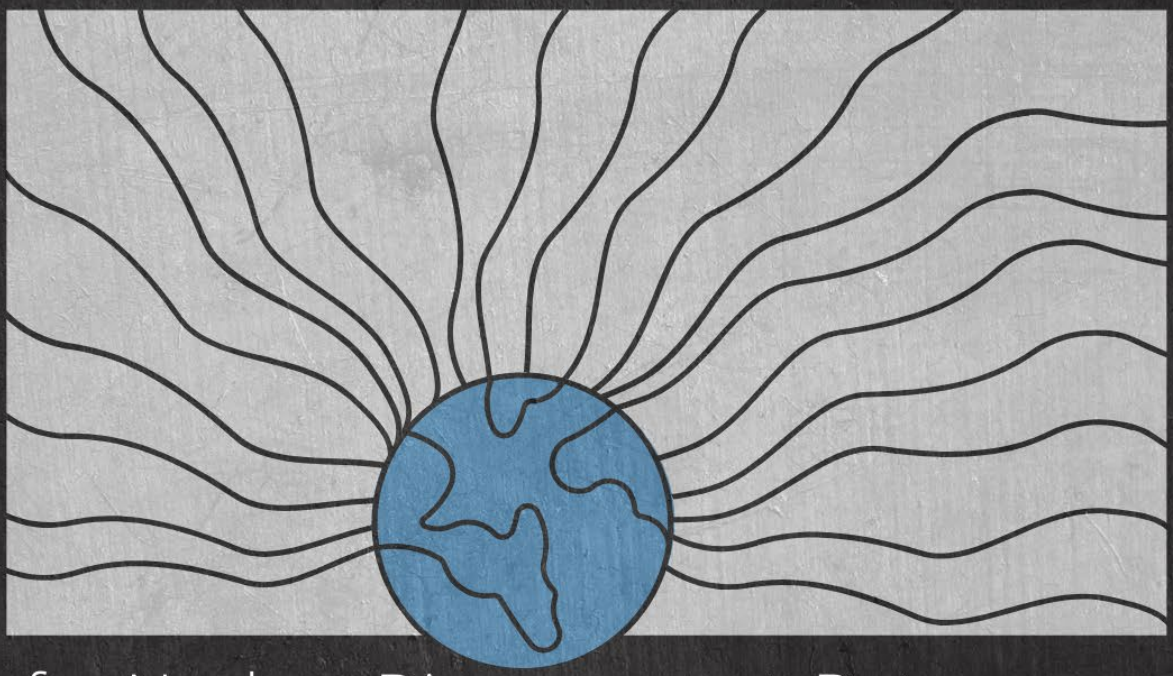
UNIDIR NUCLEAR DIALOGUE SERIES
PAPER ONE

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT



for Nuclear Disarmament, Deterrence and Strategic Arms Control Dialogue

JOHN BORRIE & LEWIS A. DUNN

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ABOUT UNIDIR

The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) is a voluntarily funded, autonomous institute within the United Nations. One of the few policy institutes worldwide focusing on disarmament, UNIDIR generates knowledge and promotes dialogue and action on disarmament and security. Based in Geneva, UNIDIR assists the international community to develop the practical, innovative ideas needed to find solutions to critical security problems.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JOHN BORRIE coordinates UNIDIR's research work and leads its Weapon of Mass Destruction and Other Strategic Weapons Programme. His working experience has covered many aspects of arms control, disarmament and humanitarian affairs, and he has published extensively on these and other topics, from nuclear weapons to cluster munitions, armed drones and autonomous weapons. Borrie has a PhD from the University of Bradford in the United Kingdom, and a BA (Hons) in history from the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand. Prior to joining UNIDIR, he worked on arms issues at the International Committee of the Red Cross. Before that, he was a New Zealand disarmament diplomat.

LEWIS A. DUNN was the United States of America's Ambassador to the 1985 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and is a former Assistant Director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. He now is an independent consultant on nuclear issues. He also serves on the Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters. He holds a PhD from the University of Chicago. His recent publications include *Reversing the Slide: Intensified Great Power Competition and the Breakdown of the Arms Control Endeavour* (UNIDIR, 2019).

FOREWORD

Virtually from the first days of the atomic age, national leaders, experts, and publics have grappled with how to prevent the devastation and loss of human life that could be brought about by nuclear weapons. Pursuit of nuclear disarmament to rid the world of nuclear arms and reliance on nuclear deterrence to prevent their use soon emerged as two approaches, complemented by what would come to be known as non-proliferation and, somewhat later, by bilateral and multilateral arms control. Over the decades, these evolving approaches have woven in and out of national and international efforts to deal with nuclear weapons' existence. Many States have drawn on and adapted strands of all these approaches in formulating their national policies. How nuclear disarmament, nuclear deterrence, non-proliferation, and arms control have interacted has varied—at times being more cooperative, at times more confrontational.

More recently, there has been intensified and frequently contentious debate about how much emphasis to place on reliance on nuclear deterrence and on pursuit of nuclear disarmament in today's security environment. In parallel, there is mounting competition, deepening mistrust, and assertive nationalism among nuclear-armed States. New centres of power, major power rivalries, new technologies, and new domains of strategic competition are emerging. The risk of use of nuclear weapons, particularly from an escalating conventional conflict, is a cause of international concern. Long-standing bilateral and arms control efforts are ending or are endangered. And, for decades now, multilateral nuclear arms control and disarmament efforts have largely been at an impasse.

Renewed dialogue at many levels is urgently needed to address these dangers.

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In July 2020, UNIDIR initiated the Disarmament, Deterrence, and Strategic Arms Control (DDAC) Dialogue. Bringing together a small but diverse group of policymakers, experts, and civil society representatives on a not-for-attribution basis, it focuses on exploring the relationships and interactions among nuclear disarmament, nuclear deterrence, and strategic arms control in today's world. The initiative aims to help bridge today's nuclear divide and renew global cooperation by identifying shared goals and interests as well as opportunities to recraft strategic arms control in the twenty-first century and contribute to re-energizing the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. As such, it is intended to complement the Secretary-General's *Agenda for Disarmament*, launched in Geneva on 24 May 2018.

The authors of this publication, Lewis A. Dunn and John Borrie, have been centrally involved in facilitating the DDAC Dialogue. They prepared this discussion paper on the current strategic context, initially as a resource for the Dialogue. As such, the paper does not seek to be a comprehensive treatment of the subject, but is a brief, interpretive sketch of the current global situation and its nuclear and broader strategic dynamics. It helps to set the scene for other discussion papers in the series on the logic of nuclear disarmament (by George Perkovich) on the logic of nuclear deterrence (by Tanya Ogilvie-White) and the logic of arms control (Lewis A. Dunn, Andrey Baklitskiy, and Tong Zhao).

While these papers were prepared initially to assist discussion in the DDAC Dialogue, UNIDIR is publishing them in order to contribute to broader engagement on the relationship between nuclear disarmament, nuclear deterrence and arms control. In 2021, UNIDIR expects to augment the nuclear dialogue paper series with further resources of further value to readers concerned with the challenges of achieving progress towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Renata Dwan
Director, UNIDIR

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

for Nuclear Disarmament, Deterrence and Strategic Arms Control Dialogue

INTRODUCTION

The following paper briefly sketches the broad outlines of today's strategic context. It has been prepared as background material for the UNIDIR Nuclear Disarmament, Nuclear Deterrence, and Strategic Arms Control Dialogue. That Dialogue is exploring the relationships among the nuclear disarmament, nuclear deterrence, and strategic arms control communities with a view to identifying options to recraft strategic arms control and revitalize the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.[1]

Three intertwined trends are making today's strategic context more complex and are of concern for nuclear deterrence, disarmament and arms control:

1. There is greater multipolarity and heightened tensions among nuclear-armed States. In particular, strategic interactions among multiple nuclear-armed States are now closely interconnected, with several nuclear triads, especially China–Russian Federation–United States, China–India–Pakistan, and United States–Democratic People's Republic of Korea–China. As a result, managing the strategic relationships between these States is becoming even more complex as actions in a bilateral dimension can spill over into the broader triad. Moreover, some experts have argued that the first two of these three triads have now overlapped to form a 'strategic chain' with China as the common node.[2] Overall, relations among many of the nuclear-armed States remain or have become more tense.

2. The fabric of international institutions, treaties, and norms that has historically contributed to predictable and more stable relationships among nuclear-armed States is deteriorating.

3. Several current or imminent technological developments are heightening the uncertainties and unpredictability in the strategic relationships among nuclear-armed States. These include anti-ballistic missile defences, hypersonic and other advanced long-range weapons, anti-satellite weapons, cyber, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and—although not a new technology per se—lower-yield nuclear weapons.

1 This paper sets out propositions on today's strategic context intended to help frame discussion. It is not intended to be a fully comprehensive treatment and some issues of importance undoubtedly are not included.

2 See Abhijnan Rej, "Triangles of Instability: Nuclear Dilemmas and How They Feed into Each Other", *The Diplomat*, 8 September 2020, https://thediplomat.com/2020/09/triangles-of-instability-nuclear-dilemmas-and-how-they-feed-into-each-other. See also footnote 5.

HEIGHTENED TENSIONS AND MORE COMPLEX INTERACTIONS AMONG NUCLEAR-ARMED STATES

Relations between the Russian Federation and the three Western nuclear-armed States (the United States, France, and the United Kingdom) have become increasingly confrontational and tense. The origins of today's confrontations have roots in the failure to create a political–security architecture in Europe acceptable not only to the United States and the States of Western and Eastern Europe but also to the Russian Federation. Moscow opposed NATO's eastern membership expansion in the 1990s—a policy continued under Putin. Pushing back against a situation unacceptable to it, the Russian Federation invaded its neighbour Georgia in 2008, in 2014 annexed Crimea, and continues to intervene in Ukraine. NATO, including the United States, responded with sanctions against the Russian Federation, including cessation of contacts between military personnel in the NATO–Russian and US–Russian contexts. Strategic rhetoric has become more belligerent on both sides, and NATO and the Russian Federation have each stepped up military exercises and confrontational military activities. Military modernization, including of nuclear and related forces, is well-advanced in the Russian Federation and now is accelerating in the United States. At this point, there appears to be no clear diplomatic–political pathway out of this continued downward trajectory in Russian–Western relations.

Relations between the United States and China are also becoming more tense. As China has risen so have uncertainties and suspicions among some of its neighbours (including US allies) and in the United States regarding China's strategic intentions. Beijing's decision to establish and consolidate military redoubts in the South China Sea, deploy new naval, air and missile capabilities, along with its overall lack of transparency about its nuclear modernization, have contributed. In this situation, one analyst recently remarked of crisis signalling and management between China and the United States that "Washington is so volatile that a situation that would be easily be resolved in normal times could prove explosive. Sooner or later, there will be a genuine crisis. History offers no shortage of worrying examples".[3] Historically, the Chinese–US economic relationship added ballast that helped to stabilize bilateral political–military tensions. Although the world's two largest national economies remain deeply intertwined, a growing trade war and economic confrontation between Washington and Beijing now make the Chinese–US economic relationship a source—rather than a means to counteract—worsening political–military relations between them.

A situation that would be easily be resolved in normal times could prove explosive. Sooner or later, there will be a genuine crisis.

India and Pakistan became nuclear armed in the 1990s and today Southern Asia remains one of the tensest regions of the world. The two States have twice fought major wars since achieving independence from the British in 1947 and remain engaged in a low-level clash across the line of control in Kashmir. In the 20 years since India and Pakistan tested nuclear weapons in 1998 there have been multiple political–military crises. Both the 1999 Kargil crisis and the 2001–2002 Twin Peaks crisis raised outsiders' concerns about the risk of escalation of conflict towards the nuclear threshold. Most recently, both Islamabad and New Delhi did act to contain a 2019 crisis between them involving border skirmishes and airstrikes on each other's

3 Sulmann Kahn, "Avoiding War between the US and China: The Lessons of Past Crises", *Foreign Affairs*, 3 December 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-12-03/avoiding-war-between-america-and-china.

territory. During the past year, lower-level military activity continued across the line of control in Kashmir. In past crises the United States urged caution and sometimes played a mediating role in ending them. Today, it is less clear whether Washington—or other outsiders—would have the same influence. Moreover, military clashes between China and India across their border in the Himalayas have now added to continuing clashes between India and Pakistan. Thus, the danger arises of political–military spillover within the China–India–Pakistan triad.

Elsewhere in Asia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has tested nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles multiple times since 2006 and the pace of these tests accelerated under Kim Jong-un. For the past three decades, Pyongyang's tense relationship with the international community has led to successive crises over its missile and weapon of mass destruction programmes. A series of meetings between Kim Jong-un and US President Donald Trump did not translate into tangible progress on a lasting peace and denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Instead, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to expand its nuclear capabilities. An escalating crisis between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan would have a nuclear dimension and any resulting conflict could bring in China as well.

Even with the recent agreement to establish diplomatic relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, as well as the destruction of ISIS, the Middle East remains a region of multiple instabilities and potential proliferation threats. Israel is widely thought to have had a nuclear arsenal since the 1960s. The Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia remain bitter rivals. The US withdrawal from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the 'Iran nuclear deal') heightened already considerable strategic tensions between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran, while eroding restraints on Iranian nuclear activities without putting anything verifiable in its place. Saudi officials have now explicitly warned that, if the Islamic Republic of Iran acquires nuclear weapons, then Saudi Arabia will seek to follow suit.[4]

Bilateral strategic developments between the nuclear-armed States like those outlined above have important spillover effects that may contribute to greater tensions or uncertainty with other nuclear-armed States. Actions the United States has taken to strengthen its capabilities and those of its allies to deter or defend against a nuclear-armed Democratic People's Republic of Korea (e.g. enhanced regional and national missile defence capabilities, as well as capacity to strike North Korean missiles 'left of launch') already have spilled over to impact US–Chinese and US–Russian strategic interactions. Similarly, US concerns about China's nuclear modernization have made it more difficult to extend the US–Russian New START agreement, with US officials calling for trilateral negotiations involving the United States, the Russian Federation, and China. The Russian Federation has also re-emphasized its arguments for including the nuclear forces of France and the United Kingdom in any new US/NATO–Russian agreement on nuclear weapons in Europe. In Southern Asia, India views Pakistan and China as a strategic totality, something fundamental to its military and nuclear doctrinal considerations. This strategic chain[5] has led policymakers in New Delhi to pursue closer relations with Washington to counterbalance China.

4 Kingston Reif, "Saudi Arabia Threatens to Seek Nuclear Weapons", *Arms Control Today*, June 2018. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-06/news/saudi-arabia-threatens-seek-nuclear-weapons.

5 For more on strategic chains, see Robert Einhorn and W.P.S. Sidhu (eds), *The Strategic Chain Linking Pakistan, India, China and the United States*, The Brookings Institution, 2017.

DETERIORATING INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, TREATIES, AND NORMS

International institutions, treaties, and norms intended to enhance transparency and predictability and to promote stability among nuclear-armed States are today under great stress and, in some cases, are faltering or failing. Even in more benign times in the 1990s, agreement among the five Permanent Members of the Security Council was never easy to achieve.[6] Today it is increasingly elusive on important matters of global and regional peace and security, from responses to proliferation threats to actions to contain regional conflicts that could slide into confrontations between nuclear-armed States. Instead, even more so than previously, the approaches of 'P5' States have often variously reflected protecting friends and interests, dodging responsibility, and historic scepticism about the United Nations sometimes rooted in the Security Council's own behaviour.

Multilateral arms control efforts are stuck.

Meanwhile, multilateral arms control efforts are stuck. The consensus-based 65-member Conference on Disarmament remains deadlocked after more than two decades and is unable to agree to negotiate—let alone adopt—new agreements, for example to curb fissile material production or to reduce the risk of military confrontation in space.[7] Initial progress in multilateral efforts to develop rules of the road to govern cyberspace also has recently given way to greater divisions. The cornerstone multilateral nuclear arms control arrangement, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime, is struggling to contain political divisions exacerbated by lack of progress on nuclear disarmament. Entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty remains a distant goal. Indeed, there is concern that the two-decades long moratorium on nuclear testing could break down. In July 2017, more than 100 States adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons—none of the nuclear-armed States or their allies have joined that treaty and many have signalled that they are unlikely ever to do so. Nonetheless, the treaty will enter into force internationally on 22 January 2021.

Since the late 1960s, incremental progress in Russian–US bilateral arms control efforts enhanced predictability and stability in their bilateral nuclear relationship and more broadly in Europe and Asia. The 2002 US decision to withdraw from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty set in motion a slide—temporarily reversed by the 2010 New START Treaty—towards the complete collapse of bilateral arms control. In August 2019, in a tangible sign that this bilateral strategic slide had resumed, the United States left the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty after claiming Russian non-compliance concerning development and deployment of a proscribed ground-launched cruise missile.[8] For its part, the Russian Federation rejected US claims, and moved too late to acknowledge the existence of the missile in question and to propose a way to resolve US concerns. The Russian Federation also put forward its own INF claims against the United States.

Although the New START agreement remains, it is due to expire in early 2021 unless extended for up to five years. In the current environment, prospects for New START's extension are

6 Adam Roberts and Dominik Zaum, *Selective Security: War and the United Nations since 1945*, Adelphi Paper 395, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008.

7 See Benjamin Silverstein, Daniel Porras and John Borrie, *Alternative Approaches and Indicators for the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space*, Space Dossier 5, UNIDIR, 2020, https://unidir.org/publication/alternative-approaches-and-indicators-prevention-arms-race-outer-space.

8 Robbie Gramer and Lara Seligman, "The INF Treaty is Dead. Is New START Next?", *Foreign Policy*, 1 February 2019, https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/01/the-inf-treaty-is-dead-is-new-start-next-russia-arms.

uncertain. The Russian Federation and the United States have each indicated at different times that resolution of some issues related to the treaty's implementation is needed,[9] while the United States has proposed new trilateral negotiations involving China as well. If New START indeed perishes, it will be the first time since the depths of the Cold War that there are no bilateral nuclear arms control arrangements in place between the two largest nuclear possessors. Conversely, even assuming a temporary extension of the New START treaty, Washington and Moscow will have to confront tough conceptual and political arms control challenges. These questions include:

- whether (and how) to regulate non-strategic nuclear weapons;
- how to address competition in new domains that are likely to impact the stability of their nuclear relationship (e.g., space, cyber, missile defences, certain new missile systems);
- new limits or reductions after New START; and, not least
- how to integrate China (and, in the Russian view, the United Kingdom and France) more fully into the nuclear arms control process—even if not through the type of trilateral negotiations that China rejects.

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has added a new element of uncertainty to the strategic mix. Its short-term impact has been negative. Mutual recriminations about the origins of the virus and lack of communication have strained relations between Beijing and Washington. In a period of tension in which face-to-face diplomacy and other trustful forms of contact are arguably at a premium in importance, the international community's ability to safely interact has been deeply constrained, with key meetings such as the 2020 NPT Review Conference postponed. In addition, the public health and longer-term economic and social costs of the pandemic may fuel populist politics that further inhibit international cooperation, including in the spheres of strategic arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. That said, those very economic costs also could provide a much greater incentive to try to avoid still more costly political–military competition and confrontation. More broadly, the pandemic could become a wake-up call for the need to address the threat of nuclear weapons.

9 The Russian Federation, for its part, wanted the United States to discuss Moscow's concerns about the US conversion of New START-accountable strategic launchers. See Pavel Podvig, "Is New START Extension Really That Easy?", 20 May 2019, http://russianforces.org/blog/2019/05/is_new_start_extension_really.shtml. However, on 5 December 2019, President Vladimir Putin stated that "Russia is willing to immediately, as soon as possible, before the year is out, renew this treaty without any preconditions"; http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62250. US officials have concerns about Russian compliance, as well as how to bring China into the equation. See Bill Gertz, "New START Extension in Doubt", *Washington Times*, 22 May 2019.

DEVELOPMENTS IN STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGIES

The weakening of the 'arms control enterprise' and the risk of its imminent collapse is especially foreboding in light of important new technological developments.[10] These developments are interconnected to various extents and taken together have major—although yet to be fully understood—nuclear-strategic ramifications.[11] These developments include advances in anti-ballistic missile defences (including possible deployment of enhanced sensors in space and enhanced hit-to-kill mechanisms), the possible deployments of hypersonic boost-glide vehicles and supersonic cruise missiles (across multiple weapon-ranges with both nuclear and conventional warheads), more sophisticated counter-space capabilities, uncrewed weapon systems, enhanced cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and (although not a new technological development precisely) new deployments of lower-yield nuclear weapons.

The pursuit of these new strategic technologies and the deployment of lower-yield nuclear weapons is creating greater complexity, new uncertainties and attendant concerns that stability in key nuclear relationships will be undermined. As a result, strategic competition and crisis instability could be increased, confidence undermined in second-strike retaliatory capabilities that have long been the bedrock for stable nuclear deterrence relationships, and the threshold eroded between nuclear and conventional conflict that has been an important component of ensuring nuclear non-use. In some outcomes, technologies ostensibly intended to strengthen deterrence could inadvertently contribute to a breakdown of nuclear deterrence instead. More broadly, mutual uncertainty among nuclear-armed States about their rivals' strategic technology investments, and the intentions behind those investments, appears to be fuelling more intense arms competition.

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More specific reasons for concern that the development—and proliferation—of new technology could adversely impact strategic stability include the following interacting and partly overlapping trends:

- The possibility of more extensive US missile defence and counter-space capabilities reinforces uncertainty especially in China but also in the Russian Federation that their existing nuclear second-strike capabilities will continue to be credible. In turn, this is complicating the US–Russian and US–Chinese nuclear relationships, especially as China and the Russian Federation seek to anticipate US capabilities with new and sometimes exotic capabilities of their own. Beyond 'hit-to-kill' interceptor missiles or projectiles, other developing technologies with as-yet uncertain implications for existing deterrence relationships include directed-energy technologies, space-based sensors and weapons, and 'left-of-launch' capabilities—such as cyber offensive operations—to reduce warning and degrade nuclear command and control.

10 Lewis A. Dunn, *Reversing the Slide: Intensified Great Power Competition and the Breakdown of the Arms Control Endeavour*, UNIDIR, 2019, http://unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/reversing-the-slide-en-755.pdf.

11 See also John Borrie, "Nuclear Risk and the Technological Domain: A Three-Step Approach", in Wilfred Wan (ed.), *Nuclear Risk Reduction: Closing Pathways to Use*, UNIDIR, 2020, pp. 70–93, https://doi.org/10.37559/WMD/20/NRR/01. In addition, that volume contains several useful contributions on different aspects of the current strategic context through the lens of nuclear risk. See also John Borrie, *Strategic Technologies*, Nuclear Risk Reduction Policy Brief No. 2, UNIDIR, 2020, https://doi.org/10.37559/WMD/20/NRR/03.

- Some of the technological capabilities now being developed and deployed by great power adversaries (such as hypersonic glide vehicles, supersonic and hypersonic cruise missiles, or long-range stealthy precision missiles with conventional warheads) may be capable of performing missions once reserved for nuclear weapons, such as limited strikes against an adversary's nuclear forces and attacking their early warning and nuclear command-and-control systems. To this list might be added forms of cyber and electronic intrusion that undermine operators' confidence in the reliability of their nuclear command-and-control or other enabling systems.[12] Again, the impact could be lessened confidence in second-strike capabilities. In addition, the difficulties in assessing adversary intentions in the use of such systems—assuming more limited military objectives as well as a mix of both conventional and nuclear warheads—could undermine crisis stability by increasing the risk of misinterpretation in an escalating conventional conflict.

- There are technological advances that—at least in principle—could permit much more effective tracking of adversaries' nuclear forces. These advances rely on a suite of technologies, including better satellite remote-sensing, electronic barriers, more sophisticated and autonomous sensors in drones of various kinds, and machine learning and artificial intelligence. Even if such technologies do not actually have the effect of eroding second-strike capabilities, that possibility almost certainly will lead to counteractions, heightening arms competition and possibly undermining crisis stability. Already there are some concerns among some US experts that over time new technologies could undermine the fundamental assumption of the survivability of the sea-based leg of the US nuclear triad.

- The deployment of nuclear weapons with higher precision and lower explosive yields has already heightened concerns about possible limited use of nuclear weapons first by the Russian Federation and then in response by the United States in an escalating conflict. In the Russian Federation, strategic thinking appears to have evolved—or, some have argued, returned to previous modes of thought[13]—about nuclear weapons. Outside experts are concerned that the concept of nuclear weapons' use in conjunction with conventional warfare has increased in salience for Russian strategists. The Russian Federation's doctrinal clarifications during the summer of 2020 failed to settle all questions and to resolve those concerns.[14] For its part, the United States has put in place its own limited nuclear options as a deterrent response, emphasizing its concerns about the prospect of the Russian Federation's limited use of nuclear weapons in a conflict to bring about a military fait accompli (for instance, in the Baltics or Eastern Europe).

- Some new and emerging technologies involve competition and confrontation in the new domains of cyber and space. More broadly, any future crisis or conflict will unfold across multiple domains in ways that are likely to be unprecedented. In the absence of experience as a guide, the risk could jump of miscalculation and misinterpretation of an adversary's actions.

12 See Jon Lindsay, "Cyber Operations and Nuclear Weapons", *NAPSNet Special Reports*, 20 June 2019, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/cyber-operations-and-nuclear-weapons/.
13 See, for instance, Alexey Arbatov, "Understanding the US-Russia Nuclear Schism", *Survival* 59(2), 2017.
14 See, for instance, Nikolai Sokov, "Russia Clarifies Its Nuclear Deterrence Policy", *Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation*, 3 June 2020, https://vcdnp.org/russia-clarifies-its-nuclear-deterrence-policy.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Outright strategic rivalry and competition have returned among several of the nuclear-armed States. At the same time, there is greater uncertainty and less predictability overall in the strategic relations of the nuclear-armed States than for many decades. The much greater inter-connectedness of strategic interactions among many nuclear-armed States, especially new triads and even strategic chains, is leading to intensified arms competition during peacetime—as well as the potential for crisis escalation that is horizontal as well as vertical. On top of this, most nuclear-armed States are pursuing and adopting new strategic technologies in new domains of competition and possibly conflict. Although intended to enhance their deterrent capabilities, deployments of new technologies across multiple domains may instead detract overall from stability by adding to uncertainty and unpredictability. Taken together, all of these features make today's strategic context particularly worrisome. Ultimately, they raise the risk of crisis and conflict—even nuclear conflict. In so doing, they also underline the importance of renewed cooperative efforts first to slow, then to stop, and ultimately to reverse the deterioration of regional and international institutions, treaties, and norms that also characterizes today's strategic context.

Deployments of new technologies across multiple domains may instead detract overall from stability by adding to uncertainty and unpredictability.

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This paper was prepared for the UNIDIR Nuclear Disarmament, Nuclear Deterrence, and Strategic Arms Control Dialogue exploring the relationships among the nuclear disarmament, nuclear deterrence, and strategic arms control communities with a view to identifying options to recraft strategic arms control and revitalize the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. It briefly sketches the broad outlines of today's strategic context. Major trends include heightened tensions among nuclear-armed States and greater multipolarity, and deterioration in the fabric of international institutions, treaties, and norms that, historically, contributed to predictable and more stable relationships among nuclear-armed States. In addition, several current or emerging technological developments are heightening the uncertainty and unpredictability in the strategic relationships among nuclear-armed States.

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