



CENTRE FOR STATECRAFT & NATIONAL SECURITY

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

Russia, China, and the Growing North Korea Threat

A Roundtable with Dr. Oriana Skylar Mastro

30 September 2026, 5.30 – 6.30pm

Dockrill Room (KIN 628)

King's College London

In June 2024, Russian President Vladimir Putin made his first visit to Pyongyang in nearly 25 years, receiving a ceremonial welcome befitting the typical pageantry of North Korean politics. Beyond the usual spectacle, however, his meeting with Kim Jong Un was unique in establishing a new frontier for Russian-North Korean cooperation: a Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, which formalized the military alliance between the two states that had been quietly taking shape since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. By October 2024, about 11,000 North Korean troops had been deployed to Russia, mainly in Kursk; by late April 2025, South Korean intelligence estimated the total at around 15,000, with at least half still deployed. Pyongyang's growing alignment with Moscow threatens to diminish Beijing's role as a constraining influence and disrupt the balance of this three-country coalition, upping the risk of escalation for South Korea and its allies. To prevent future conflict on the Korean Peninsula, deterrence efforts must address this new configuration of North Korea's dangerous liaisons, confronting both Russia's willingness to sustain Kim's regime and China's willingness to secure its neighbourhood.

On 30 September, the Centre for Statecraft and National Security, in conjunction with the Department of War Studies, will host Dr Oriana Skylar Mastro for a roundtable discussion on her recent research on China-Russia-DPRK alignment.

To RSVP, please [fill out the form](#) by 28 Sep

Speaker

Oriana Skylar Mastro is a Center Fellow and Director of the [Indo-Pacific Policy Lab](#) at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies and Courtesy Assistant Professor of Political Science at [Stanford University](#) where her research focuses on Chinese military and security policy, Asia-Pacific security issues, war termination, and coercive diplomacy. She is also a nonresident scholar, [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#) and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. She was previously an assistant professor of security studies at Georgetown University. Mastro continues to serve as a lieutenant colonel in the United States Air Force Reserve for which she currently works at the Pentagon as Deputy Chief of Reserve China Global Strategy. [For her contributions to U.S. strategy in Asia, she won the Individual Reservist of the Year Award in 2016](#) (CGO), 2022 (FGO), and was also awarded the Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command 2025 Annual Award (FGO). She has published widely, including in *International Security*, *Security Studies*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, *The Washington Quarterly*, *the Economist* and *the New York Times*. Her most recent book, *Upstart: How China Became a Great Power* (Oxford University Press, 2024), evaluates China's approach to competition and was awarded a Silver Medal at the 2026 Axiom Business Book Awards. Her book, *The Costs of Conversation: Obstacles to Peace Talks in Wartime*, (Cornell University Press, 2019), won the 2020 American Political Science Association International Security Section Best Book by an Untenured Faculty Member. She holds a B.A. in East Asian Studies from Stanford University and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Politics from Princeton University. Her publications and other commentary can be found at www.orianaskylarmastro.com and on Twitter [@osmastro](#).