposes. So this, you know, steady as she goes approach has really prevailed. But I think in a multipolar and to nuclear peer world, this is no longer tenable. Next slide please. So, the fourth potential choice is actually establishing a new division of labor.

00:37:32:14 - 00:38:05:00

Paige Gasser

Now I actually think we have a very strong division of labor. So, I argue that this preferable path is really redefining the division of labor, encouraging allies to take on greater roles in their own defense while maintaining nuclear guarantees. There's obviously, with this increased Allied defense spending, which we're certainly seen, I envision more joint military exercises, which we could discuss the development of regional deterrence strategies as well.

00:38:05:02 - 00:38:40:09

Paige Gasser

And the benefits here is that there could be better resource alignment, reduced proliferation pressure, and then actually more credible deterrence. Next slide please. So I think for this case, there are kind of practical steps and implementation, pieces that we can discuss. I think the following steps are really essential for adopting extended deterrence to meet today's realities versus this Cold War vintage, perspective.

00:38:40:11 - 00:39:13:12

Paige Gasser

So first, allies must develop a shared understanding of the interconnected challenges posed by Russia and China, who are increasingly blurring the lines between conventional and nuclear conflict. So, I argue in the paper that allies really need to adopt a comprehensive view of the threat. This requires coordinated intelligence sharing, joint threat assessments, regular strategic dialogs, plus a willingness to assume greater responsibility.

00:39:13:14 - 00:39:38:00

Paige Gasser

And so, I think since the actions of Russia and China are not confined to a specific region, closer cooperation among allies, even across these theaters, is going to become even more essential in the in the coming decade. Second, I think there needs to be more institutionalization of alliance planning for to theater and opportunistic aggression scenarios.

00;39;38;00 - 00;40;05;29

Paige Gasser

We've made a lot of progress in this, but just to clarify, we're not talking about pre committing allies to any sort of automatic response or drafting detailed joint war plans for every contingency. But I think it's rather about a collective recognition about and about risk tolerance and shared preparedness. Our allies need to be jointly ready for what the world may look like before we are living in it.

00;40;06;02 - 00;40;42;20

Paige Gasser

This means building habits, I think, of planning and consultation around several key questions. What are the shared assumptions about second theater risks? What's the baseline division of labor across these theaters? You know, what's maybe pre-agreed consultative mechanisms for, a two-theater stress kind of scenario? We can discuss that more. But ultimately, I think, developing some sort of co-developed theory of victory within our alliances will continue to be a really important piece.

00;40;42;20 - 00;41;09;25

Paige Gasser

And, yeah, we've been doing a lot of work in that area. Next slide, please. Some other steps in terms of capabilities and roles. I think part of this is really ensuring that we rebalance our collective capabilities. We need to identify what are the key multi-domain gaps and let our allies fill them. It's not just through increased spending, but it's really providing real operational means.

00;41;09;25 - 00;41;50;16

Paige Gasser

So, this to this means determining what specific forces, capabilities and deployment timelines are required and really having forthright discussions on this, whether this means additional nuclear systems in Europe that the UK or France may provide, or bolstering regional deterrence with advanced conventional forces and the Indo-Pacific. These discussions really should include our about, include enhancing our ability to counter and deter, I would argue, limited nuclear use by adversaries in regional conflicts, and how allies could potentially address this challenge with the United States.

00;41;50;22 - 00;42;23;27

Paige Gasser

Next slide please. I think interoperability is non-negotiable. So joint training, co-production, a robust defense industrial base ensures that they're seamless allied operations. Our national defense strategies have emphasized this. The U.S. force structure planning must account for allied contributions with clear roles and missions defined and advanced. And I think that this includes peacetime planning with allies that would serve as a powerful tool.

00;42;23;29 - 00;43;01;06

Paige Gasser

And I think also allies should really focus, with the United States on how to signal during interwar deterrence, and, and potentially dissuading, an adversary from escalating once a conflict begins. Next slide, please. And then lastly, a robust communication strategy is absolutely needed. This is often strategic. Communications I think is often overlooked. And field but we need to ensure that statements with allies are clear, consistent, avoiding contradictions that could undermine regional deterrence efforts.

00;43;01;09 - 00;43;31;03

Paige Gasser

I think that there's actually some really important key lessons learned from the war in Ukraine. Even port visits to South Korea, the trilateral military exercises that should really inform how, interwar signaling might differ in various theaters. Next slide please. So, looking back at my three

main questions, first, are the longstanding assumptions still valid? No, they're not fully valid in the current security environment.

00:43:31:05 - 00:43:59:20

Paige Gasser

My paper really argues that the strategic context has obviously fundamentally changed, as I discussed, and that the assumptions that have guided us extended nuclear deterrence during the Cold War. And the unipolar post-Cold War era, are no longer applicable. The context has drastically changed. And second, I think there how could future scenarios impact extended deterrence?

00:43:59:23 - 00:44:31:15

Paige Gasser

I envision scenarios such as simultaneous or sequential crises involving Russia and China. Growing adversary cooperation, shifting alliance expectations. This could all seriously challenge and potentially overwhelm the current US extended nuclear deterrence. Practices. And we can discuss that more in Q&A. And then third, the current course is insufficient. The United States must adapt and revise a strategy driven approach to extend nuclear deterrence.

00:44:31:17 - 00:44:57:26

Paige Gasser

Business as usual, in my perspective, is no longer an option. There have been incremental adoptions. Absolutely. But I think the steady as she goes approach is no longer adequate for the emerging two peer environment and instead a deliberate, well designed division of labor with allies as central to a credible deterrence posture. And as we, and we discussed some of those practical steps.

00:44:57:26 - 00:45:39:28

Paige Gasser

Next slide please. I think that the, you know, failure to adapt really risks deterrence, failure, allowing alliance fractures, and then also potential further proliferation. And so, the alternative, in my view, is not favorable and then U.S. interests. Next slide please. So, as I mentioned, the status quo is really not adequate. A division of labor within alliance is not simply, I think, a policy preference, but it's becoming more of a structural requirement of extended deterrence architectures under two peer pressures.

00:45:40:01 - 00:46:11:01

Paige Gasser

I think there's further questions at the NDS, the 2026 NDS doesn't really explore, but are alliances would really benefit. And discussing some of these things and frank and open discussions. So, what role should specific allies play in nuclear related missions? How much additional risk is the U.S willing to assume? How much should allies share? What are the near-term procurement policy decisions that can't be, can't be delayed?

00:46:11:01 - 00:46:22:18

Paige Gasser

There's a lot that we need to discuss with our allies. Next slide, please. And with that, I'll leave it there. I went over my time a little bit, so apologies, but I really look forward to the discussion.

00:46:22:20 - 00:46:38:10

Peter Huessy

Thank you very much, Paige. That was really very interesting. I'm going to have to have you back to explore this. A lot of the questions. I'm going to go through some of the questions we have in the chat, as well as some that I've written down is.

00:46:38:12 - 00:46:57:04

Peter Huessy

is this allowed by the NPT? I think it is, but it is an interesting question of this division of labor. Like if you're non-nuclear, you don't sit in on the nuclear planning stuff, but is that it? Is that an issue? Or is it easily gotten around?

00:46:57:06 - 00:47:03:01

Paige Gasser

You cut out a little bit, but my I understand the question was about clear planning and whether or not can you.

00:47:03:03 - 00:47:08:12

Peter Huessy

Can you have non-nuclear and nuclear states working on nuclear stuff?

00:47:08:14 - 00:47:14:14

Paige Gasser

Yeah, definitely. I mean, I think that, yes, NPG is the example of this within the NATO framework,

00:47:14:17 - 00:47:35:20

Paige Gasser

you have states that don't necessarily participate in the nuclear mission. They obviously don't have their own nuclear capabilities. The NPG doesn't necessarily do planning. But like shape takes that role. But you absolutely. Yeah, have allies participating in those conversations and preparing for that.

00:47:35:22 - 00:47:55:12

Paige Gasser

Additionally, I'll just say that the NPT, actually was, established after the nuclear sharing arrangements. And so that's just a yeah, there's a lot of work that's been done out there looking at that, that archive. But, I don't see them as contradictory and any means.

00:47:55:16 - 00:48:09:24

Peter Huessy

Okay. Should, what new nuclear and non-nuclear technologies should America think of acquiring along with its allies in order to meet the challenges that you point out? And option number four.

00:48:09:27 - 00:48:31:14

Paige Gasser

Yeah, it's a great question. I think, you know, obviously this administration is really focusing on Golden Dome for America. And missile defense. And I think that that's, you know, an area that is really important. However, it's really unclear what that means and what that looks like and whether or not allies have been brought aboard on those conversations.

00:48:31:17 - 00:49:00:20

Paige Gasser

I know Japan, has a strong interest of maybe, you know, participating in that in some way. And so that's an interesting area to kind of flag, within the NATO context, I think there's a lot of consensus on deep precision strike, and even potential standoff capabilities, in the coming decades. And so, that will be an interesting area to watch as well.

00:49:00:23 - 00:49:23:13

Paige Gasser

And I mean, think about other domains, right? What can we do in space? What can we do in cyber? There's a lot that is could potentially be brought to bear. There that is not necessarily the nuclear mission. But as you mentioned in your introduction, the importance here is conventional nuclear integration. And that is a really hard challenge.

00:49:23:16 - 00:49:46:10

Paige Gasser

So how do we actually integrate all of that? That's where I actually, you know, we can discuss this later, but I actually welcome Macron's speech in the sense that, I think that that could potentially be a clear path for some CNI integration with some specific allies. I think we need to see more of that.

00:49:46;13 - 00:50:15;21

Peter Huessy

Okay. This is a kind of a three-part question. And with respect to France, and if Europe has more intra-European Union discussions of bringing France and England into a the extended deterrent role in Europe, one should that happen? Two question is one question asked is will that increase the risk of the use of nuclear weapons.

00:50:15;24 - 00:50:39;16

Peter Huessy

Just kind of interesting. There it is. Should we, whether it's France or England or even the US, should we put weapon nuclear weapons back into Europe, for example, couple question up countries or mentioned Poland and Sweden so that it's our weapons, but we forward deploy them as opposed to where they are now, which is limited to gravity bombs aboard.

00:50:39;19 - 00:51:00;16

Peter Huessy

Airplanes. And then we're going to have some standoff capability. But those are number questions. Quite a number of questions in the chat function came up on this issue of enhanced EU cooperation on nuclear, as opposed to NATO, because NATO includes US in support.

00:51:00;18 - 00:51:27;01

Paige Gasser

Yeah, definitely. So, I think we're seeing those debates and discussions are very lively right now. Obviously, Macron's speech the other week, kind of you know, exemplified that. So first of all, it's important to note that France and the UK, have, as I mentioned, I mean, they're independent strategic forces, have been the backstop as well, of NATO or Europe's.

00:51:27;03 - 00:52:01;03

Paige Gasser

Yeah, nuclear deterrent and their posture. And so, so it's, you know, important to note that this is not anything new, per se. With Macron speech, for example, I think that, you know, they're trying, you know, he really signal that they're France is interested in building kind of a NATO adjacent nuclear, layer. So it potentially would be distinct from NATO's nuclear mission, but also perfectly complementary.

00:52:01;05 - 00:52:31;29

Paige Gasser

There's no kind of, there was no kind of discussion of NATO joining then or excuse me, excuse me of France joining the NPT. But that they would have these kind of many lateral bilateral political exchange bodies. I actually think that, you know, this could be, potentially building off of, like, the Northwood declaration that occurred last summer between the UK and France.

00:52:32;02 - 00:53:09;05

Paige Gasser

There's a lot in that declaration that France and the UK, will need to be implementing. And so, I think that... I think that they're, yeah, these are kind of complementary and probably expansive, pieces. In terms of risk. I think that it's an important we don't often talk about risk management. And, I actually have a colleague at the center for Global Security Research, Anna Peczeli, who wrote a really interesting piece on our what should our be our strategy for risk management.

00:53:09;08 - 00:53:37;21

Paige Gasser

And I think that that would be my recommendation. There's, that the UK and France should really be thinking about. Yeah. What is their actual strategy for risk management if they're going to extend their nuclear deterrent to other countries? I do think that, you know, this really shows, a potential, it shows really like a strong deterrent message.

00:53:37;21 - 00:54:05;23

Paige Gasser

But I think that any kind of movement within Europe really could reinforce NATO's conventional agenda, especially on the air and missile defense and long-range strikes. So, for example, in Macron's speech, he really talked about this kind of mutual support between nuclear and conventional. And he identified three priority kind of capability buckets for Europe. So, early warning integrated air and missile defense.

00:54:05;25 - 00:54:32;05

Paige Gasser

And then deep strike. And the one thing I will say is that I really welcome that, especially with Macron speech, that, there was discussion of potential integration of these, conventional nuclear exercises. What would that look like? I think that the more that we have those types of exercises, the better off, for the alliance and, yeah.

00:54:32;05 - 00:54:52;10

Paige Gasser

And ultimately, I think, you know, no matter what, if the EU, the U.S. really stays engaged in Europe for the next ten years or maybe backs off a little bit, no matter what, Europe has to build up conventionally. And so I think these discussions are actually, really positive from my perspective.

00:54:52;12 - 00:54:55;02

Peter Huessy

I'm going to throw a curveball at you.

00:54:55;04 - 00:54:56;02

Paige Gasser

Yeah.

00:54:56;04 - 00:55:29;28

Peter Huessy

And it's something that I haven't seen a lot of writing about, but what did we get out of the I. I don't think it was all bad or all good, but yeah, it was the unilateral declaration. I understand why it was done. I know a lot of the people worked on that. And the second question related to that is, given the restraint we showed with respect to theater systems, why did Putin invade Ukraine in 2014?

00:55:30;00 - 00:55:56;10

Peter Huessy

You mentioned in your paper a couple times, did he no longer think deterrence mattered, that America just wasn't going to respond? Or do you say, I'll roll the dice and take a risk because the deterrent is there. America didn't disarm. And NATO had been enhanced by a number of presidents. We kind of did go on a holiday, so we got about three minutes.

00:55:56;10 - 00:56:20;08

Peter Huessy

Paige and I know those are. They're not easy questions, but I think they need to be asked, because one of the things I'm thinking of is, should we put nuclear weapons back in the western Pacific? Not necessarily in country, but aboard ships or in the area. So I'll leave it to you. These last two questions and, we've got about three minutes, so, yeah.

00:56:20;10 - 00:56:48;11

Paige Gasser

Think, going backwards potentially, the theater nuclear force question. First I would, kind of, advise people to potentially read Greg Weaver's piece that came out last April on the imperative of theater nuclear forces, kind of talks about a man and, you know, are some that are capable or a capability similar to, like, a man that goes into kind of some of those operational details.

00:56:48;13 - 00:57:11;11

Paige Gasser

I think it's a really important piece to read. That kind of raises, some of those, some of those questions. Peter. So, why did, Putin invade, Ukraine back in 2014? I, I was actually in Bulgaria when that happened. So not too, too far away. And, I think that, you answered the question.

00:57:11;11 - 00:57:41;00

Paige Gasser

I think he was able to gamble and take the risk. I think NATO had been kind of, sleeping there a little bit. And I think that, additionally, maybe a more important question is why did he invade again in 2022? Because I think that, he took lessons learned from 2014 and specifically how the U.S. responded and figured he could probably do this again and get away with it.

00:57:41;00 - 00:58:13;06

Paige Gasser

Obviously, there's a whole litany of, evidence of, you know, he wasn't expecting, you know, the Ukrainian will and power to fight, NATO and international support in 2022. But that comparison is very interesting. And then additionally, and what did they get us? I don't know if I can necessarily answer that. But I think just in the sense that I think that this was this was the framing, this was how we were thinking about the environment.

00:58:13;08 - 00:58:35;11

Paige Gasser

And the key point here is that our adversaries were not thinking about reducing. They were thinking about they kept those, those, you know, for their nuclear enterprises. They kept those lines running in terms of production. And so, and, and obviously, I mean, this goes back to what's the US's role in the world. We were distracted by Iraq, Afghanistan, I mean, other, other pieces. So, yeah, I think that's, important part of the narrative as well.

00:58:43;21 - 00:58:47;02

Peter Huessy

Thank you. You finished? Right at 11:00.

00:58:47;04 - 00:58:56;05

Paige Gasser

Okay. Wonderful. I know it's short, but for anyone who's interested, please get back and get in touch with me. And more than happy to continue the conversation any other time.

00:58:56;07 - 00:59:17;14

Peter Huessy

Okay, Kimberly, I'm going to pass it over to you to conclude because I have to run to another zoom event. But I want to thank you, Paige. That was really extraordinary. We will have a transcript, and the video will post it. Kimberly does that does a wonderful job on that. But I want to thank you on behalf of NIDS and Jim Petrosky, our president, who's here with us.

00:59:17;16 - 00:59:38;02

Peter Huessy

Really extraordinary. Well done. A lot more food for thought that could go on for a number of different sessions, which we should begin to think about. Getting you out here to maybe one of our Triad symposiums, which we're going to do on this fall, and we're going to do one in June. But again, Paige, thank you and give my best to Brad Roberts as well.

00;59;38;03 - 00;59;43;00

Paige Gasser

Thank you. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it. Yeah. Thanks everyone.

00;59;43;02 - 01;00;14;01

Kimberly Cherington

Yes. Thanks again, Paige, for being here with us today. I will, for and thanks to each of you who took time out of your day to join us. I will be sending out a transcript, this video to you, as well as Paige's slide show. If, she's willing for me to do that. And just wanted to say, if you're new to notes, we are a 501 C3 nonprofit organization dependent on generous donations.

01;00;14;01 - 01;00;34;05

Kimberly Cherington

And we're dedicated to advancing peace and stability through a strong national security and nuclear deterrent. We thank you for your support and for being part of our growing community, and we hope you have a peaceful day and a peaceful weekend. And that you'll join us next week. Thank you.

01;00;34;08 - 01;00;35;00

Paige Gasser

Thank you.