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## Conclusion: The Future of Arms Control

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Much has changed in the world since 1994, the year that many of the contributors to this volume began work on the earlier book, *Arms Control Toward the 21st Century*.<sup>1</sup> Although that edition highlighted the relevance of the arms control theories, policies, and treaties that had been central features of Cold War politics, the authors in this volume note that we are at a crossroads regarding arms control and the nascent efforts toward cooperative security. Hindsight makes it clear that political and bureaucratic support for an extensive arms control agenda had peaked by the mid-1990s. Indeed, our previous expectations for a bright future for traditional arms control were based on post-Cold War exuberance, faith in existing international agreements and institutions, and an unspoken assumption that continuity would be reflected in the future strategic setting. As we confront today's evolving strategic landscape, however, those Cold War institutions and agreements are beginning to show signs of wear and tear. More than a decade after the end of the Soviet Empire, the Cold War arms control regime appears to be threatened by a creeping bloc obsolescence.

What has happened to reduce the relevance of the existing arms control regime? From a realist's perspective, the end of the Cold War minimized the need for traditional arms control as the Russian Federation and the United States reduced and even eliminated major portions of their nuclear arsenals. Confidence-building measures and cooperative efforts to deal with decaying and potentially deadly remnants of Russia's nuclear, chemical, and biological arsenals remain important, but the pace of such programs is influenced more by the funding supplied by the U.S. Congress than by any fundamental international political disagreement over their importance. By contrast, strategic arms control agreements seemed to be providing a floor, not a ceiling, for weapon deployment, slowing reductions and adjustments in Russian and U.S. long-range nuclear forces. Critics even noted that arms

control itself was a greater source of acrimony between Russians and U.S. citizens than the military arsenals it was intended to control. But even before the attacks of 11 September 2001, slowly improving U.S.-Russia relations had taken much of the urgency out of arms control negotiations. Arms control is not necessary to stop an arms race between states that lack the political will and, in one case, the financial resources needed to engage in an arms competition in the first place. Kerry Kartchner makes this very point in Chapter 16: some critical arms control solutions to Cold War security threats have actually outlived the problems that they were meant to solve.

The erosion of a clear bipolar structure to international relations also reduced the de facto international management once supplied by the superpowers. Unconstrained by either a superpower patron or antagonist, many states used a newfound freedom of maneuver to make their preferences known, undertake regional initiatives, settle old scores, and even gamble on aggression. No longer constrained by the Cold War, the interests, objectives, and disputes of many states and nonstate actors began to emerge on international agendas and to dominate headlines. These disputes, once considered to be so-called lesser included threats when compared to the cataclysmic nuclear war that might have been unleashed by the superpowers, are now perceived as major challenges to global security. Many of the U.S.-Soviet agreements reached during the Cold War were never intended to apply to these emerging actors and issues. Of course, multilateralism and multilateral agreements existed during the Cold War, but those treaties, which were backed by the superpowers, were supported by the order and general restraint produced by bipolarity. Today multilateral treaties as well are under increasing pressure. Universal norms against the development and deployment of chemical or biological weapons, for instance, are threatened not only by nonconforming states but also the legitimate security concerns of countries that want to comply with treaty obligations but see reduced benefit from arms control agreements that fail to constrain a growing number of international bad apples.

Technology also has created new challenges. In the 1960s only the United States and the Soviet Union could deploy intercontinental ballistic missiles; today many states have long-range ballistic missiles. Instead of fading into Cold War history, weapons of mass destruction remain on center stage, as state and nonstate actors have either acquired or are making efforts to acquire nuclear, radiological, chemical, and biological weapons. Space surveillance is no longer controlled by two superpowers, creating a mixed blessing for the arms control community. On the one hand, increased transparency supplied by satellite reconnaissance can be used to verify treaty compliance and support confidence-building measures. On the other hand, space surveillance, combined with the revolution in precision guidance and real-time intelligence, could create windows of opportunity and

incentives for preventive war and preemption. The information revolution also empowers everyone who can gain access to a computer and the Internet.

Technology poses a triple challenge to the arms control community. Its spread equips new actors with weapons that were once owned only by the Soviet Union and the United States. It creates new types of weapons, especially by upgrading existing systems with advanced computer and guidance technology. And as Schuyler Foerster notes (see Chapter 3), technology is empowering not only small states but also all types of nonstate actors and groups. Additionally, technology is creating super-empowered individuals—people who become international actors in their own right.

Domestic and bureaucratic politics also have contributed to a gap between arms control and emerging security challenges. In the United States the political standoff between those who believe arms control is obsolete and those who believe that maintaining and expanding the international arms control regime is in the U.S. interest has been broken. The U.S. Senate's rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in October 1999, as well as the George W. Bush administration's July 2001 rejection of the verification protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention and its December 2001 decision to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, have placed arms control advocates on the defensive, a situation that is not conducive to the development of new initiatives. In terms of bureaucratic impediments to innovation, the United States and other parties to existing agreements maintain significant government organizations with the express purpose of implementing current treaties, but little is heard from the bureaucracy about new types of cooperative security measures. The bureaucratic machinery behind arms control is clearly intended to maintain the status quo and to implement existing treaties.

By the end of President Bill Clinton's administration, the changes unleashed in the post-Cold War period began to overwhelm the forces that had preserved continuity in the international arms control regime. These events came as a shock to many in the arms control community. The Bush administration's decision to withdraw from the ABM Treaty, for example, is a sign of these changing times. Officials in the Bush administration want new cooperative initiatives to replace nuclear deterrence as the foundation of the U.S.-Russian strategic relationship. Because the ABM Treaty was intended to preserve a situation of mutual assured destruction, Bush officials believed that the treaty locked Russia and the United States into an adversarial strategic relationship that no longer reflected improving relations and political opportunities. They also noted that the spread of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons to a variety of states and nonstate actors has raised doubts about the efficacy of deterrence. The ABM Treaty prevented the United States from developing missile defenses to protect itself in the event that religious fanatics, millenarians, or desperate leaders managed to gain

control of long-range ballistic missiles armed with nuclear, chemical, or biological warheads—a possibility that appeared highly salient in the aftermath of 11 September. An arms control regime designed to deal with the Cold War was viewed by the administration as an impediment in responding to the emerging security threats faced by the United States.<sup>2</sup>

### Emerging Roles for Arms Control

In assessing the prospects for arms control, it is important to recognize that current trends are not likely to apply universally or to continue indefinitely into the future. It also is important to remember the limits of arms control. Arms control will not prevent conflict if one or both of the parties involved actually believes that violence will improve their position or will help them to achieve some grand objective. Arms control will not prevent war if people really want war. Arms control, for example, would not have prevented al-Qaida's attack on the World Trade Center because the terrorists turned civilian airliners, not a weapon or device subject to arms control, into a precision-guided fuel-air explosive. Arms control also is unlikely to be employed if states believe they can satisfy their security concerns unilaterally.

Today critics of arms control would assert that these limitations always have bedeviled international agreements and are just more apparent today, despite the optimistic expectations of arms control advocates. But as Thomas Schelling noted in an address to our contributors, it would be a mistake to conclude that arms control during the Cold War was misguided or that arms control and confidence-building measures will never again be relevant to future security problems. The end of the ABM Treaty does not mean that the agreement was a bad idea or that it failed to serve a useful purpose. It only means that the treaty no longer addresses today's strategic situation.<sup>3</sup> The problem that we face might not be the obsolescence of arms control but rather a reluctance on the part of the arms control community to abandon a status quo based on past success in order to address emerging challenges to international security. Admittedly these problems would have appeared far-fetched just a decade ago, but the idea of arms control itself also appeared revolutionary—or at least counterintuitive—in the early 1960s.<sup>4</sup>

Opportunities for arms control exist when parties come to believe that they might benefit from either unilateral or mutual restraint regarding the size of their forces, the kinds of weapons included in their arsenals, and the nature of their defense policies. Longtime critics of arms control have seized upon this necessary condition for constructive arms control to note that “arms control works best when least needed.”<sup>5</sup> But dismissing arms control in this way ignores how agreements can save valuable resources and create constructive dialogues that calm unrealistic or imagined fears.

Indeed, the very act of talking about one's security concerns and plans with a potential opponent sends a strong signal that peace, not war, is possible. The fact that U.S. and Russian citizens today share a common language and history when it comes to their strategic policies might even be a sign that they have transcended the need for arms control. Instead of negotiating cuts to existing arsenals, they are coordinating their defense policies informally, deciding in advance what types of weapons they will develop and deploy.

Today arms control still makes an important contribution to international security. Asia is just one place where arms control has an important role to play. As Brad Roberts notes (see Chapter 15), the end of the Cold War has led to an increase in the importance of arms control in Asia. The U.S.–North Korea Agreed Framework, for example, has constrained North Korea's nuclear program, reducing pressures on Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea to develop their own nuclear programs. Nonproliferation agreements and cooperative security initiatives also have helped stem the flow of Soviet-era weapons, technologies, and expertise into the region. Roberts suggests that as China modernizes its nuclear forces, and as U.S. and Russian strategic forces continue to shrink in size, stability in the region might be enhanced if China could be brought into the strategic arms control process. Arms control thus has a potentially stabilizing effect in Asia by helping states in the region adjust to growing Chinese military capability. Arms control also helps to prevent political and military shocks that could destabilize the nuclear balance in the region.

Another region where arms control and confidence-building measures can contribute greatly to international security is South Asia. In the wake of the 1998 Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests, the ongoing dispute between those enduring rivals over Kashmir threatens to spark a nuclear war. Although, as Peter Lavoy notes (see Chapter 14), there is no consensus about the types of arms control agreements and confidence-building measures that might reduce the prospect of a nuclear exchange, it does appear that many Cold War arms control lessons are applicable to the India-Pakistan rivalry. Lavoy suggests that an important first confidence-building measure between New Delhi and Islamabad would be the initiation of an informal diplomatic or academic exchange of ideas to help create a culture of arms control and an arms control community in South Asia. The emergence of this epistemic community is important because it would allow for the creation of a common strategic language between India and Pakistan as both sides clarify their own and their rival's doctrines, security concerns, and procurement policies. Still, time might be running out for arms control and confidence-building measures in South Asia. It took at least a decade for the concept of arms control to build political and intellectual support on both sides of the Cold War divide. By contrast, in South Asia, where both sides appear interested in testing the leverage created by their nuclear

capabilities, the time needed to cultivate a culture of arms control might be in short supply.

Technology, specifically the information revolution, has created theoretical and practical challenges and opportunities for the arms control community. The spread of information technologies across the globe increases government, business, and personal reliance on the Internet and computers, but it also creates opportunities for states, terrorist organizations, and individuals to conduct information warfare campaigns. As Greg Rattray notes (see Chapter 18), little international agreement exists about how to protect this extraordinarily important medium of international communication and commerce, even though there is a growing perception that regulation is needed to contain disruption caused by cyberattacks. But the regulation of cyberspace with an eye toward limiting cyberattacks and cyberterrorism is complicated by the fact that the information revolution involves new technologies and social and commercial interactions that are not well understood by experts in arms control or, for that matter, by most diplomats and elected officials.

Creating an arms control regime for cyberspace also presents challenges for theorists. For example, nonstate actors and transnational corporations have played a part in the creation and implementation of past arms control regimes. Nongovernmental organizations and interest groups might lobby for the inclusion of key provisions in a proposed agreement. Corporations involved in missile production also have found their activities at specific sites governed by international agreement. But today nonstate actors and corporations might play a dominant role in developing and implementing cooperative security measures designed to reduce the threats posed by increasing access to information systems. Another interesting challenge faced by theorists is the fact that regulating cyberspace would directly affect individuals. The state parties to an agreement might no longer be the primary target of an international regime governing cyberspace.

Arms control also has an increasing role to play in safeguarding communications and reconnaissance assets in outer space. The Outer Space Treaty, which entered into force in October 1967, still remains in effect. It bans placing nuclear weapons in orbit and on celestial bodies and calls for treaty parties to use space only for peaceful purposes. Little has been done since 1967, however, to help slow the militarization of space and to safeguard the billions of dollars' worth of national and commercial assets now in orbit. Like cyberspace, outer space is no longer just the realm of the United States and Russia. Many small states, nonstate actors, and businesses have a significant presence in earth orbit. And, like the effort to regulate cyberspace, the arms control community faces significant challenges when it comes to devising methods to slow the weaponization of space.

## The Future of Arms Control

Today arms control theory, theorists, and institutions continue to reflect their Cold War origins. Bureaucratic inertia, a lack of theoretical innovation, and domestic political battles have been identified as possible sources of continuity in an arms control regime facing dramatic change. But this observation also raises several important questions for arms control theorists and practitioners alike. Was traditional arms control primarily a Cold War phenomenon? Did bipolarity make arms control possible because it simplified what is usually a highly complex strategic environment, allowing policymakers on both sides of the Cold War divide to focus on their primary security threat (i.e., the other superpower)?<sup>6</sup> Did the situation of mutual assured destruction that existed between the United States and the Soviet Union throughout the latter half of the Cold War eliminate any realistic opportunity for gaining a unilateral military advantage, thereby creating a necessary condition for arms control?<sup>7</sup> Indeed, cooperation might have been the only way for both the United States and the Soviet Union to obtain their primary security objective: avoiding nuclear armageddon.<sup>8</sup>

Viewed in this way, arms control is likely to make a significant contribution to international security only under a specific set of circumstances. The number of great powers at any one moment probably affects the prospects for successful arms control. In a world with only one great power, arms control might be unlikely because the great power would be able to achieve its security objectives unilaterally. In a world of many great powers or scores of interested actors, it might be difficult to negotiate arms control agreements that satisfy actors' specific security concerns or to generate a common political consensus necessary to undertake constructive negotiations. Indeed, as the number of parties to an agreement increases, issues of transparency, verification, and compliance become highly problematic. The probability of free riding (i.e., the effort of one party to exploit the cooperation of others by clandestinely violating the treaty) also increases as the number of parties to a treaty grows.

Because they empower individuals at the expense of bureaucracies and states, today's cultural, social, technological, and economic trends might undermine the ability of traditional parties to the international arms control regime to negotiate and implement arms control agreements. By lowering the costs of communications and organization, the information revolution can empower groups and individuals, creating the conditions for a clash of civilizations and even a general descent into chaos.<sup>9</sup> Under these circumstances, traditional arms control can make little contribution to international security.

Yet globalization optimists would suggest that the spread of free markets, democracy, and a democratic peace sets the stage for a renewed interest in

arms control as states seek formal and informal ways to reduce military expenditures. In addition, there are geographic regions and new arenas of multinational concern that could be enhanced through cooperative security efforts. These could benefit from the lessons learned by arms control initiatives during the Cold War. From this perspective arms control is not dead; it just needs to be applied to the new fields that would benefit from it. This calls for a broader vision on the part of the traditional arms control community, as well as the willingness on its part to perform an educational role in these areas.

As we stand at a crossroads in the history of arms control and cooperative security, it is clear that the broad trends in global politics—not just the record of past arms control accomplishments—will shape future arms control regimes. The real contribution that today's arms control community can make to future security is not to simply preserve existing agreements but rather to apply the theories, concepts, and techniques that have helped to constrain past arms competitions to solve emerging problems. As technology proliferates and becomes more complex, and as the number of interested actors and issues multiply, the challenges faced by the academic and policy community are indeed profound. Yet the hardest challenge remains the one faced by Thomas Schelling and other intellectual pioneers more than 40 years ago: convincing all concerned that it is possible to collaborate with potential enemies and actually increase one's security.

## Notes

1. Jeffrey A. Larsen and Gregory J. Rattray, eds., *Arms Control Toward the 21st Century* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996).

2. Leon Fuerth, "Return of the Nuclear Debate," *Washington Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (Autumn 2001): 97–108; and Robert Joseph, "The Changing Political-Military Environment," in James J. Wirtz and Jeffrey A. Larsen, eds., *Rockets' Red Glare: Missile Defenses and the Future of World Politics* (Boulder: Westview, 2001), pp. 55–77.

3. Thomas Schelling, Address to Workshop titled "Arms Control and Cooperative Security in a Changing Environment," Science Applications International Corporation, McLean, VA, 11–12 July 2001.

4. The counterintuitive notion embodied in arms control was best expressed by Thomas Schelling more than 40 years ago: "One can simultaneously think seriously and sympathetically about our military posture and collaborating with our enemies to improve it." Schelling, "Reciprocal Measures for Arms Stabilization," *Daedalus* (Fall 1960): 892.

5. Colin Gray, *House of Cards* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

6. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

7. Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

8. Richard J. Harknett, "State Preferences, Systemic Constraints, and the Absolute Weapon," in T. V. Paul, Richard J. Harknett, and James J. Wirtz, eds., *The Absolute Weapon Revisited* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 47–72.

9. Samuel Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1998); and Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991).