

## Tailoring Arms Control in the New Strategic Environment

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First off, thank you so much to RUSI for the invitation to be here.

I'm probably going to talk about one of the least popular topics today –arms control, which is getting a bit of a bad rap. I put up here the Time Magazine cover from 1983 as a reminder that we've been here before with arms control and been historically pessimistic about it. But that cover came out before INF, CFE, and START, so clearly there was a future for arms control and I would ask that we give it a chance in the current strategic environment.

To do that, what I'll talk about today is exactly what that new strategic environment is, different versions of how we got here, and two tools for NATO/US/UK to promote strategic stability in that environment- tailoring arms control and tailoring assurance.

But before doing that I wanted to address a couple misnomers about arms control. Arms control does not equal disarmament. Arms control is a tool for the management of existing weapons. It does not always entail numerical reductions, and is not always between the United States and Russia. It's a tool for strategic stability. Another tool for strategic stability is deterrence. So arms control and deterrence are not mutually exclusive.

And this new strategic environment is one that is more complex and seemingly less stable. I'm going to argue that in this environment, arms control has an important role to play by promoting transparency, predictability, and reciprocity. In short, don't give up on arms control.

First, let's talk a bit about this "new" strategic environment. I put up here again that Time cover from 1983, but also show here Time covers from 1996, 2014, and 2015, which demonstrate that a lot of these challenges we face aren't necessarily new. Strategic stability isn't some binary whereby we woke up one morning and suddenly the world was unstable. No, strategic stability is a continuum and it's relative.

Being an academic, I like to start with defining terms and offer two definitions of strategic stability. First, it can be the absence of full-scale conventional war. Second, it is the low risk that conventional war will lead to nuclear war. Historically, strategic stability has been shaken by new technologies, such as missile defence and MIRVing in the 1960's that led to SALT, but it can also be shaken by revisionist states seeking to upset the international order and existing borders.

The environment I'm talking about today is more complex, seemingly less stable than in recent history, with new technologies, revisionist states, and nuclear threats. I refer to this as a "cross domain" environment, but I know that's a controversial term so give the audience the assignment of offering what you think accurately describes the world we are facing. Cross-capability?

F. Scott Fitzgerald said the test of a first-rate intelligence was the ability to hold two conflicting ideas in your mind at the same time and still maintain the ability to function. I know there are a lot of first rate intelligences in this audience, so am going to ask that we not only consider the NATO perspective, but also the conflicting Russian perspective as to how we got into this environment.

We all know the NATO version of the story quite well. Russian aggression and revisionism has upset the international order. Its defence spending in 2015 was approximately \$88.3B, which has doubled in a decade, and defence was exempt from 10% cuts across the board in the rest of the budget. Another aspect that NATO points to is Russian nuclear sabre-rattling, to include violation of INF, threatened suspension of New START, new Borei-class and Bulava, and military exercises with Iskandars and threats to deploy in Crimea.

The Russians would also point to defence modernization and arms control non-compliance. They argue that it was US unipolarity that upset stability and the balance of power, taking advantage of Russia when it was weak. They point to US missile defence deployments and CPGS- a new technology, going back to potential to undermine stability. And lastly, this was something I found in the course of my PhD research and somewhat surprised me, from the Russian perspective, the US has undermined the arms control regime by trying to push through an imbalanced START II, withdrawing from the ABM Treaty, failing to ratify CTBT, and not seeing the preamble of New START (offence-defence balance) as legally binding. I don't mean to be a Russia apologist, but if we want to strengthen strategic stability, their version of this story certainly matters.

There are also two versions of a possible future for arms control. For the US, in order to develop further arms control, Russia must come back into full compliance with INF, TNW must be included (per Senate advice and consent for New START), and domestic politics will continue to be a challenge regardless of who the next President is.

For Russia, missile defence and/or advanced conventional weapons need to be the subject of arms control in order to maintain strategic stability, and the process needs to become multilateral. But Russia also faces domestic pressures and right now arms control might not play into that domestic narrative.

So in the short-term I'm a pessimist and don't see much scope for "big leaps" in arms control, but in the long-term I'm an optimist because Russia needs arms control. It needs arms control to avoid arms race, retire its weapons, and cut down on modernization. It needs arms control for strategic stability- if it wants to see constraints on US missile defence and CPGS, reciprocal arms control is the best chance of that. And lastly, it needs arms control because arms control is a source of prestige for Russia. It's an opportunity to take centre stage, put their nuclear weapons on display diplomatically, demonstrate its on par with the United States, and that does feed into the domestic narrative. So when New START verification expires in 2021, with a five year possible extension, Russia may be coming back to the table for arms control when it needs it.

What, then, is the future for tailoring arms control? Three things. First, the top priority should be maintaining existing agreements and relationships. Despite the breakdown in almost all other areas of cooperation, the United States and Russia have continued to implement New START with 182 inspections to date (according to State Department website). So let's not take that for granted, but ensure it continues. Existing relationships also include INF, and getting Russia back on good terms with INF needs to be a priority.

Second, let's get creative with arms control. Arms control isn't about numerical reductions and isn't always between the US and Russia. It's about transparency, predictability, and reciprocity. The US-led International Partnership for Disarmament Verification is one example of a different type of arms control.

But I'm going to put out a really creative arms control alternative, but do so as a thought experiment and by no means am I advocating or recommending this. When we talk about reciprocal arms control that is usually in terms of like-for-like exchanges: you give up this many SDVs, I will give up this many SDVs. But in this cross-domain environment, can we explore options for cross-domain arms control? And here is the thought experiment: Russia wants a legally-binding constraint on US missile defences and guarantee these will not be used against Russia. The United States wants to see a reduction in Russian TNW. So the potential arms control would be a legally-binding guarantee from the United States that it will not expand beyond current EPAA plans for ten years- set duration is important here. And in exchange, Russia would reduce its TNW for a set period of time. Again, not advocating this, but truly trying to get creative in arms control.

Lastly, the only option for arms control at present may be 'strategic patience', and laying the groundwork for if/when Russia does want to come back to the table, and if/when the United States is in a position to pursue further arms control.

But arms control comes with risks, and that brings me to the second tool for strategic stability- tailoring assurance. One of the greatest challenges of arms control is how it will be perceived by US allies, particularly NATO members. Assurance and arms control work in tandem.

I put up this map of NATO members not because I doubt your knowledge of NATO, but as a reminder that there are 28 NATO members and 28 different opinions and sets of interest- at least 28 sets of interest! An anonymous DoD official once said to me, 'all allies are special like all children are special.' Allies require understanding and knowing their specific interests and needs.

Tailoring comes with certain tools for reassurance that can be distributed in various ways but include: conventional deployments, conventional modernization and ensuring interoperability, missile defences, defence spending, and nuclear modernization. As long as nuclear weapons exist, maintain a safe, secure, and effective arsenal- this, too, is a tool for assurance. And while nuclear assurances are important, they should not come at the expense of conventional modernization within NATO.

I will close with two quotes from Henry Kissinger. First, "It is not a matter of what is true that counts but a matter of what is perceived to be true." I'm sure many people here take issue with the Russian perspective I outlined and say, it's not true the US destabilized Europe. But what matters is that Russia perceives this to be true and that drives their strategic thinking. Second, "What in the name of God is strategic superiority?" I put this up with a follow-on question- is NATO seeking superiority or parity and which of those is best for stability? I pose these questions not necessarily because I have or expect answers, but rather because these are really tough issues.

To wrap up, strategic stability is often upset by the threat we don't see coming. Ten years from now we might think the world is really unstable and look back on 2016 as the good years when things were stable. So what is the threat we don't see coming and what tools can we put in place now to prepare us for that environment and to encourage stability. I see arms control and assurance as essential for that way forward.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.