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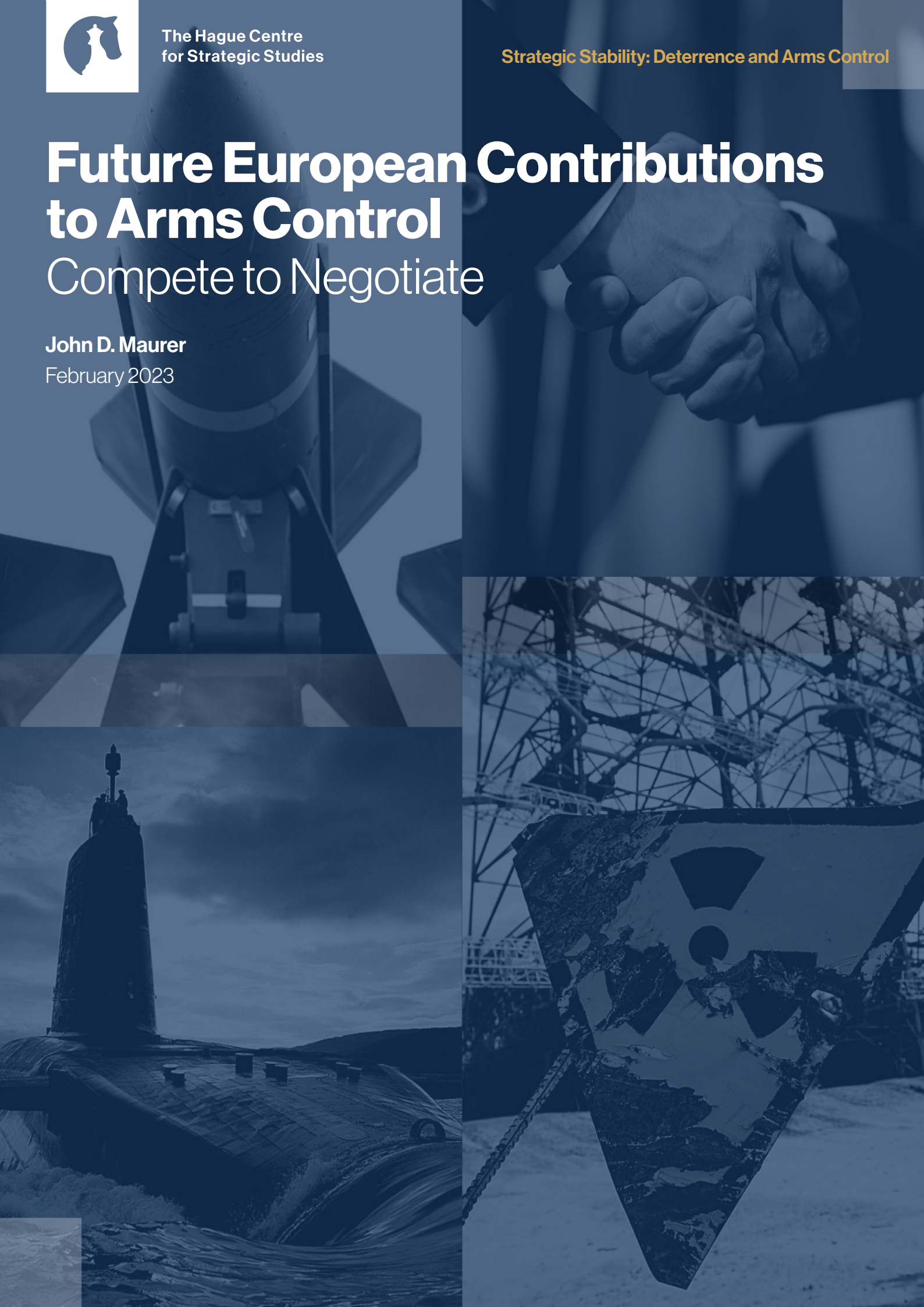
Strategic Stability: Deterrence and Arms Control

Future European Contributions to Arms Control

Compete to Negotiate

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Increasing violence by revisionist regimes in China, Iran, Russia, and North Korea is breaking the current arms control regime. European countries can best respond to this challenge by leaning into military technical competition in the short term to produce better arms control results over the longer term. Effective military-technical competition serves to reinforce deterrence as a prerequisite to negotiations; incentivise adversaries to negotiate seriously and make meaningful concessions; and compel rivals to abide by agreements once concluded. European countries should consider how they can best stand with other law-abiding nations around the world to compete more effectively in military technology and structure future negotiations with an eye towards restraining violent revisionist challenges.

The challenge we face today is not the end of arms control per se, but rather the increasing violence by the revisionist regimes.

Arms control is in deep trouble. This is not news: analysts have recognized the serious challenges to legacy arms control frameworks for the better part of a decade. Yet Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine has thrown into sharp relief the real problem eating away at the core of the arms control regime. The challenge we face today is not the end of arms control per se, but rather the increasing violence by the revisionist regimes in China, Iran, Russia, North Korea, and elsewhere. These regimes prefer to flout international law and amass armaments to seize what they want from their neighbours. In the face of this challenge, many respected analysts have concluded that arms control has very little prospects in our hyper-competitive future.¹

It is perhaps good news, then, that scholarship on arms control is increasingly turning to embrace the synergy between arms control and strategic military competition.² For many years, major proponents of arms control have tended to emphasize its high-minded, cooperative dimension, in which even fierce military rivals can come together to negotiate specific limits for the good of mankind. We should continue to hope that we can establish this sort of common ground with our rivals. Yet scholars increasingly recognize that previous major arms control achievements were

1 Eugene Rumer, "A Farewell to Arms... Control," *US-Russia Insights*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/04/17/farewell-to-arms-...-control-pub-76088>; Linton F. Brooks, "The End of Arms Control?" *Daedalus* 149, no. 2 (2020): 84-100, https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01791; David J. Trachtenberg, "Overselling and Underperforming: The Exaggerated History of Arms Control Achievements," National Institute for Public Policy Information Series No. 497, 22 July 2021, https://nipp.org/information_series/david-j-trachtenberg-overselling-and-underperforming-the-exaggerated-history-of-arms-control-achievements-no-497-july-22-2021/; Amy J. Nelson, "How Emerging Technology is Breaking Arms Control," *Lawfare*, 24 April 2022, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/how-emerging-technology-breaking-arms-control>.

2 James Cameron, *The Double Game: The Demise of America's First Missile Defense System and the Rise of Strategic Arms Limitation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Andrew Coe and Jane Vaynman, "Why is Arms Control So Rare?" *American Political Science Review* 114, 2 (2019): 342-355, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305541900073X>; Brendan Rittenhouse Green, *The Revolution that Failed: Nuclear Competition, Arms Control, and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Timothy W. Crawford, *The Power to Divide: Wedge Strategies in Great Power Competition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021); John D. Maurer, *Competitive Arms Control: Nixon, Kissinger, and SALT, 1969-1972* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022).

based on a critical combination of high-minded idealism and hard-headed bargaining, backed by significant military-technical strength. This new scholarship challenges much of the received wisdom about deterrence and arms control in the Cold War. If we want arms control to have a future, then the first step will be to make sure that law-abiding countries are working together to ensure they have the military-technical strength to bargain effectively. In the short term, effective arms control policy means leaning into competition in nuclear and missile forces in ways reminiscent of Western policies in the 1970s and 1980s. NATO's Dual Track approach to competition and arms control remains in many ways the gold standard of engaging a recalcitrant adversary and compelling them to enter negotiations on the West's own terms.

Europe must join its security partners to compete for military-technical advantage against revisionist rivals for three important reasons. First, effective deterrence of active war is an absolute prerequisite for any effective arms control negotiations. Second, future arms control negotiations will depend on effective military-technical competition to generate the bargaining power necessary to win concessions from revisionist challengers. Third, *continued* competition within the bounds of concluded arms control agreements will deter revisionist regimes from cheating on or defecting from their arms control commitments. Whether in naval arms in the interwar period or missile forces in the Cold War, arms control has flourished when the states favouring limitation have first armed themselves effectively. Future arms control will similarly depend on ensuring a strong competitive basis for negotiated solutions.

Step 1: Compete to Prevent War

The track record of sustaining arms control agreements in wartime is bleak. Previously agreed upon restraints rarely survive the incredible strain of military necessity in wartime. Early arms control agreements to avoid the use of chemical weapons did not prevent the use of such weapons in the First World War.³ Interwar attempts to ban aerial targeting of non-combatants or unrestricted submarine warfare similarly failed to prevent widespread indiscriminate attacks in the Second World War.⁴ Some combination of normative restraint and deterrence prevented the widespread battlefield use of chemical weapons during the Second World War, but the record of restraint on chemical weapons use since then has been mixed.⁵

More recently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has done significant damage to the prospects for future arms control negotiations, ending the budding US-Russian strategic stability dialogue, seriously imperilling the verification of New START, and now even rendering discussions with Iran more difficult.⁶ Preventing major war should thus be considered a prerequisite for future arms control success. Ensuring that law-abiding nations retain the military wherewithal to deter such war is thus an immediate arms control imperative.

3 Richard Price, *The Chemical Weapons Taboo* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 14-69.

4 Richard Overy, "Allied Bombing and the Destruction of German Cities," in *A World at Total War: Global conflict and the Politics of Destruction, 1937-1945*, eds. Roger Chickering, Stig Förster, and Bernd Greiner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 227-296; Joel Ira Holwitt, *Execute Against Japan: The U.S. Decision to Conduct Unrestricted Submarine Warfare* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2009).

5 Price, *The Chemical Weapons Taboo*, 100-163.

6 Steven Pifer, "The Russia-Ukraine War: A Setback for Arms Control," *CISAC News*, 23 May 2022, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/news/russia-ukraine-war-setback-arms-control>; Mark B. Schneider, "Trust Without Verification: The Wrong Approach to Arms Control," *National Institute for Public Policy Information Series*, No. 532, 1 September 2022, https://nipp.org/information_series/mark-b-schneider-trust-without-verification-the-wrong-approach-to-arms-control-no-532-september-1-2022/; Arash Arabasadi, "Killer Drones, Human Rights Stall Hopes of Iran Nuclear Deal," *Voice of America*, 23 October 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/killer-drones-human-rights-stall-hopes-of-iran-nuclear-deal/6802000.html>.

Step 2: Compete to Incentivize Negotiation

Major arms control compromises rarely occur purely as a result of goodwill. Countries are incentivized to enter negotiations and bargain seriously only when their security would be otherwise adversely affected. Arms control can thus be considered a coercive activity, in which adversaries are dissuaded from or persuaded to accept certain limits on their own forces based on the threat that our future weapons deployments will pose to their security.⁷

This is not a new idea, and indeed has significant historical precedent. Interwar naval arms limitation was readily recognized as being motivated by the threat of major post-war naval construction in Britain, Japan, and the United States.⁸ Japanese leaders especially were compelled to accept an inferior ratio of forces by the implicit threat of an unrestrained American naval build-up.⁹ Similarly, by the late 1960s American and Soviet decisionmakers were increasingly compelled to adopt negotiations out of growing fears of the other side's advanced nuclear capabilities.¹⁰ The "hard bargaining" approach to arms control had its clearest success in NATO's late Cold War "dual track" policy on the limitation of intermediate range missiles, in which bargaining proposals on missile limitation were explicitly linked to the deployment of advanced missile capabilities to generate Soviet concessions.¹¹

Sceptics of competition are often concerned that adopting an overly competitive approach will worsen arms racing rather than promote arms control. This concern is reasonable and in relations between law-abiding, status quo powers entirely justifiable. When dealing with revisionist powers, however, an overly-conciliatory approach actually carries greater risks. Japan in the 1930s and the Soviet Union in the 1970s were *already* determined to build threatening military capabilities, much as China and Russia are so determined today. Under those circumstances, choosing to compete is *not* provocation, but a reasonable response aimed at restoring deterrence and establishing the preconditions for negotiation. Recent historical scholarship backs up this claim, showing for example that the deployment of American intermediate-range missiles did not provoke a dangerous "Able Archer Crisis" with the Soviet Union, but instead put moderate and growing pressure on Soviet leaders to accept Western terms.¹² In our current circumstances, competition will not worsen the arms race, but lay the conditions for its future abatement.

Of course, effective arms control negotiations require more than just building our own weapons. Yet if effective military-technical competition is not *sufficient* for future arms control negotiations, it is undoubtedly *necessary*. No one in 1979 could have foreseen the momentous political developments in the Soviet Union from 1985 onwards that played such a critical role

7 Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 260-266.

8 Emily O. Goldman, *Sunken Treaties: Naval Arms Control Between the Wars* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1994), 33-74.

9 Sadao Asada, "From Washington to London: The Imperial Japanese Navy and the Politics of Naval Limitation, 1921-30," in *Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor*, eds. Erik Goldstein and John Maurer (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1994), 147-191.

10 Cameron, *The Double Game*, 49-78; Maurer, *Competitive Arms Control*, 15-20; Aleksandr' G. Savel'yev and Nikolay N. Detinov, *The Big Five: Arms Control Decision-Making in the Soviet Union* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 1-30.

11 Avis Bohlen, William Burns, Steven Pifer, and John Woodworth, "The Treaty on Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces: History and Lessons Learned," Brookings Arms Control Series Paper 9, December 2012, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/30-arms-control-pifer-paper.pdf>.

12 Simon Miles, "The War Scare That Wasn't: Able Archer 83 and the Myths of the Second Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 22, 3 (2020): 86-118, https://doi.org/10.1162/jcws_a_00952.

Countries are incentivized to enter negotiations and bargain seriously only when their security would be otherwise adversely affected.

in the conclusion of the INF Treaty.¹³ Yet without the dual track decision laying the groundwork for the “zero option,” it is equally doubtful whether Gorbachev’s rise would have led to the elimination of the Soviet SS-20 force. When and where the political and diplomatic circumstances will emerge for arms control bargains over the long term will necessarily remain uncertain. Ensuring that we are prepared to seize opportunities as they emerge depends on careful preparation, foremost of all in the development of sufficient bargaining leverage.

Step 3: Compete to Sustain Agreements

Arms control rarely marks the end of competition between nations. Rather, agreements serve as the frameworks within which rival states continue to compete for military advantage. Nor is arms control irreversible. States will abide by agreements when those agreements continue to advance their own security and discard them when they think otherwise. Maintaining an arms control regime therefore requires not a small amount of continued competition to deter defection. If revisionist adversaries believe they will pay no price for cheating on their arms control commitments, then arms control agreements quickly lose their staying power.

Previous arms control regimes have risen and fallen on this very point. Interwar naval arms limitation worked in the 1920s when Japanese leaders still feared that abrogating the arms control system would lead to American naval preponderance. By the mid-1930s, however, a more militarized Japanese government decided to abrogate the treaty system and embark on rapid naval rearmament.¹⁴ Rather than meet this challenge with its own naval building program, the United States sought to persuade Japan to re-join limits that Japanese leaders had clearly rejected.¹⁵ By refusing to compete with Japan, promptly to restore naval limits and reinforce deterrence, American leaders inadvertently brought about the end of naval arms limitation and set Japan on a course towards Pearl Harbour.¹⁶

A similar dynamic has occurred with the Putin regime in recent years. Russia paid a relatively small price for its 2009 attack on Georgia, 2014 invasion of Ukraine, and 2015 intervention in Syria. Throughout the same period, the United States spent years trying to convince Russia to abide by its CFE, INF, and Open Skies Treaty obligations. Yet attempts at tailored sanctions on Russian leaders did little to alter their behaviour, and Western countries were slow to rearm. This tepid response prompted further defections from both arms control agreements and international law more generally. The result has been a near-total breakdown of arms control and a massive war in Ukraine.

Maintaining and *negotiating* arms control thus function in distinct ways. *Maintaining* an arms control regime requires military-technical competition, yet in a different way than *negotiating* the regime. Incentives to *negotiate* arms control generally come from undermining an adversary’s security, usually through the deployment of military-technical capabilities that

13 Simon Miles, *Engaging the Evil Empire: Washington, Moscow and the Beginning of the End of the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), 11-32; Hal Brands, *The Twilight Struggle: What the Cold War Teaches Us about Great-Power Rivalry Today* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022), 209-235

14 Sadao Asada, *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor: The Imperial Japanese Navy and the United States* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 99-160.

15 John H. Maurer, “Arms Control and the Washington Conference,” in *Naval Rivalry, East Asian Stability and the Road to Pearl Harbor*, eds. Erik Goldstein and John Maurer (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1994), 267-293.

16 Stephen E. Pelz, *Race to Pearl Harbor: The Failure of the Second London Naval Conference and the Onset of World War II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

States will abide by agreements when those agreements continue to advance their own security and discard them when they think otherwise.

the adversary finds threatening. Incentives to *maintain* arms control often depend less on forces themselves than on the ability to reconstitute forces quickly should the agreement fail. Competition moves from the realm of arms themselves and into the broader political, economic, and military structures from which new forces might someday spring.

As in any coercive activity, this competition to maintain agreements depends on both the *capability* to reconstitute forces, as well as the *credibility* of the threat to do so. It is in this latter part that arms control regimes so often fail. Japanese leaders in the 1930s recognized that absent arms limitation the United States *could* build a fleet second to none, but calculated that American leaders mired in the isolationism of the Great Depression *would* not do so.¹⁷ In the political context of the late 1930s, they were generally right. By 1940, however, the worsening international security situation drove the United States to build the ocean-dominating fleet that Japanese leaders of the 1920s had sought to prevent.¹⁸ Similarly, the Atlantic community retains significant military and technical capabilities to build intermediate-range ballistic missiles capable of threatening Russia. One can only surmise that the Putin regime concluded that Western regimes *would not respond* to Russian cheating. If future arms control agreements are to flourish, then, they must be backed by the broad bases of military-technical power coupled with effective diplomacy to signal the resolute will to reconstitute forces should agreements break down.

Implications for Europe

For Europe today, then, the single most important contribution to the future of arms control is to choose to compete. European nations must stand alongside their compatriots around the world to build the military-technical strength necessary to deter aggression, bargain for arms control, and then deter defection from agreements reached. Putin's overreach in Ukraine has provided an opportunity to have more honest conversations about the predatory behaviour of revisionist regimes. We must use that opportunity to build a new consensus around deterrence and arms control through competition and strength.

In pursuing the future of arms control, European countries can make major contributions through their diplomatic, economic, geographic, military, and technological capabilities. Indeed, Europe's proximity to the Russian heartland creates major opportunities for competitive arms control approaches. Given the symbolic importance of the collapse of the INF Treaty, a logical first step would be the reintroduction of intermediate-range missiles in Europe, this time with precision conventional warheads. As in the Cold War, advanced weapons deployed in Europe pose a unique threat to Russian security that can generate significant bargaining leverage beyond what the United States can generate with its strategic forces alone.¹⁹ European countries might similarly leverage their technological know-how in outer space, robotics, and machine learning technology to develop next-generation military capabilities that a Russia weakened from sanctions and war will struggle to match.

17 Robert Gordon Kaufman, *Arms Control During the Pre-Nuclear Era: The United States and Naval Limitation Between the Two World Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 180-184.

18 Paul Kennedy, *Victory at Sea: Naval Power and the Transformation of the Global Order in World War II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), 134-137.

19 John D. Maurer, "The Dual-Track Approach: A Long-Term Strategy for a Post-INF Treaty World," *War on the Rocks*, 10 April 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/04/the-dual-track-approach-a-long-term-strategy-for-a-post-inf-treaty-world/>.

Advanced weapons deployed in Europe pose a unique threat to Russian security that can generate significant bargaining leverage beyond what the United States can generate.

In the pursuit of these capabilities, European countries should examine how they might coordinate force development and arms control proposals with the United States to link the introduction of new military capabilities to specific arms control proposals, along the lines of the dual track process. Indeed, NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept explicitly calls for allied approaches to critical arms control questions, though unlike the 1979 Dual Track Decision it does little to describe *how* NATO will entice adversaries into negotiation.²⁰ What is needed now is a clearer plan for how NATO or other like-minded security partners can coordinate their military-technical approaches to best incentivize adversaries to accept a revitalized arms control dialogue.

A critical question for any allied competitive approach will be how to share the related burdens of deploying new weapons systems and conducting negotiations. In the early 1980s, NATO decided that the United States would develop and deploy intermediate-range weapons on allied territory. Because the weapons in question were American, this approach simplified negotiations by allowing the United States to stand in for the entire Western bloc at the negotiating table. On the other hand, having the United States take such a leading role placed significant strain on alliance diplomacy as well as the domestic politics of European countries asked to base new American weapons. Alternative formulas are possible, in which European countries develop their own advanced weapons, though such approaches would require different types of alliance coordination and complicate negotiations for ultimate limitation. Further study and dialogue is necessary about how best to share these difficult military, diplomatic, and political burdens. Whatever the specifics, though, an allied approach would reinforce deterrence while providing strong leverage to prompt future negotiation.

At the same time, European countries may also be called upon to participate in arms control frameworks beyond the traditional Atlantic-European-Russian context. Strategic competition in the 21st century is increasingly occurring in the Asia-Pacific region as well, including rising centres of military-technical power in China, India, Japan, and South Korea. European countries will need to work closely with their security partners across different regions to frame arms control discussions in ways that are most advantageous to reinforcing international law against revisionist challengers. On some issues, tweaking traditional frameworks for arms control (such as engaging China in future American-led strategic stability talks) may be the best approach, at which point Europe may still play a supporting role to primarily American initiatives. Other issues, like intermediate-range missiles, may increasingly have to be handled in "Eurasian" contexts in which the United States is the supporting partner and primary negotiations occur between the relevant neighbours in Europe, Russia, China, India, Iran, etc. In either case, a critical variable will be to ensure that European governments are working closely together on joint initiatives with close partners in the United States and elsewhere to pool resources for competition and adopt joint approaches to negotiation.

²⁰ "NATO 2022 Strategic Concept," NATO, 29 June 2022, <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>.

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