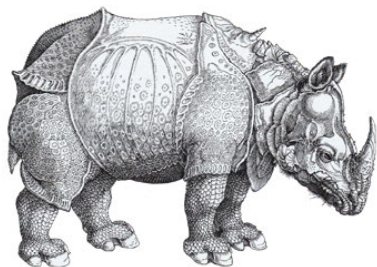


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SECURITY INDEX

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Future of arms control: views from the United States

Tom Countryman, Anya Fink



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Analysis

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Tom Countryman. How to Multilateralize Arms Control

The article analyzes prospects for multilateral arms control including China, Great Britain, and France. Although the Russian-American strategic relationship remains the most crucial issue, it will be increasingly difficult to restrain new proliferation efforts without establishing multilateral arms control among all countries of the P5. Engaging China is a difficult task, but it is possible if a trilateral security dialogue cements the perception of China's superiority to the UK and France. London and Paris themselves will be willing to join a multilateral dialogue only after a deep reduction in the American and Russian arsenals. The extension of New START is a precondition for such a dialogue.

Key findings:

- **Although multilateral arms control is an important goal, the Russian-American strategic relationship remains the most crucial issue the world faces.**
- **Without global confidence that arms control will be embraced by all of the P5, it will be increasingly difficult to restrain new proliferation efforts in the Middle East and Asia.**
- **Under certain circumstances, one could conceive of China joining a trilateral security dialogue, if only to cement the perception of their superiority to the United Kingdom and France.**
- **Without a deep reduction in the American and Russian arsenals, France and Great Britain will be as reluctant as**

Beijing to put their relatively small force on the negotiating table. Until such a reduction occurs, there is no clear argument available that would persuade the UK and France to enter a P5 negotiation.

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Anya Fink. Challenges to Broadening the Scope of U.S.-Russian Arms Control

The article analyzes the challenges of broadening the scope of U.S.-Russian arms control. The author elaborates on the incorporation of new elements into a future arms control negotiating framework, comments on weapon systems that require immediate attention, and shares her viewpoint on bilateral and multilateral approach towards key strategic issues. The article also defines possible instruments and mechanisms that could be used independently of legally binding treaties.

Key findings:

- **It is not entirely clear that Russia wants to negotiate on non-strategic nuclear weapons and novel capabilities due to its perceived need for regional deterrence capabilities.** This raises questions of a minimum level of nonstrategic or novel nuclear capabilities that Russia would need and specific U.S. capabilities that could be considered for tradeoffs.
- **There is no one “most highly destabilizing weapon system” because risks have more to do with how sides plan to use certain capabilities.**
- **Any arms control framework will need to be resilient to political fluctuation in the bilateral relationship.**
- **After a New START extension, the United States may be able to work bilaterally (with Russia and China, and maybe others) on key strategic stability issues while also engaging in various multilateral and international venues.** However, a neat negotiating framework for all these new elements is unlikely because, as noted, many of them still need to “ripen” through dialogue.

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How to Multilateralize Arms Control

Thomas Countryman

A multilateral process is not the most urgent undertaking...

The Russian-American strategic relationship remains the most dangerous threat the world faces. It is far easier to imagine an inadvertent escalation from an incident to a conflict to a nuclear war between the US and Russia than it is to imagine the same between the US and China. (India and Pakistan are another matter). Therefore, the most urgent priority is to stabilize the US-Russia relationship at a lower level of risks, and a smaller size of arsenals.

... but it is important to send a signal that multilateral arms control is conceivable

The continued coherence and credibility of the Nonproliferation Treaty is at stake, given the frustration most nations feel at the failure of the five Nuclear Weapons States to move more rapidly toward nuclear disarmament, a reaction that was the impetus behind the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Extension of New START is a minimum condition to ensure a civilized atmosphere at the August 2021 NPT Review Conference. But without global confidence that arms control will be embraced by all of the P5, it will be increasingly difficult to restrain new proliferation efforts in the Middle East and Asia.

What incentives did the Trump Administration offer to China?

According to sources inside the White House, President Trump's simplistic thinking was that China would jump at the opportunity to "sit at the big boys table", to be recognized as being on a nuclear par with Russia and the United States. Of course, Beijing does not believe that the blessing of Trump or any other American is necessary to confirm its 'Great Power' status. But Trump's thinking is not entirely delusional; under certain circumstances, one could conceive of China joining a trilateral security dialogue, if only to cement the perception of their superiority to the United Kingdom and France.

Others in the Trump Administration argued that the deployment of new US intermediate-range missiles in Asia would force China to accept an invitation to a trilateral dialogue. This was never likely to influence Beijing, not least because of the difficulty Washington would face in finding a willing host for new missiles aimed at China.

The US approach, based on the mistaken belief that Russia needed New START extension more than the US needed it, was to pressure Russia to pressure China to join, while engaging in a public effort to 'shame' China into accepting the invitation, with rhetoric that was aimed at the US domestic audience, but which had no resonance in Beijing.

There is no indication that the US ever privately outlined what China would gain (other than US-bestowed prestige) from a dialogue, such as a significant reduction in the risk of conflict between the US and China.

The US demanded 'transparency' from China as if transparency were a self-evident virtue. In fact, Chinese resistance to transparency (at least at the level shared between Moscow and Washington) is rooted in their view that their far smaller arsenal retains credibility as a second-strike instrument

in part because of secrecy. Indeed, as well argued by Alexander Savelyev, insisting on a US-Russian level of transparency could impel China to adapt its doctrine and arsenal in destabilizing directions.¹

So, how DO you bring China in?

First, it must be noted that there will be NO multilateral negotiations for a long time if Washington and Moscow fail to extend New START.

Next, it is important to state the obvious: it is NOT Russia's job to drag China to the negotiating table. The corollary of this, though is not quite so obvious: if the US somehow convinces China to join a trilateral dialogue (as unlikely as that now seems), Russia should not insist (though it may suggest) that the UK and France must join as well.

Instead of repeating Trump's insistence on a trilateral dialogue, the Biden administration will need to start a little less ambitiously, with a credible, private offer of a wide-ranging bilateral security dialogue with China. Such an offer should occur soon after Washington and Moscow agree to the higher priority, their own bilateral dialogue.

A look at the history of Chinese-American communication tells us it won't be easy to get started. The official discussions under the Obama-era Security and Economic Dialogue, among military and civilian leaders from both sides, were stilted and unproductive. With insufficient history of mil-mil contacts, and the lack of a common knowledge base and terminology, the discussions were never likely to be as frank and productive as the same conversations between Russians and Americans. Even American-Chinese Track Two discussions of nuclear issues tend to run into polemics and conceptual gaps at an early point. Also, in my experience, Chinese officials can play even more games (or, if you prefer, be more 'tactical') than Americans or Russians in the simple mechanics of dialogue: postponing/cancelling scheduled dialogues to make a statement of protest on unrelated matters, or delaying scheduling meetings until the agenda is (in Beijing's view) perfect. Finally, even with a new US President, the recent deterioration in US-China relations (as also with US-Russia relations) will potentially complicate the effort, even if it is advertised as a dialogue of 'technical' experts at first.

Despite those obstacles, I believe there is fertile ground for Chinese and American officials to plow. As with Russia, US officials need to explore further conventional risk reduction measures that could prevent inadvertent escalation of incidents. Tong Zhao has outlined practical discussion areas that – while falling short of treaty negotiations – could immediately reduce risk and gradually lead to more formal agreements.²

There is also a potential game-changer: if Biden follows up the statement he made in January 2017, and advocates for a US policy of "No First Use" of nuclear weapons (or the related concept of 'sole purpose'), Beijing's calculation about the utility of the dialogue would immediately become more positive.

And how do you get to Five?

It is understandable why Moscow views the British and French forces as part of the 'NATO-3' nuclear arsenal. But it is also important to understand that London and Paris

don't see it that way and continue to use their own rationale for maintaining an independent deterrent.

Washington cannot force them to the negotiating table, any more than Moscow could force Beijing. Nor should the US 'hide behind' them and discourage their participation in any way. Without a deep reduction in the American and Russian arsenals, they will be as reluctant as Beijing to put their relatively small force on the negotiating table. Until such a reduction occurs, there is no clear argument available that would persuade the UK and France to enter a five-way negotiation.

A question posed by TPNW advocates is relevant here: if the nuclear-armed states cannot accept the TPNW, is there any of them prepared to take a decisive lead in forcing a more serious effort to reduce arsenals? I am pessimistic that – in the next few years – Washington, Moscow or Paris will come up with a paradigm-shifting approach to the imperative of disarmament, such as the Joint Enterprise advocated by the American former cold warriors (Shultz, Perry, Kissinger, Nunn)³. But I am somewhat more hopeful that London (or perhaps even Beijing) is capable of such an initiative.

What tools can move us forward?

The P5 process

Since 2009, the P5 process proved a useful channel of dialogue. Its public results are unimpressive to many: the publication of a nuclear glossary required intensive consultation and helped to bridge differences in perception, but it was greeted by much of the world with a yawn. Perhaps the main value of the P5 has been in laying a groundwork, a common conceptual base, upon which future multilateral negotiations could be built. However, it is a process, not a negotiation, and it will not become a negotiation without significant intervening effort, particularly by Washington and Moscow. The most valuable thing the P5 could do before the 2021 Review Conference would be to issue a simple, two-part statement: repeating that 'nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought'; and re-affirming, without any qualification or footnote, their legal obligation to pursue nuclear disarmament.

The NPT Review Conference

Most diplomats define a successful RevCon as one that produces a consensus final document, even if much of the text gets forgotten even before the delegates have returned home. It can be an effective mechanism for reminding the nuclear-weapons states of their unfinished obligations, but it is not a decision-making body. Still, this year's RevCon could help pave the long path toward multilateral negotiation if:

- The P5 (particularly the US, Russia and France) stop attacking the TPNW advocates as naïve and dangerous.
- All participating states focus on the core purpose of the NPT: to prevent non-nuclear states from acquiring such weapons.
- The Conference states clearly, and the P5 accept, that further steps must be taken by the two states with the largest arsenals, but that none of the P5 can assume that they are "off the hook" and have no obligation to take action to reduce arsenals.

Non-treaty forms of agreements

Both Moscow and Beijing have made clear that they prefer binding treaties over less formal 'political' agreements, and with good reason. They have little patience with the dysfunctional nature of the US Senate. From their side, however, they will need to show some flexibility in the face of America's partisan politics, and be prepared to use the kind of non-treaty mechanisms that Presidents Gorbachev and Bush employed. Here too, however, the American President is not off the hook. Senate refusal to ratify treaties is an old story. In 1905, Secretary of State John Hay predicted that the Senate would never ratify another treaty, a view many think is true of today's situation in Washington. Of course, with time, his prediction proved false. The Biden Administration should seek to end the stalemate by aggressively advocating for ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and any subsequent arms control treaty negotiated with Russia or others.

A final note: rhetoric matters!

The readiness of other states to join the US and Russia in more ambitious arms control efforts will be affected by the rhetoric of our national leaders. In the last years of the 20th century, P5 leaders largely stopped boasting about the strength of their arsenals, or describing (as North Korea and Pakistan are wont to do) their nuclear weapons as an element of their national greatness. The return of such rhetoric, first by Putin, then by Trump and (to a lesser extent) Xi, sends exactly the wrong signal to states that harbor nuclear weapon ambitions, and to the great majority of the world who will be unwilling participants (victims) in any nuclear conflict. Presidential statements alone cannot change the hard realities of security competition, but they can set the agenda for reduced reliance on nuclear weapons, and for a more successfully focused bilateral (or multilateral) discussion of ways to reduce nuclear risk.

And I end where I began: the primary responsibility for achieving multilateral reductions does not reside in France, Britain or China; it is the United States and the Russian Federation that must create the conditions for multilateral negotiations by making breakthroughs in their own strategic stability relationship.

¹ Alexander Savelyev, "China and Nuclear Arms Control" // Russia in Global Affairs, 2020, <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/china-nuclear-arms/>.

² Tong Zhao, "Practical Ways to Promote U.S.-China Arms Control Cooperation" // Carnegie-Tsinghua Center, 2020, <https://carnegietsinghua.org/2020/10/07/practical-ways-to-promote-u.s.-china-arms-control-cooperation-pub-82818>.

³ James Goodby, "A World Without Nuclear Weapons Is a Joint Enterprise" // Arms Control Association, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2011-05/world-without-nuclear-weapons-joint-enterprise>.

Challenges to Broadening the Scope of U.S.-Russian Arms Control

Anya Fink

Since 2014, the U.S. government has expressed increasing concerns about Russia's emerging military capabilities as well as Moscow's intentions, particularly toward U.S. allies and partners in Europe. The incoming U.S. administration is likely to take steps to engage with Russia in a strategic stability dialogue and even potentially seek to conclude numerical and/or operational arms control agreements. The last several years have seen no shortage of proposals from civil society experts, some of which are likely to become policies of the incoming administration.

While there is a possibility that the incoming administration may use a New START extension to signal a break with the nuclear policies of the outgoing administration, it's also likely that U.S. positions on arms control with Russia will take some time to emerge. The incoming administration will have to outline its defense and procurement priorities, including the future of the nuclear triad and the nuclear enterprise, as well as a missile defense strategy.¹ These will have to contend with an environment of economic constraints and political divisions. The incoming administration will also need to reinvigorate relationships with U.S. allies and partners and re-engage in international cooperation on immediate threats, like global health security. And, it will need to nest U.S.-Russian risk reduction efforts within a broader strategy for the bilateral relationship that is likely to remain fraught with hostility and mutual recrimination. With these points in mind, here are my answers to the questions posed.

How would you prioritize the incorporation of new elements into a future arms control negotiating framework?

There is a veritable cornucopia of arms control proposals that have been developed by U.S., Western, and Russian experts over the last several years. Some issues, like Russia's stated concerns about the evolution of the U.S. missile defense architecture and conventional prompt global strike have been on the table for some time. So has the U.S. concern about Russia's nonstrategic nuclear weapons. But new issues have also been added to the table, to include hypersonic, cyber, space, and autonomous weapons systems. President Putin's 2018 speech to the Federal Assembly made public Russia's so-called "exotic capabilities."² The collapse of the INF and Open Skies treaties amid allegations of noncompliance, as well as close encounters between Russian and U.S./allied forces, have highlighted the need to invest time and attention into security architectures in key regions. There is general consensus on all sides that many of these issues require focused dialogues before negotiations allow actionable solutions, if available, to emerge. These focused dialogues could take place not only in a bilateral format, but also within the P5, and even potentially within a NATO-Russia format.

Russia's nonstrategic nuclear weapons and novel capabilities are issues important to the U.S. government, legislature, and allies. But, it's not entirely clear that Russia wants to negotiate on this issue due to its perceived need for regional deterrence capabilities. This raises some

questions: Is there a minimum level of nonstrategic or novel nuclear capabilities that Russia would need or be comfortable with? Are there links with some very specific U.S. capabilities that could be considered for tradeoffs? Is this something that could be easier to engage on at the regional level (with links to conventional capabilities) or should all nuclear weapons be handled together and separately from conventional? There may be venue and format tradeoffs here. Further, according to President Putin's January 2018 speech, Russia procured some of its novel nuclear systems to counter U.S. missile defense. But does that also mean that Russia no longer perceives U.S. missile defense as a threat because it has factored it into modernization since the early 2000s? Or could some of these capabilities be viewed separately as bargaining chips in future arms control? At least at present, this is not clear.

Washington may remain interested in constraining all nuclear warheads, potentially to a single nuclear warhead limit that includes nondeployed and nonstrategic warheads.³ Some have argued for a solution involving adaptive warhead limits that would "tie one side's allowed strategic nuclear deployment to the other side's chosen level of ballistic missile defense deployment."⁴ There are also creative ideas related to delivery vehicles, including intercontinental ground-launched boost-glide missiles and nuclear-powered torpedoes.⁵ All proposals will require creative approaches to verification.

What is the most highly destabilizing weapon system that requires immediate attention?

My personal opinion is that there isn't one "most highly destabilizing weapon system" because risks have more to do with how sides plan to use certain capabilities.

For example, there is some concern that, in a crisis or early in a conflict (or in the initial period of war), Russia may want to use offensive cyber, counterspace, and precision capabilities to deny its opponent(s) information superiority or achieve coercive effects. The effects of such Russian actions on the other side's NC3, C4ISR, or civilian infrastructure may be unpredictable and also potentially highly escalatory. The first step to trying to mitigate risks involves agreeing that this is an area of mutual concern and then exploring practical risk reduction steps. But, right now, points of convergence with opportunities to mutually improve security are unclear.

What would a negotiating framework look like to address these new elements bilaterally and multilaterally?

After a New START extension, the United States may be able to work bilaterally (with Russia and China, and maybe others) on key strategic stability issues while also engaging in various multilateral and international venues. But, a neat negotiating framework for all these new elements is unlikely because, as noted, many of them still need to "ripen" through dialogue. Moreover, space, cyber, and issues related to autonomous systems span across domains,

institutions, and stakeholders. They will prove complex for any domestic interagency process, and an even greater challenge of comprehension and coordination when scaled up to the bilateral or multilateral level. While some issue linkage at a political level is possible, working out the technological and military-strategic details will take time—and all the while the capabilities in question and employment concepts will continue to evolve.

Any arms control framework will need to be resilient to political fluctuation in the bilateral relationship.

Given the current volatility of the relationship, envisioning a resilient bilateral channel is very difficult. One way could be to have strictly technical engagement away from public eyes and twitter. Another way could be to expand the engagement away from the bilateral toward the regional, P5, or multilateral so that there is staying power and pressures from others to keep at it. There is potential for multiple approaches at once.

Are there other instruments or mechanisms – short of a legally binding treaty – that could improve bilateral transparency and confidence?

Many experts have proposed shifts in declaratory policy, moratoriums, and various transparency and confidence-building measures.⁶ Some have put forward risk reduction measures that would include noninterference with nuclear C3I.⁷ Others have stressed norms. For example, when it comes to space, there are proposals of preserving the norm of noninterference with national technical means,⁸ developing norms of behavior and rules of the road in outer space,⁹ or creating rules of the road for space and cyber space in peacetime, crisis, and conflict.¹⁰ Some of these could be explored bilaterally and in various multilateral fora.

Some propose non-treaty approaches to arms control. However, at times, it's not always clear if these are proposed as a response to needs for flexibility due to perceived changes in the world order or because some think it may be more practical because of challenges in seeking U.S. Senate ratification?

Future arms control will need to be durable enough to pass the bipartisan smell test in the United States Senate because otherwise all policy advances will be fragile.

I think it's important to appreciate the limitations of this particular moment because deliberating, let alone agreeing on, limits on military technologies may prove challenging when numerous states are engaged in the pursuit of military innovation. But it doesn't mean the United States and Russia shouldn't try to engage in arms control or strategic stability discussions. For example, President Putin has said that future deterrence approaches may not necessarily rely on nuclear weapons.¹¹ So, could both sides work toward nuclear arms control while engaging in military

innovation on conventional capabilities? That may be the most likely outcome, but only time will tell.

¹ For a discussion of fundamental questions on missile defense, see Brad Roberts, "Missile Defense: Fit for What Purpose in 2030," in Brad Roberts, editor, *Fit for Purpose? The U.S. Strategic Posture in 2030 and Beyond* (CGSR LLNL, October 2020), <https://cgsr.llnl.gov/content/assets/docs/The-US-Strategic-Posture-in-2030-and-Beyond.pdf>

² And, if that speech was intended as an invitation to arms control, it's not entirely clear that the message worked as intended on a U.S. audience.

³ In addition to proposals of the Trump administration, see, among others, Rose Gottemoeller, "Rethinking Nuclear Arms Control," *The Washington Quarterly*, September 2020, https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.gwu.edu/dist/1/2181/files/2020/09/Gottemoeller_TWQ_43-3.pdf or Steven Pifer, "The Next Round: The United States and Nuclear Arms Reductions After New Start," Brookings, November 29, 2010, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-next-round-the-united-states-and-nuclear-arms-reductions-after-new-start/>.

⁴ Aaron Miles, "Adaptive Warhead Limits for Further Progress on Strategic Arms Control," RealClear Defense, February 6, 2017, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2017/02/07/progress_on_strategic_arms_control_110760.html

⁵ Pranay Vaddi and James M. Acton, "A ReSTART for U.S.-Russian Nuclear Arms Control: Enhancing Security Through Cooperation," CEIP, October 2020, <https://carnegiendowment.org/2020/10/02/restart-for-u.s.-russian-nuclear-arms-control-enhancing-security-through-cooperation-pub-82705>

⁶ See, for example, James Timbie, "A Way Forward," *Daedalus*, Spring 2020, <https://www.amacad.org/publication/way-forward>; Linton F. Brooks, "The End of Arms Control?" *Daedalus*, Spring 2020, https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/full/10.1162/daed_a_01791?mobileUi=0; Vince Manzo, "Nuclear Arms Control Without a Treaty: Risks and Options After New START," March 2019, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/IRM-2019-U-019494.pdf and see Linton Brooks, op. cit.

⁷ James M. Acton, "Escalation through Entanglement: How the Vulnerability of Command-and-Control Systems Raises the Risks of an Inadvertent Nuclear War," *International Security*, Summer 2018, https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/full/10.1162/isec_a_00320

⁸ Michael Markey, Jonathan Pearl, and Benjamin Bahney, "How Satellites Can Save Arms Control," *Foreign Affairs*, August 5, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2020-08-05/how-satellites-can-save-arms-control>

⁹ Frank A. Rose, "Safeguarding the Heavens: The United States and the Future of Norms of Behavior in Outer Space," Brookings, June 2018, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FP_20180614_safeguarding_the_heavens.pdf

¹⁰ James N. Miller and Richard Fontaine, "Navigating Dangerous Pathways," CNAS, January 30, 2018, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/navigating-dangerous-pathways>

¹¹ "Встреча с рабочей группой по подготовке предложений о внесении поправок в Конституцию" [Meeting with a working group to prepare constitutional amendment proposals], President of Russia, February 13, 2020, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62776>.