



# Balancing deterrence with assurances – policy coordination between security partners in the Asia-Pacific

## Policy brief

Joel Petersson-Ivre, Oliver Meier,  
Tanya Ogilvie-White, Rishi Paul

---

January 2024

# About the Authors



**Joel Petersson Ivre**  
*Policy Fellow at the APLN*

Joel Petersson Ivre is a Policy Fellow at the APLN. His research interest lies in Asia-Pacific security issues, with a focus on Chinese politics and foreign policy and nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula. He received his Master's degree from Yonsei University's Graduate School of International Studies in East Asian Studies and International Security and Foreign Policy, and his Bachelor's degree in Chinese Language and Culture from Stockholm University. He has held internships at East Asia Institute in Seoul and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.



**Dr Oliver Meier**  
*Policy & Research  
Director at the ELN*

Dr Oliver Meier is Policy and Research Director at the European Leadership Network. Previously, he was Senior Researcher at the Berlin office of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH) and Deputy Head of the International Security Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP). He was also International Representative and Correspondent of the U.S. Arms Control Association. Dr Meier has also held the position of Senior Arms Control and Disarmament Researcher with the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC). Dr Meier holds a PhD in political science from the Free University of Berlin.



**Dr Tanya Ogilvie-White**  
*Senior Research Adviser  
at the APLN and non-  
resident senior fellow at  
Pacific Forum*

Dr Tanya Ogilvie-White is a senior research adviser at the Asia Pacific Leadership Network, Seoul; non-resident senior fellow at Pacific Forum, Hawaii; and a member of the international group of eminent persons for a world without nuclear weapons, Tokyo. Previously, she was director of the New Zealand Centre for Global Studies, Wellington; associate professor and research director at the Centre for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, Australian National University; senior analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra; Stanton nuclear security fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London; and senior lecturer at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand.



**Dr Rishi Paul**  
*Senior Policy Fellow at the  
ELN*

Dr Rishi Paul is a Senior Policy Fellow at the ELN leading the implementation of Nuclear Policy projects. His expertise includes nuclear deterrence and emerging and disruptive technologies, especially its effect upon the formation of nuclear strategy and escalation pathways. Rishi's research interest is also geared towards a critical examination of the role of nuclear off-ramps in managing risk reduction and averting nuclear use. Rishi's pioneering work in this space is held in high regard; in late 2022, the Geneva Center for Security Policy awarded Rishi First Prize in its global security competition for developing an innovative plan designed to avert nuclear use in crisis and in war.

# Executive Summary

**Deterrence without clearly communicated assurances towards adversaries is highly problematic, destabilising, and increases the risks of miscalculation.**

This policy brief is part of a joint project between the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network (APLN) and the European Leadership Network (ELN) aimed at understanding strategic threat perceptions and policies among three security partners in the Asia-Pacific – Australia, Japan, and South Korea – and the United Kingdom (UK). The strategic choices of Australia, Japan, and South Korea are heavily focused on strengthening deterrence against China and North Korea, at the expense of credible assurances of restraint.

The policy brief distinguishes between **reassurance** – a positive security guarantee, where a country resolves to defend an ally if they are attacked – and **assurance** – a negative security guarantee, where a country resolves not to use force against an adversary as long as certain conditions are met.

From this definition, the policy brief makes three central arguments regarding assurance:

- Deterrence without clearly communicated assurances towards adversaries is highly problematic, destabilising, and increases the risks of miscalculation.
- To reduce those risks, the three Asia-Pacific security partners must balance their deterrence policies with assurances of restraint, chiefly by improving coordination between their respective deterrence policies.
- The UK is well-positioned and has a strategic interest in facilitating such coordination.

A phased approach to developing joint assurance policies is sensible: these countries should first explore a unified assurance approach amongst themselves before coordinating with the United States in order to eventually decide on how to communicate assurance measures to adversaries and reduce the risk of deterrence breakdown.

To this end, the security partners must identify the ‘Goldilocks zone’ between ambiguity and assurance, and agree on where to draw red lines, how to communicate those red lines towards adversaries, as well as the consequences of these adversaries crossing red lines. At the same time, these security partners must create incentives for adversaries to not cross such lines.

Recent changes to deterrence postures in Australia, Japan, and South Korea (especially the acquisition of long-range strike capabilities), together with recent diplomatic developments between the Asia-Pacific security partners on the one hand, and China and North Korea on the other, have complicated the task of communicating assurances – but have also opened up new opportunities to stabilise deterrence.

The UK, despite its limited regional influence, maintains a strategic interest in improving the balance between deterrence and assurance measures in the region. It can and should support efforts to stabilise deterrence, by facilitating a dialogue on assurances. This is necessary because the developments outlined in this policy brief indicate that there is a lack of understanding among political leaders, government officials, and the expert

community of how deterrence operates during periods of high tension in a multipolar system and of the stabilising role that assurances need to play.

The paper identifies five challenges where the security partners must do more work in order to balance deterrence with assurances:

**1. Coordination:** the security partners must coordinate their approaches and views of assurances among themselves.

**2. Agreement:** the security partners must reach agreement on how to define red lines vis-à-vis China and North Korea, including the principles that underpin assurances, its scope and the institutional framework for providing assurances.

**3. Empathy:** the security partners must recognise how their lack of policy coordination and adoption of certain diplomatic language can affect Chinese and North Korean threat perceptions.

**4. Reciprocity and trust:** recognising that assurances of restraint require reciprocal assurances from China and North Korea to be politically acceptable, the security partners should agree on, and clarify what trustworthy assurances from China and North Korea would look like.

**5. Complexity:** the security partners should discuss how to maintain the credibility of assurances in case crises break out simultaneously in different parts of the Asia-Pacific, such as the Taiwan Strait and the Korean Peninsula.

**This paper identifies five challenges where the security partners must do more work in order to balance deterrence with assurances.**

# Introduction

The risk of conflict in the Asia-Pacific is becoming a concern for Australia, Japan, and South Korea – security partners and main allies of the United States (US) in the Asia-Pacific – and, to some extent, for countries outside the region with significant strategic interests in the region, such as the United Kingdom (UK). A previous report by the APLN and the ELN has laid out how these three security partners, together with the UK, are making strategic choices to address the risks that developments in the region pose to their national security.<sup>1</sup> These four countries share concerns about China’s assertiveness and its lack of transparency over its nuclear build-up, North Korea’s aggressive nuclear and military posturing, and the worsening strategic competition between the US and China. In this policy brief, we make three central arguments:

- Deterrence without clearly communicated assurances towards adversaries is highly problematic, destabilising, and increases the risks of miscalculation.
- To reduce those risks, the three Asia-Pacific countries must balance their deterrence policies with assurances of restraint, chiefly by improving coordination between their respective deterrence policies.
- The UK is well-positioned and has a strategic interest in leading – or at least facilitating – such coordination.

The concerns of these security partners – all US allies – are compounded by anxieties over continued US commitment to the region after the US elections in 2024. The prospect of a second Trump administration and the return of a transactional approach towards alliance management has driven US allies to seek as much reassurance as possible from the United States, while the more amenable Biden administration is in power. The proponents of this approach hope that reinforced alliance commitments, enhanced military coordination, and deterrence measures – especially the acquisition of long-range strike capabilities – will ensure a strong continued US presence in the region that can deter Chinese or North Korean aggression. One notable example of this strategy is Australia’s move to acquire nuclear-powered submarine – among other things – from the United States and the UK through the AUKUS pact. South Korea has sought – and received – additional reassurances as part of US extended deterrence commitments, through the Washington Declaration, which promises visits by US ballistic missile submarines and B-52 bombers, as well as the establishment of a new bilateral Nuclear Consultative Group. Japan for its part, has published a series of new security documents to “pave the way for strategic, institutional, and tactical integration”<sup>2</sup> with the United States.

However, others are wary of radical changes in US security policies and thus argue that US allies must hedge on the risk of American retrenchment by seeking ways to ensure their security, independent of the United States. In South Korea, most notably, the debate about acquiring an independent nuclear deterrent has entered the mainstream, with widespread public support. President Yoon Seok-yul has openly broached the idea (although he later retracted the statement), and several leading politicians have expressed support for a South Korean bomb. Another sign of Seoul’s nuclear hedging is its development of submarine-launched ballistic missile

capabilities, the only non-nuclear armed state to have done so. In the wake of AUKUS, support for developing an indigenous nuclear-propelled submarine has seen a resurgence among Korean experts and officials.<sup>3</sup>

Japan is widely seen as the US ally that puts most faith in the US alliance. But Tokyo is also hedging its bets. Japan is increasing defence and security cooperation, including the provision of “Official Security Assistance” to “like-minded countries”,<sup>4</sup> a term which echoes the Biden administration’s framework of ‘democracies versus autocracies.’ Yet, the countries that Japan designates as “like-minded” appear to be those that share similar threat-perceptions of China, rather than those with a democratic political system.<sup>5</sup>

For the UK, regional hedging by US allies opens opportunities to establish itself as a security provider in the region. As AUKUS shows, the UK strategy for the Asia-Pacific is premised on continued US regional involvement. However, London is also involved in partnerships without the United States, such as an ambitious project to develop fifth generation fighter jets with Japan (and Italy). The UK typically abstains from permanent involvement in the Asia-Pacific, such as committing to fixed placement of UK hard assets or patrols of nuclear-armed Trident submarines. However, the UK has adopted a ‘support’ capacity role in the sense that it considers itself available to regional allies on a case-by-case basis. In line with this approach – and with the UK’s focus currently on Russia – it continues to remain “unlikely that Whitehall has developed nuclear targeting plans for China and North Korea”.<sup>6</sup>

Strategies for seeking US reassurances and hedging on US retrenchment are not mutually exclusive. For example, South Korean proponents of a domestic nuclear deterrent argue that their independent nuclear capabilities can enhance Seoul’s value and prestige as a US alliance partner. South Korea’s nuclear hedging might even be intended as a negotiating tactic to secure US reassurances. Japan and South Korea have also begun mending their bilateral relationship and deepened their trilateral cooperation with the United States. The Biden Administration is currently enthusiastic about that cooperation. Washington sees closer security cooperation between Japan and South Korea as having value in deterring Chinese, North Korean, and even Russian military activity in the region.

UK deployments of military assets to the region are naturally much more limited than those of the US. Yet, the UK’s (temporary) deployment of an aircraft carrier to the Asia-Pacific in 2021, as well as an increasing number of exercises with Australia, Japan, and South Korea, are meant to align with the strategies of regional partners and contribute to strengthening deterrence in the region.

Whether through seeking reassurances from the United States or hedging on its retrenchment, approaches to security in the Asia-Pacific are firmly grounded in the jointly held perception that deterrence is the best available means for reducing risks in the region. By building capabilities that can credibly hold China and North Korea at bay, Australia, Japan, and South Korea (and to a lesser extent, the UK) hope to keep the region stable. Compellence as an extension of deterrence is also gaining importance. This is to say, Canberra, Seoul, Tokyo and – to some degree London –

believe China and North Korea can be “compelled” to change their behaviour through threat of force. The belief is that compellence can reduce risks of conflict with China and North Korea – or bring such conflicts to a swift end on favourable terms, should deterrence fail.

### A note on reassurance and assurance

In this report, we distinguish between *reassurance* and *assurance*.<sup>1</sup>

*Reassurance* – refers to a form of *positive* security guarantee, meaning that a country resolves to defend an ally if they are attacked. The US promise to come to the aid of its Asia-Pacific allies in case of aggression against them is a form of reassurance.

*Assurance* – refers to a form of *negative* security guarantee, meaning that a country resolves not to use force against *an adversary* as long as certain conditions are met.

<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge that these terms are often used interchangeably.

# Assurances of restraint

**Doubts over continued US commitment to the region have resulted in an overreliance on the procurement aspects of deterrence, often at the expense of diplomacy.**

We argue in this policy brief that deterrence *without clearly communicated assurances towards adversaries* is highly problematic, destabilising, and increases risks of miscalculation.<sup>7</sup> To be successful, deterrence must focus on credible assurances of restraint as long as the adversary stays within implicit or agreed limits of behaviour.<sup>8</sup> Assurances can also be an element of compellence if the adversary (in this case China and North Korea) ignores demands. In such a scenario it would involve the promise that coercive measures will stop if and when the compelled state complies with demands to change behaviour.

Historically, after the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, both sides recognised that assurances were necessary. The 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe was a kind of ‘assurance package’ because it combined a recognition of territorial status quo with promises of economic cooperation and humanitarian contacts across borders.

There are measures that the United States can take to clarify red lines towards China and North Korea and re-engage both countries diplomatically.<sup>9</sup> Leading US experts on China have recommended greater focus on assurances in US policy towards China over the Taiwan issue.<sup>10</sup>

However, given the significant role that Australia, Japan, and South Korea play in US strategy on the Taiwan issue and its strategy towards the Korean Peninsula, it is worth investigating the role of US allies in providing assurances as security partners. Exploring assurances from a *non-US perspective* has two distinct advantages. First, it allows identification of US assurance measures that might be unpalatable to allies.<sup>11</sup> Second, the prospect of at least partial US retrenchment from the Asia-Pacific, or a return to a more transactional ‘America First’ foreign policy begs the question what US allies can do either by themselves or together to reduce risks they perceive in the region, without necessarily looking to the United States as the coordinating hub.

A phased approach to developing joint assurance policies is therefore sensible: these security partners may want to first explore a unified assurance approach amongst themselves, before coordinating with the United States, in order to eventually decide on how to communicate assurance measures to adversaries, and reduce the risk of deterrence breakdown.

Doubts over continued US commitment to the region have resulted in an overreliance on the procurement aspects of deterrence, often at the expense of diplomacy. It is therefore also worth exploring how other external partners – in this case the UK – can be productively engaged in assuring adversaries. Such an analysis can support a wider effort of improving policy coordination of deterrence policies between US allies in the region for the purpose of improving assurance as a key element of more stable deterrence.

Deterrence without assurances is dangerous. Insofar as Australia, Japan, and South Korea think about escalation scenarios in the Asia-Pacific, they tend to focus narrowly on how to respond to China or North Korea *after* they have crossed red lines. However, our interviews and discussions with experts and officials in Australia, Japan, and South Korea have found that these red lines



are often vague and ill-defined. Such ambiguity enhances the effectiveness of deterrence, but there is a trade-off: by not stating where the red line is drawn, the implicit assurance is weakened. It is thus essential that these security partners identify the 'Goldilocks zone' between ambiguity and assurance, and agree on where to draw red lines, how to communicate those red lines towards adversaries, as well as the consequences that these adversaries will face if they cross the red lines. At the same time, these security partners must create incentives for adversaries to not cross such lines. Assurances require some recognition of an adversary's threat perception. But assurances are not concessions. Rather, they bolster deterrence by making it more stable and sustainable.

In the next two sections, we first highlight how recent changes to deterrence postures in Australia, Japan, and South Korea – particularly the acquisition of long-range strike capabilities – succeed in communicating credible punishment but fail at clearly communicating assurances of restraint to China and North Korea. We then show how recent diplomatic relations between these security partners in the Asia-Pacific on the one hand, and China and North Korea on the other hand, have complicated the task of communicating assurances – but also opened up opportunities to stabilise deterrence.

From this assessment of deterrence measures and the state of diplomatic relations, we conclude by noting challenges that policy makers must take into account in order to balance deterrence with assurance measures.

# Long-range strike doctrines and red lines

The South Korean position on pre-emptive strikes against North Korea undermines the credibility of its nominal engagement policy (see below). According to South Korea's current doctrine (the "three axis" defence system), it will use domestically produced strike capabilities to conduct pre-emptive strikes if signs of missile launch are detected in North Korea, and follow up any successful attack on South Korea with 'massive punishment and retaliation'. However, there is uncertainty over Seoul's operational ability to correctly identify an impending strike – and thus respond appropriately.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, loose talk from some South Korean politicians about 'decapitation strikes' against Kim Jong Un and the North Korean leadership has introduced significant ambiguity regarding the conditions that might actually trigger a South Korean strike on North Korea.

South Korea has a less hostile relationship with China than with North Korea. Seoul therefore has so far not seen the need to clarify red lines regarding the use of its long-range strike capabilities in its bilateral relations with Beijing. However, some recent developments might necessitate more clearly defined assurances vis-à-vis China. In 2021, South Korea lifted the range limitations on its missiles. Previously, a bilateral agreement with the United States had restricted South Korean missile ranges. For the first time, South Korean missiles could hit targets over a distance of more than 1,000 km, putting not just all North Korean territory within range, but also Beijing and the Taiwan Strait. South Korean missiles subsequently hold at risk countervalue targets in some of the most densely populated areas of China. They also threaten counterforce targets in China's Northern, Eastern, and Central Theater Commands.<sup>13</sup>

Beijing is likely to have taken note of this change but has yet to officially comment on its implications. South Korean President Yoon has stated that South Korean missiles are only intended to target North Korea. But that comment speaks to a fundamental South Korean dilemma, as it aligns closer with the United States and Japan: given its geographic proximity to both North Korea and China, for any step South Korea takes to deter North Korea, it will have to reassure Beijing that China is not the real target. China's harsh reaction to the 2016 deployment of a US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in South Korea demonstrated the need for better assurances, if South Korea wants to avoid unnecessarily provocative blowback from China.

Japan is planning to field 'counterstrike capabilities', which are partly domestically produced and partly consist of US-made Tomahawk missiles. Such weapons can be used to strike at enemy bases with the minimum required force, provided that an attack against Japan has occurred and no other means are deemed sufficient to safeguard Japan's security.<sup>14</sup> The 2022 National Security Strategy provides a seemingly non-ambiguous declaration that "pre-emptive strikes, namely striking first at a stage when no armed attack has occurred, remain impermissible".<sup>15</sup> However, analysts have pointed out that Japan's definition of "pre-emptive" is not so clear, and that Japan appears to reserve the option of carrying out a "pre-emptive counterstrike" in situations that are not clearly spelled out in its policy documents.<sup>16</sup>

Australia is rapidly moving to acquire long-range strike weapons. Defence Minister Richard Marles has used the term 'impactful

projection' to describe Australia's future long-range strike doctrine, which he defined as "an ability to hold an adversary at risk, much further from our shores, across kind of the full spectrum of proportionate response".<sup>17</sup> The nuclear-propelled submarines to be acquired through AUKUS are a main investment priority for Australia to serve this purpose. As Canberra's 2023 Defence Strategic Review states: "Nuclear-powered submarines are key assets both in effecting a strategy of denial and in the provision of anti-submarine warfare and long-range strike options".<sup>18</sup> Other major AUKUS investment priorities include the acquisition by Australia of more than 200 US Tomahawk missiles and an accelerated program to manufacture guided missiles and rockets in South Australia (partly to help expand the US military-industrial base in the Asia-Pacific) by 2025. Long before the AUKUS pact was announced, Australia and the United States had been cooperating to develop and test air-launched hypersonic weapons on Australian soil.<sup>19</sup> In addition, AUKUS will also facilitate the supply of US Tomahawk missiles to Australia. Experts at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) have speculated whether Australia should also acquire other US-made long-range capabilities, including the B-21 strategic bomber. Such weapons could potentially serve roles beyond those required by the 'deterrence by denial' posture implied in Australian official statements.<sup>20</sup>

\*\*\*

At the dawn of the third nuclear age, it is becoming increasingly likely that non-nuclear weapons will assume some of the strategic roles that traditionally have been associated with nuclear weapons.<sup>21</sup> Even though it is currently unclear whether Australia, Japan, or South Korea share this analysis, the trend does complicate policy coordination among them. For example, Japan recognises its counterstrike capabilities as part of its 'strategic approach'. But the South Korean nuclear debate indicates that some South Koreans do not view their (or the US) current non-nuclear capabilities as strategic assets. Many in Seoul believe that an effective deterrence posture must be based on nuclear weapons.

As South Korean long-range strike capabilities expand further, and Japanese and Australian ones become operational over the next few years, the need to assess how those capabilities affect China and North Korea's threat perceptions will increase. This trends towards enhanced military capabilities will in turn amplify the need to communicate assurances of restraint to China and North Korea, provided all sides want to reduce risks of escalation and unnecessary arms races. The demise of the INF treaty, and the planned deployment of US intermediate range missiles in the region in 2024 introduces additional complexities.<sup>22</sup> Experts believe that currently no US ally would be willing to host such capabilities, but predict that this willingness might well change.<sup>23</sup>

**At the dawn of the third nuclear age, it is becoming increasingly likely that non-nuclear weapons will assume some of the strategic roles that traditionally have been associated with nuclear weapons.**

# Diplomacy and deterrence

## Stalemate with North Korea

Stable deterrence is dependent on assuring North Korea that the United States and its allies have no intention of conducting a first strike against the regime. US allies have a role to play in assuring North Korea that neither they nor the United States are pursuing regime change, and in pushing for restraint from the United States.

In the current diplomatic environment, assuring North Korea is an extremely difficult task, however. Following North Korea's successful launch of a surveillance satellite in November 2023, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the United States applied coordinated sanctions on eleven individuals involved in the North Korean missile and space program.<sup>24</sup> The unprecedented degree of coordination exemplifies the current approach of US allies towards Pyongyang. The international sanctions on North Korea limit the diplomatic engagement of North Korea with any country, particularly US allies.

South Korea is the only US ally that maintains an official policy of bilateral engagement with North Korea. But in practice the current government in Seoul has shown less enthusiasm than its predecessor for engagement. Soon after taking office, President Yoon announced an 'audacious initiative' for engagement with North Korea, in which he promised economic incentives, but conditioned these on the gradual and eventual denuclearisation of North Korea. Pyongyang rejected the initiative and subsequently enshrined its nuclear weapons in the constitution, and refocused its missile program on short-range capabilities, including the miniaturisation of nuclear warheads, to be fitted on tactical-range missiles. Inter-Korean relations have thus deteriorated in recent years. Left to manage its North Korea policy through unilateral measures, the Yoon administration has downsized and reorganised the Unification Ministry, and following the November satellite launch, abandoned the 2018 inter-Korean Agreement. Thus, the only remaining arms-control agreement between the two Koreas has ceased to be operational.

Japan's policy of engagement towards North Korea entails the pursuit of diplomatic efforts "in close coordination with the US and the ROK".<sup>25</sup> This policy in effect means that Tokyo does not pursue bilateral diplomacy with North Korea. The abduction of Japanese citizens to North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s remains a main sticking point in bilateral relations.<sup>26</sup> Japan has recently attempted to approach North Korea to resolve the issue. But no agreement on formal talks has been reached yet.<sup>27</sup>

The space for diplomatic interaction between Australia and North Korea is small. The two countries technically maintain diplomatic relations. But since 2008, neither country has maintained an embassy in the other's capital. Instead, Canberra and Pyongyang have accredited their embassies in Seoul and Jakarta, respectively. Australia's North Korea policy has thus been characterised as "all containment and no engagement".<sup>28</sup> The latest Australian foreign policy White Paper, published in late 2017, highlighted the threat from North Korea's nuclear missiles, and held that "Australia will continue to work with others to impose the strongest possible economic and other pressure on North Korea to stop its dangerous behaviour".<sup>29</sup> However, since then North Korea has gradually

disappeared from the Australian security debate. The 2020 Defence Strategic Update mentions North Korea only once, and the 2023 Defence Strategic Review does not mention North Korea at all. Australian security experts argue that the disappearance of North Korea in the Australian security debate is largely reflective of the singular focus on China as the main security threat in the region.<sup>30</sup>

### Opportunity with China?

Australia's singular focus on China in recent years has largely been driven by a rocky diplomatic relationship with Beijing. The Albanese Government has made it a priority to stabilise Australia's relationship with China and is basing such efforts on the principle to "co-operate where we can, disagree where we must", as articulated by Prime Minister Albanese when he made an official state visit to Beijing to meet with President Xi in November 2023.<sup>31</sup> At the APEC summit in San Francisco a few weeks later, Albanese extended an official invitation to Chinese Premier Li Qiang to visit Australia.

During this time, two episodes highlighted the Australian difficulties of navigating its diplomatic relationship with China. As the APEC leaders met in San Francisco, a Chinese navy ship used its sonar against divers operating from a Royal Australian Navy ship in Japanese territorial waters. This caused minor injuries to the divers. Albanese claimed that he had raised concerns over the incident with China, and Japanese officials also expressed "serious concern".<sup>32</sup> At the same time, the Australian Prime Minister refused to answer directly whether he agreed with US President Joe Biden's off-script remarks that Xi Jinping is a "dictator".

Australia has also sought to endorse a stabilisation of the US-China relationship. In May 2023, Prime Minister Albanese gave a speech at the Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore, where he called on China and the United States to establish 'guardrails' that could prevent the relationship from veering into open conflict. The speech reflected an attempt to manage strategic competition between the Beijing and Washington. Kevin Rudd, former Australian Prime Minister, and the current ambassador to the United States, has also called for such engagement.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, a large trust deficit in the relationship between Australia and China persists. Some Australian experts go so far as to suggest that Beijing's attempts to stabilise relations with Australia are a Chinese ruse, aimed at exploiting Australian good will further down the line. Australian officials argue that the strategic impact of AUKUS pales in comparison to the implications of China's nuclear build-up. But on the Chinese side, AUKUS has generated a great deal of diplomatic resignation. The project has also complicated Australian efforts to lead on nuclear security and risk reduction in forums such as the IAEA or the NPT review cycle.

Like Australia, South Korea is attempting to pursue a principled diplomatic stance towards China. The experience of Chinese sanctions after the THAAD deployment in 2016 is still fresh in political memory. South Korean public's trust in China is low. Likewise, South Korean officials sense that "China is trying to push everywhere and see what they can get away with".<sup>34</sup> It is not strange then, that the Yoon administration has emphasised

“mutual respect”<sup>35</sup> in its attempts to carry out a soft reset of the South Korea-China relationship. Although the relationship has recently seen some heated exchanges between Chinese and Korean diplomats, it appears to be stabilising.<sup>36</sup> The South Korean President’s office has been open about its intention to arrange for Xi Jinping to visit Seoul in the near future.

South Korea and Japan are currently planning to resume trilateral foreign-minister level talks with China through the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS). Despite the previous South Korean administration’s attempts to expand its work, the TCS has generally shied away from hard security issues. But the effort at least represents a return to broad high-level talks that are inclusive of China. The TCS is a forum where some trust-building between top diplomats can begin to take place. Separately, Japan and China have recently established a hotline between their respective defence ministries. But a much-needed hotline between Japan’s Self-Defense Forces and China’s PLA theatre command is still missing.<sup>37</sup>

Tokyo has serious concerns about Chinese intentions. But Japan recognises that it shares with China “important responsibilities for the peace and prosperity of the region”.<sup>38</sup> Despite Chinese sanctions on Japanese fish exports over Japan’s decision to release treated wastewater from the Fukushima power plant into the Pacific Ocean, Japanese Prime Minister Kishida and Chinese President Xi met on the side-lines of the November 2023 US-China San Francisco summit. Although the short meeting did not produce any concrete outcomes, the official Chinese readout struck a positive tone.

\*\*\*

At the moment, the potential for diplomatic engagement with North Korea appears limited. But the budding momentum in bilateral relations with China could present an opportunity for engagement on deterrence communication. Ideally, such an effort would include an effort to clarify intentions and redlines with Beijing. The issue remains that Australia, South Korea, and Japan have little experience of engaging China in a deterrence dialogue and have huge difficulty communicating with Beijing on hard security issues, where their efforts often backfire. By learning from each other’s mistakes; coordinating among themselves on what is required to provide effective assurances they can begin to build the necessary expertise and skills among themselves to understand and strengthen deterrence. They should also seek to learn from how other states have navigated deterrence relationships – including how, when and where assurances have worked in the past. As we argue in the next section, the UK has a role to play in facilitating such an undertaking.

**At the moment, the potential for diplomatic engagement with North Korea appears limited. But the budding momentum in bilateral relations with China could present an opportunity for engagement on deterrence communication.**

# The role of the UK in the Asia-Pacific

**The UK, despite its limited regional influence, maintains a strategic interest in improving the balance between deterrence and assurance measures in the region.**

The UK's political and military influence in the Asia-Pacific is not particularly significant. For London, the European theatre and the Russia-Ukraine conflict take priority. However, the UK recognises that substantial economic interests are tied to the Asia-Pacific and that some level of involvement is required to ensure its interests are safeguarded.

The geographical distance limits the UK's direct military and political influence in the Asia-Pacific. However, in addition to the fact that there is a large UK ex-patriate community in Northeast Asia a salient concern for London is centred on the presumption that a China-Taiwan conflict would disrupt the global supply of Taiwanese manufactured computer micro-chips and associated logistical chains. UK policy-framers and experts believe such a development could severely hamper UK economic interests. Although London has formal diplomatic relations with Beijing, it maintains a *de facto* embassy in Taipei. In June 2023, UK Security Minister Tom Tugendhat reportedly discussed mutual security interests with the Taiwanese Digital Affairs Minister Audrey Tang.

Until 2021, the UK focus centred on broader engagement with the Asia-Pacific, particularly with ASEAN and regional partners, but notably omitted risks of a war over Taiwan's future. But recently the UK's concerns about mitigation of escalation risks around a potential China-Taiwan conflict have moved to the forefront. In its 2023 Integrated Review Refresh, London acknowledged security concerns over crisis in the Taiwan Strait, recognising that a potential conflict there is a realistic threat.<sup>40</sup> Experts differ on the likelihood of such a conflict and often focus their policy recommendations on the perceived effectiveness of the US extended deterrence in avoiding such a conflict altogether.<sup>41</sup>

The UK's approach to a potential North Korean aggression focusses on denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, concerns over cyber threats, and a reliance on diplomatic channels and international cooperation to prevent escalation.<sup>42</sup> Experts generally agree that the US deterrence strategy on the Korean Peninsula makes a conflict with North Korea unlikely in the short term. Overall, UK experts argue that US presence in the Asia-Pacific strengthens strategic stability and believe that a conflict in the Asia-Pacific is improbable in the short term.

The UK, despite its limited regional influence, maintains a strategic interest in improving the balance between deterrence and assurance measures in the region. Its policy is focused on strengthening deterrence postures of its partners in the region, notably by ensuring sustained US involvement in the region. Yet, there remains a significant gap in the UK's policy stance on direct military engagement in the region, which reflects either a deliberate strategic choice to focus on diplomacy instead of crisis management, or a lack of comprehensive planning for such eventualities.

# Balancing deterrence with assurances: challenges in the Asia-Pacific

**There is a lack of understanding among political leaders, government officials and the expert community of how deterrence operates during periods of high tension in a multipolar system, and of the stabilising role that assurances need to play.**

The policies of the security partners in the Asia-Pacific are long on deterrence but fall short on conceptualising and operationalising assurances vis-à-vis China and North Korea, as a necessary element of stable deterrence relationships. In short, current Australian, Japanese, and South Korean policies are too risky. All three security partners urgently need to start thinking about how stabilise their current adversarial relationships with China and North Korea by strengthening assurances.

The developments outlined in this policy brief indicate that there is a lack of understanding among political leaders, government officials and the expert community of how deterrence operates during periods of high tension in a multipolar system, and of the stabilising role that assurances need to play. Weapons systems are being acquired, but not enough is being done to expand the small pool of diplomats and experts who are well-versed in deterrence communication. For many reasons, including new technology and political developments, the risks of deterrence breakdown are rapidly evolving, making it hard even for individuals with expertise to keep up with events. Therefore, we argue that increased focus from policymakers and experts can and should be a necessary element of – but not a replacement for – the development of deterrence policies in the Asia-Pacific.

The build-up of deterrence capabilities and the breakdown of trust is taking place as multilateral non-proliferation and arms control regimes are fraying, sometimes *because* of that build-up. AUKUS has become another sticking point in the IAEA, the demise of the INF treaty has opened the way for the United States to plan the deployment of ground-based intermediate-range missile capabilities in the region. Creating more stable and sustainable deterrence postures in the Asia-Pacific would serve to counteract this concerning trend.

The UK alone cannot induce regional actors to reorient their security policies towards a less risk prone and more sustainable deterrence posture. But as a reliable security partner with a stake in the region, London brings long-standing experience in the management of East-West conflict to the table, which can inform and foster a dialogue on such a recalibration of deterrence. Moreover, the UK can help to analyse and address some of the challenges and dilemmas associated with bringing assurance into a deterrence posture.

As a European power, a nuclear weapon state, a close partner of regional states and permanent member of UN Security Council, the UK has unique opportunities but also a responsibility to work towards a more stable relationship among states in the Asia-Pacific. For London, the P5 process remains the preferred platform to engage China on a meaningful level. In January 2022, the P5 collectively made the most basic joint assurance that “A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”.<sup>43</sup> However, UK deterrence framing and elements of associated policies and practices, which include a degree nuclear opacity, complicate efforts to communicate assurances to China and North Korea.



## Coordination: the challenge of a united approach towards assurances

A coordinated approach to bringing assurances into deterrence relationships is key if such efforts are to be effective. China and North Korea might otherwise be able to 'pick off' countries and exploit gaps between their policies, or between their policies and those of the United States.

Australia, Japan, and South Korea recognise the importance of maintaining good diplomatic relations with China. Efforts to sustain high-level dialogue with China – and Beijing's apparent willingness to engage in such dialogue – provide a possible basis on which to engage in a dialogue on assurances. The significant economic and strategic interests Canberra, Seoul, and Tokyo have with China should strengthen a foundation for such a conversation. But all three countries must better coordinate amongst themselves to renegotiate the terms of bilateral relations with Beijing.

The same is true for relations with North Korea. But while all three regional security partners share a concern about China's posture, South Korea is currently the only regional country that considers North Korea a policy priority. Greater prioritisation of North Korea by South Korea's partners could help not only policy coordination, but also reduce the sense of insecurity that is causing the public and some policymakers to consider nuclear weapons.

## Agreement: the challenge of defining red lines vis-à-vis China and North Korea

Assurances are faced with some of the same dilemmas that deterrence entails. Thus, agreement between Australia, Japan and South Korea on assurances will be tricky. The devil will lie in the details of reaching agreement on the principles underpinning assurances (how binding?), the scope (how general or specific?), and the institutional framework (who will be providing such assurances?). On all of these questions, the same difficulty of reconciling different priorities, interests and political cultures among allies will need to be tackled.

Assurances may come in very different forms. Some may be communicated quietly, in the form of political promises, others may be contained in written documents. Some assurances can be agreed bilaterally (for example between North and South Korea), some plurilaterally (for example between AUKUS partners and China). Others may find their way into the multilateral sphere, for example via UN resolutions or NPT initiatives.

The UK can play a crucial role in the process of fostering a dialogue on a joint understanding about the relative importance of assurances, as well as their scope and quality. Each of these aspects is likely to be contested within and among regional partners, and London can be a catalyst towards greater coherence and consistency of assurances given to China and North Korea. The UK can also play an important role in communicating these assurances: to China through its position as a P5 state in the UN; and to North Korea through the embassy in London, and the UK

**The devil will lie in the details of reaching agreement on the principles underlying assurances (how binding?), the scope (how general or specific?), and the institutional framework (who will be providing such assurances?)**

embassy in Pyongyang as soon as the opportunity arises to reopen it. Flexibility, specificity, and honesty will have to be essential elements of a process towards more and better assurances that can underpin deterrence.

### Empathy: the challenge of recognising Chinese and North Korean concerns

US allies view China and North Korea (and Russia) as a hostile bloc. This threat perception is mirrored in China and North Korea, who view Australia, Japan, South Korea and the United States (as well as other Western countries) as a hostile bloc. Chinese and North Korean propaganda frequently portrays individual Washington's allies simply as US puppets. This view implies that incongruent actions of US allies, that each by themselves might be intended to stabilise, could be seen from Beijing and Pyongyang as purposeful deceit under the direction of the United States.

For example, South Korea's attempts at creating ambiguity around its pre-emptive strike doctrine could undermine sincere Japanese attempts to clarify the red lines in its doctrine. Likewise, the Australian Prime Minister's support of 'guardrails' reflects a lack of consideration to Chinese threat perceptions, as China rejects the term as an attempt at US containment.<sup>44</sup> Australia's uncritical adoption of the US diplomatic vocabulary could fuel the very mistrust that the country seeks to dispel.

As a power with a very small military footprint in the region, the UK could leverage its diplomatic clout within the P5 process play a coordinating, intermediary role here by fostering a dialogue aimed at better understanding threat perceptions. It could foster Track-2 dialogues on specific issues, such as the interaction of emerging technologies and assurances, that are related to current tension but may not lie at the core of ongoing disputes. As a European partner, the UK could also impress on its regional partners the importance of continued dialogue, even under difficult circumstances.

### Reciprocity and trust: the challenge of extracting Chinese/North Korean assurances

Assurances from security partners in the region necessitate corresponding assurances from China and North Korea to be practically meaningful and politically acceptable. Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the UK should clarify what trustworthy Chinese and North Korea assurances would look like. The UK could inform such a discussion based on its historical experience in building trust through reciprocal agreements with the Soviet Union.

Engagement at different levels and with different partners can increase credibility of assurances. Direct military-to-military contacts, such as the dialogues pursued between China and the United States in the wake of the San Francisco summit, can establish direct personal relationships between militaries. Bilateral diplomatic exchanges can underpin such engagement politically. Communication of assurances to additional partners, for example in the ASEAN Regional Forum, can increase the 'stickiness' of such commitments and increase the costs of violating pledges. Multilateral fora can be venues to broaden the reach even further.

**Assurances from security partners in the region necessitate corresponding assurances from China and North Korea to be practically meaningful and politically acceptable.**

Most importantly, consistent engagement of China and North Korea on all these levels can increase the credibility of any assurances they might provide.

### Complexity: the challenge of maintaining the credibility of assurances in a twin-crisis

One complication of defining assurances is connected to maintaining assurances in a 'dual crisis' involving the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait.<sup>45</sup> Many decision-makers and experts, particularly in South Korea, fear that China and North Korea may exploit a crisis in one theatre to gain advantages in another, by exploiting the fact that the United States or its allies may be overcommitted or distracted. Sticking to assurances under such dynamic conditions may be particularly challenging.

Addressing such complex interdependencies between different subregions and military technologies is difficult when discussing assurances but should not stand in the way of such an attempt. The UK, with its broad experience in supporting multilateral arms control is situated well to address such complexities. Currently, UK officials consider the risk of a 'dual crisis' to be overblown. However, it is important to understand and acknowledge the concern that South Koreans attach to this risk.

\*\*\*

Military build-ups by regional states, the scarcity of diplomatic and military channels between Australia, Japan, South Korea, and the UK on the one side, as well as China and North Korea on the other side, are clear indications that deterrence will remain the predominant stabiliser in the Asia-Pacific. Uncertainty over the reliability of US reassurances for its regional allies is fuelling an overreliance on the compellence component of deterrence strategies. China and North Korea appear to be bent on exploiting such uncertainties to use force to establish greater influence in the region.

All these developments make for a very dangerous mix. The availability of novel military technologies, such as long-range conventional strike capabilities, appear to grant advantages to those who strike quickly in a crisis. Lack of coordination between partners and unclear escalation paths in possible parallel crises around Taiwan and North Korea can further reduce crisis stability.

Assurances between adversaries on red lines can be essential tools to reduce incentives to outcompete each other in peacetime and to prevent escalation when deterrence has failed. Exploration of such assurances will be a difficult undertaking. Australia, Japan, and South Korea may want to explore such measures first, amongst themselves and then bring the United States in. Once there is a basic understanding of the scope of such assurance measures would it make sense to pursue them with China and North Korea. The UK, as a reliable and credible partner, with credibility in diplomatic efforts to broker arrangements that increase regional stability, has a key role to play in such a process. Difficult it may be, but the alternative - an overreliance on deterrence without assurance - is dangerously unsustainable.

# References

- 1 This policy brief presents preliminary findings from the second year of a joint APLN-ELN project aimed at investigating threat perceptions and risk reduction measures in the Asia-Pacific. The content of this policy brief is based on 35 interviews carried out with officials and experts in Australia, Japan, and South Korea between August and September 2023, and a conference with participants from each country and the UK, that was held in Tokyo in October 2023. For a summary of the first year findings, see: Anna Clara Arndt, Maximilian Hoell, Alice Saltini, and Joel Petersson Ivre, "Strategic Risks in the Asia-Pacific: Examining Australian, British, Japanese, and South Korean Perspectives" (Asia-Pacific Leadership Network & European Leadership Network, June 2023).
- 2 Takuya Matsuda, "Japan's Emerging Security Strategy," *The Washington Quarterly* 46, no. 1 (January 2, 2023): 93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2023.2190218>.
- 3 Jamie Chang, "South Korean Admiral Claims That Nuclear-Powered Submarines Are Necessary," *Naval News* (blog), November 16, 2023, <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2023/11/south-korean-admiral-claims-that-nuclear-powered-submarines-are-necessary/>.
- 4 Tokuchi Hideshi, "Japan's New National Security Strategy and Contribution to a Networked Regional Security Architecture," *Center for Strategic & International Studies* (blog), June 23, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/japans-new-national-security-strategy-and-contribution-networked-regional-security>.
- 5 Kuik Cheng-Chwee, "Navigating the Narratives of Indo-Pacific: 'Rules,' 'Like-Mindedness,' and 'De-Risking' in the Eyes of Southeast Asia," 2023, 52–54, <https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/handle/10822/1085043>.
- 6 Interview participant, Dec 2023.
- 7 This point was expressed – though not unanimously agreed on – by participants in the APLN-ELN conference in Tokyo, October 2023.
- 8 Matthew D. Cebul, Allan Dafoe, and Nuno P. Monteiro, "Coercion and the Credibility of Assurances," *The Journal of Politics* 83, no. 3 (July 2021): 975–91, <https://doi.org/10.1086/711132>.
- 9 Jamie Kwong and Ankit Panda, "What Russia's Embrace of North Korea Means for America," *Foreign Affairs*, November 15, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/north-korea/what-russias-embrace-north-korea-means-america>.
- 10 The Task Force on U.S.-China Policy, "Avoiding War Over Taiwan" (University of California: San Diego, October 12, 2022), <https://china.ucsd.edu/files/2022-avoiding-war-over-taiwan.pdf>; see also more recently: Bonnie S. Glaser, Jessica Chen Weiss, and Thomas J. Christensen, "Taiwan and the True Sources of Deterrence," *Foreign Affairs*, November 30, 2023, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/taiwan/taiwan-china-true-sources-deterrence>.
- 11 See critique on the Task Force's recommendations from a Taiwanese perspective: Michael Turton, "Climate of Confusion," *Taipei Times*, October 24, 2022, sec. Features, <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/feat/archives/2022/10/24/2003787600>.
- 12 For a discussion of these operational challenges, see: Ian Bowers and Henrik Stålhane Hiim, "Conventional Counterforce Dilemmas: South Korea's Deterrence Strategy and Stability on the Korean Peninsula," *International Security* 45, no. 3 (January 1, 2021): 22–28, [https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00399](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00399).
- 13 The Eastern Theater Command's area of responsibility includes the Taiwan Strait and the East China Sea; South Korean observers have noted that China's Northern Theatre Command would be leading any Chinese intervention on the Korean Peninsula, see Chang Hyung Lee, "The People's Liberation Army's Transformation Under Xi Jinping's Military Reform" (Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, 2019); for the approximate location of counterforce targets around the Korean Peninsula, see Decker Eveleth, "People's Liberation Army Rocket Force Order of Battle 2023" (James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, July 3, 2023), 33, <https://nonproliferation.org/peoples-liberation-army-rocket-force-order-of-battle-2023/>.
- 14 These conditions are referred to in the Peace and Security Legislation of 2015 as the "Three new conditions for the use of force".
- 15 "National Security Strategy of Japan," December 2022, <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/221216anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>.
- 16 "Japan's Counterstrike: Learn from South Korea," *War on the Rocks*, August 2, 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2023/08/japans-counterstrike-learn-from-south-korea/>. South Korean media has also noted that Prime Minister Kishida has been "disappointingly vague" on Japan's pre-emptive strike doctrine, see: So-youn Kim, "Japan's standards for use of preemptive counterstrike against N. Korea remain unclear," *Hankyoreh*, December 20, 2022, [https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/1072238](https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/1072238).
- 17 Richard Marles, "Submarine Institute of Australia - Conversation with Michael Fitzgerald," *Australian Department of Defence*, November 8, 2022, <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/transcripts/2022-11-08/submarine-institute-australia-conversation-michael-fitzgerald>.
- 18 "Defence Strategic Review" (Australian Government, 2023), 56.

- 19 "SCIFIRE Hypersonics" (Air Force, September 22, 2022), <https://www.airforce.gov.au/our-work/projects-and-programs/scifire-hypersonics>.
- 20 Marcus Hellyer and Andrew Nicholls, "Impactful Projection: Long-Range Strike Options for Australia" (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, December 2022).
- 21 Andrew Futter and Benjamin Zala, "Strategic Non-Nuclear Weapons and the Onset of a Third Nuclear Age," *European Journal of International Security* 6, no. 3 (August 2021): 257–77, <https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2021.2>.
- 22 Ashley Roque, "Army's New Typhon Strike Weapon Headed to Indo-Pacific in 2024," *Breaking Defense* (blog), November 18, 2023, <https://breakingdefense.sites.breakingmedia.com/2023/11/armys-new-typhon-strike-weapon-headed-to-indo-pacific-in-2024/>.
- 23 Jeffrey W. Hornung, *Ground-Based Intermediate-Range Missiles in the Indo-Pacific: Assessing the Positions of U.S. Allies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2022).
- 24 Ji Da-gyum, "S. Korea, US, Japan, Australia Jointly Announce Sanctions on NK," *The Korea Herald*, December 1, 2023, <https://m.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20231201000491>.
- 25 "National Security Strategy of Japan," 15.
- 26 "No Thaw in Sight for Japan–North Korea Relations," *East Asia Forum*, September 17, 2022, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/09/17/no-thaw-in-sight-for-japan-north-korea-relations/>.
- 27 "Japan Held Secret Talks with North Korea in March and Again in May," *The Asahi Shimbun*, September 29, 2023, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/15017105>.
- 28 "Impactful Projection: Long-Range Strike Options for Australia"
- 29 "2017 Foreign Policy White Paper," 4.
- 30 Interviews carried out with Australian security experts in September 2023.
- 31 "Press Conference - Beijing - People's Republic of China," November 6, 2023, <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/press-conference-beijing-peoples-republic-china-0>.
- 32 "Japan Has 'Serious Concerns' about Australia Sonar Incident," *Australian Financial Review*, November 21, 2023, sec. asia, <https://www.afr.com/world/asia/japan-has-serious-concerns-about-australia-sonar-incident-20231121-p5els7>.
- 33 Kevin Rudd, *The Avoidable War* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2022).
- 34 Comment by Korean official at APLN-ELN conference in Tokyo, October 2023.
- 35 Jingdong Yuan, "Mutual Respect? China-South Korea Relations at 30," *Asia-Pacific Leadership Network*, August 24, 2022, <https://www.apln.network/analysis/commentaries/mutual-respect-china-south-korea-relations-at-30>.
- 36 Scott A. Snyder, "What's Causing the Rise in China-South Korea Tensions?," *Council on Foreign Relations* (blog), June 30, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/whats-causing-rise-china-south-korea-tensions>.
- 37 This was noted by a Japanese participant at the APLN-ELN conference in Tokyo, October 2023.
- 38 "National Security Strategy of Japan."
- 39 "Xi, Kishida Reaffirm Strategic, Mutually Beneficial China-Japan Ties," accessed November 21, 2023, [http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-11/17/content\\_116823170.htm](http://english.scio.gov.cn/topnews/2023-11/17/content_116823170.htm).
- 40 "Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world", HMG, March 2023, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1145586/11857435\\_NS\\_IR\\_Refresh\\_2023\\_Supply\\_AllPages\\_Revision\\_7\\_WEB\\_PDF.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1145586/11857435_NS_IR_Refresh_2023_Supply_AllPages_Revision_7_WEB_PDF.pdf).
- 41 Interview with UK official, Dec 2023.
- 42 Richardson, Peter. "Operationalising Risk Reduction in the Asia-Pacific – A UK Perspective." *Asia-Pacific Leadership Network & European Leadership Network*, (forthcoming).
- 43 "Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races", *The White House*, 3 January 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/01/03/p5-statement-on-preventing-nuclear-war-and-avoiding-arms-races/>.
- 44 Katie Rogers and David E. Sanger, "U.S. Manages Expectations of a Breakthrough Before Biden and Xi Meet," *The New York Times*, November 14, 2023, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/14/us/politics/biden-xi-china-apec.html>.
- 45 Kim, Jina. "Strategic Stability on the Korean Peninsula: Dual Crisis and Risk Reduction Measures." *Asia-Pacific Leadership Network & European Leadership Network*, (forthcoming).

The European Leadership Network (ELN) is an independent, non-partisan, pan-European NGO with a network of nearly 200 past, present and future European leaders working to provide practical real-world solutions to political and security challenges.

The Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (APLN) is a network of former- and currently-serving political, diplomatic and military leaders, as well as senior government officials, scholars and opinion leaders across the Asia-Pacific region.

## Contact

Published by the European Leadership Network and the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network, January 2024

European Leadership Network (ELN)  
8 St James's Square  
London, UK, SE1Y 4JU

Asia-Pacific Leadership Network (APLN)  
4th fl., 116, Pirundae-ro, Jongno-gu  
Seoul, ROK, 03035

@theELN | europeanleadershipnetwork.org  
@APLNofficial | apln.network

Published under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0

© The ELN and the APLN 2024

The opinions articulated in this report represent the views of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the position of the European Leadership Network, the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network, or any of their members.



EUROPEAN  
LEADERSHIP  
NETWORK



APLN  
ASIA-PACIFIC LEADERSHIP NETWORK

