



## Nuclear Cooperation with Strategic Competitors

*Rapporteur: John Milton*

On March 21, 2023, [CNA's National Security Seminar \(NSS\) series](#) hosted a virtual panel discussion ([see recording here](#)) on Dr. Timothy McDonnell's recent publication [Working with the Adversary: Great Power Cooperation and Nuclear Risk Management](#). In addition to McDonnell, the event featured Rose Gottemoeller, former deputy secretary general of NATO and chief US negotiator of the 2010 New START Treaty, and was moderated by Mary Chesnut, a research analyst and nuclear weapons policy expert at CNA.

McDonnell began the discussion by providing a synopsis of his publication. Using lessons from three early Cold War cases in which the US and the Soviet Union attempted to cooperatively manage nuclear risks—sometimes unsuccessfully—McDonnell provided recommendations for contemporary US policymakers seeking to use cooperative strategies to reduce nuclear risks and advance US interests. Gottemoeller, [recently published on the subject in the Texas National Security Review](#), said she considered McDonnell's findings “a very valuable contribution” to nuclear policymaking. She reinforced several of [McDonnell's key takeaways](#) that aligned with her experiences as a senior arms control negotiator.

The panel discussion and Q&A covered a range of topics, including the consequences of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and the growth and modernization of China's nuclear arsenal. Gottemoeller drew in part on her experience negotiating the New START Treaty to discuss current US-Russia nuclear relations. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has constrained diplomatic communication between Washington and Moscow, she noted, but the New START Treaty required notifications on both sides' nuclear postures, provided predictability, and “helped bolster our understanding that they were not raising the strategic nuclear forces to a higher level of operational readiness” during the conflict's first year. Therefore, Russia's recent decision to suspend its participation in New START and halt those notifications, Gottemoeller said, “is not bringing the nuclear temperature down. It's raising the nuclear temperature in my view.”

McDonnell and Gottemoeller both concluded with cautious optimism. Despite headwinds, over the medium to long-term arms control—broadly understood—will remain an important and valuable tool that the US can use to advance its national interests.

To join the #NationalSecuritySeminar mailing list, please [subscribe online](#).

Visit us at <https://www.cna.org/initiatives/national-security-seminar> | Email: [CNA\\_NSS@cna.org](mailto:CNA_NSS@cna.org)

More information on CNA's nuclear research program can be found [here](#).

More CNA research on strategic competition can be found [here](#).

For video of this and other CNA events, please see: <https://www.youtube.com/user/VisionCNA>.

LIMITED PRINT AND ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION RIGHTS: CNA intellectual property is provided for noncommercial use only. CNA makes no warranties of any kind, either expressed or implied, as to any matter including, but not limited to, warranty of fitness for purpose or merchantability, exclusivity, or results obtained from the use of the material. Unauthorized posting of this publication online is prohibited. Permission is given to duplicate this document for noncommercial use only, as long as it is unaltered and complete. Permission is required from CNA to reproduce, or reuse in another form, any of its research documents for commercial use. Contact CNA's Office of General Counsel at 703-824-2702 if you wish to make commercial use of any content in this document. The material in this report may be reproduced by or for the US government pursuant to the copyright license under the clause at DFARS 252.227-7013 (February 2014).

This report may contain hyperlinks to websites and servers maintained by third parties. CNA does not control, evaluate, endorse, or guarantee content found in those sites. We do not assume any responsibility or liability for the actions, products, services, and content of those sites or the parties that operate them.

CNA is a nonprofit research and analysis organization dedicated to the safety and security of the nation. It operates the Center for Naval Analyses—the only federally funded research and development center serving the Department of the Navy—as well as the Institute for Public Research. CNA is dedicated to developing actionable solutions to complex problems of national importance.