The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Manuscript 3193

Book Reviews

USAWC Press

Follow this and additional works at: https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters
Negotiating the New START Treaty
by Rose Gottemoeller

Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Seth A. Johnston, PhD,
officer, and visiting professor of political science at Universität Heidelberg

Negotiating the New START Treaty is an instant classic. This firsthand account by the treaty’s chief US negotiator is at once a memoir, case study in international negotiation, primer on arms control, guidebook for domestic government process and politics, and compendium of lessons for national security leaders at all levels. Its author, Rose Gottemoeller, writes with the authority and perspective of a deeply informed and groundbreaking stateswoman who later served as Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, then Deputy Secretary General of NATO. Its pages exemplify clear and engaging writing, illuminating a complex topic with relatable personal reflection and humor. Its timeliness cannot be overstated, as Russia issues nuclear threats in the course of its war in Ukraine, and the treaty will expire in just over three years. I would highly recommend this book to arms control specialists and general readers alike.

Your reviewer has known the author and her family for the better part of three decades. But you may judge the fairness of this review insofar as its conclusions reinforce the wide-ranging acclaim the book has already attracted. Its cover alone features strong endorsements from six of the most highly respected and senior international security practitioners, including three former cabinet secretaries. Henry Kissinger calls the treaty “the most significant arms control agreement of recent decades.” The book also earned the 2021 Douglas Dillon Award for a Book of Distinction on the Practice of American Diplomacy.

Negotiating the New START Treaty follows a chronological structure, with most of the action focusing on the twelve-month period beginning April 2009, when the US and Russian presidents agreed in London to begin negotiations for a successor to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), and ending with their signing the new treaty in Prague in April 2010. Encounters in Rome, Geneva, and Moscow during this period are the essence of the book’s focus on negotiation. The book also contains three other important sections. Chapters on
the Senate ratification process in Washington after the treaty’s signing are essential
to the overall story of how the New START Treaty came into force, as well as the
larger strategic and political context in which the treaty was considered. A final
chapter on “Lessons Learned” explicitly aims to be “food for thought for future
negotiators” and could serve as a standalone reference for practitioners (171). The
opening prologue and introductory chapter provide important framing facts about
arms control and US-Russian relations, as well as the author’s individual career
experience in both areas. That individual history not only serves to underscore the
author’s expertise, but also aims to “inspire new negotiators to enter the game” and
“maintain a clear-eyed sense of where U.S. national interest lies” ( xxiii).

Several themes and arguments throughout Negotiating the New START Treaty
are especially relevant to senior members of the defense community.

First, the New START Treaty is one of a diminishing number of arms control
agreements. Many of the Cold War-era arms control agreements negotiated with
the Soviet Union have either lapsed or been withdrawn. The urgency to complete
New START more quickly than previous agreements owed to the demise of the
original START treaty in 2009. The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, Intermediate-
Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, Open Skies Treaty, and Conventional Armed Forces
in Europe Treaty are among those from which countries have withdrawn formally
or suspended participation. The war in Ukraine and COVID-19 pandemic have
frustrated implementation of those that remain. Despite all that, Russia and
the United States agreed to a one-time five-year extension of the New START
Treaty in 2021, such that it will remain in force until February 4, 2026. Such facts
contribute to the notion of New START as the “Gold Standard Treaty” ( vii).

Second, Gottemoeller argues consistently in this book for a vision of arms
control not as something to do for its own sake but rather as a means to serve
the national interest and strengthen national security. This view is increasingly
prominent, as both the 2022 National Security Strategy and NATO’s 2022
Strategic Concept describe arms control in terms of its connection to effective
deterrence and defense.

Third, arms control negotiation requires interagency participation and
defense expertise. For expertise on US weapons systems and capabilities, there
is no substitute for the actual operators of those systems. For expertise on
implementation and verification, experienced arms control inspectors “knew what
had worked and what had not in previous nuclear arms control regimes” and
“How to make the most of the time that would be available on inspections” ( 177).
To demonstrate a coherent and coordinated interagency position, the book
repeatedly features the importance of the so-called backstopping process
for developing instructions.
Fourth, related to the above, knowledge of how to negotiate arms control agreements has atrophied as their number has dwindled. This dynamic has increased the value of expertise where it remains and argues for efforts to preserve that expertise and sustain relevant capabilities for the future. Most relevant expertise, whether technical or weapons related, language skills, or procedural and political understanding, takes time to develop. The original START treaty was negotiated over a decade, compared to a year for New START. Shorter negotiation timelines further increase the value of preexisting expertise.

Fifth, Negotiating the New START Treaty teaches ample lessons on leadership. Some lessons, such as detailed reflections on entertaining for Thanksgiving (75–78) and Easter (135–38), may reflect norms or practices specific to a diplomatic environment. But the underlying issues in those lessons—morale, motivation, leader engagement, and team cohesion—are widely applicable. Other lessons, such as “define your security objective and stick with it” (171), should resonate directly with national security professionals in any environment. Throughout the book, Gottemoeller commonly attributes successes to others or to the team, while treating setbacks either as her own responsibility or as lessons that can be learned without naming names. Negotiating the New START Treaty is therefore not a memoir of gossip or score settling but rather of conveying practical knowledge and wisdom. This constructive, results-oriented emphasis makes Negotiating the New START Treaty itself an honorable public service.

Arms Control for the Third Nuclear Age: Between Disarmament and Armageddon

by David A. Cooper


David A. Cooper, in Arms Control for the Third Nuclear Age, argues “the transition to a fundamentally different nuclear landscape will require significant adjustments to long-standing post-Cold War approaches to U.S. nuclear policy and diplomacy” (6). Cooper distinguishes between Cold War arms control built on a “mutual deterrence paradigm” designed to mitigate nuclear risks and post-Cold War arms control based on a “denuclearization paradigm” designed to bolster disarmament and nonproliferation (6). He argues the United States should return to the former model because the
“post-Cold War system of multilateral nonproliferation and bilateral disarmament arrangements was never designed to manage a great-power nuclear arms race” (26).

Cooper notes, as nuclear deterrence theory developed in the late 1950s and 1960s, arms control was a “tough-minded and pragmatic national security tool” (40) designed to manage and reduce incentives for nuclear threat (41). The goal was to find and preserve a “stable strategic nuclear balance” (51), which required maintaining first strike stability, crisis stability, and escalation stability (54). The United States and Soviet Union needed forces that could survive and retaliate after a nuclear attack; thus, arms control measures should favor forces better suited for a retaliatory strike rather than a first strike (54).

Cooper demonstrates this approach with an overview of the US-Soviet/Russian arms control process in what he admits “is not a history in any proper sense” (78). He aims, instead, to “show how classic arms control theory evolved through real-world experience” (78) and to demonstrate Cold War “nuclear arms control was pursued . . . with strategic stability as its topmost goal” (76). The treaties supported deterrence by ensuring the United States could maintain a secure retaliatory force (79). He highlights the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty’s limitation of systems able to intercept second strike missiles and the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty’s (START) limitation of systems vulnerable to preemptive attack and therefore more useful for a first strike.

Cooper asserts arms control makes several lessons evident—such as the premise the United States should “arms race toward arms control” by building up its forces to provide incentives for adversaries to negotiate limits (108). He also argues this history shows the comparative ease of negotiating preemptive controls on weapons in development rather than cutting deployed systems (88). Although analysts often cite these lessons in arms control assessments, neither is fully supported by the facts.

Cooper’s understanding of the relationship between arms control theory and Cold War-era agreements would benefit from a fulsome review of arms control history. His analysis contains numerous errors about these agreements: he misunderstands the Congressional debates for some, offers faulty summaries of the provisions in others, and identifies inaccurate negotiation goals for many. These faults appear to stem from his reliance on single-source interviews rather than official documents or detailed reviews of the negotiating process. In one case, he claims the 1979 Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) failed in the Senate because members were concerned about the US ability to verify Soviet compliance. SALT II failed for a number of reasons—key among them the campaign by critics who highlighted concerns about the Soviet advantage in large, multiple-warhead land-based missiles. These concerns, which evolved into the
notorious “window of vulnerability,” advised the Reagan-era proposals for START, and their absence from Cooper’s review of SALT II is a surprise.

Cooper argues the links between deterrence, stability, and arms control receded in the 1990s when “Washington [pivoted] . . . to a denuclearization paradigm built on the tandem pillars of nonproliferation and disarmament” (118). He finds evidence of this in the program cancellations and deep reductions supported by the Bush administration and in the Clinton administration’s effort to implement further reductions through the START II and potential START III treaty. Yet, he never mentions that the demise of the Warsaw Pact and collapse of the Soviet Union had sharply reduced the numbers of targets the United States would seek to destroy in a conflict; thus, the United States could eliminate thousands of warheads without undermining deterrence or stability. Military planning—not a theory of arms control—produced the changes he cites in the US nuclear force posture.

Cooper notes the emerging arms race is technological—not numerical—and asymmetric with multiple countries pursuing a range of new capabilities (163). Consequently, he argues, strategic stability “is at real and imminent risk” (163). In this vein, Cooper identifies emerging technologies likely to undermine stability—in particular, hypersonic glide vehicles capable of carrying nuclear warheads to intercontinental range—and evaluates arms control measures capable of addressing these weapon types.

Cooper argues the United States should invest in destabilizing technologies—thus arms racing toward arms control—and pursue limits to constrain them early, as success would be more difficult after their deployment. This contradictory advice is inconsistent with the history of US-Soviet arms control. US-Soviet treaties have addressed weapons not yet deployed in great numbers, and the two nations agreed to limit these weapons only when they lacked military capabilities that would justify the costs of their deployment. Arms control did not impede the deployment of weapons the parties considered essential to national security. Thus, military requirements informed US and Soviet negotiating positions. In addition, a proposal for the United States “to procure weapons without military requirements to “arms race toward arms control” runs counter to the weapons acquisition process and represents a potential diversion of defense funding from high priority programs.

Cooper’s central thesis of arms control’s ability to serve national security by bolstering deterrence and helping to maintain strategic stability is sound. Looking back, he sees evidence of deterrence theories and models of strategic stability affecting the terms of agreements signed during the Cold War. Yet, he fails to recognize the role military planning and targeting requirements played in determining the size and structure of the US nuclear arsenal and
in crafting acceptable arms control proposals. Although political leaders can cite theories of deterrence when describing why the United States chose its force structure and arms control positions, history shows these theories played a far smaller role than Cooper portrays. Recognizing the improbability of arms control limiting weapons nations view as essential to their national security would provide Cooper a stronger tool to assess whether arms control can mitigate emerging threats to strategic stability.

**RUSSIA**

**The Soviet Army’s High Commands in War and Peace, 1941–1992**

by Richard W. Harrison

Reviewed by Dr. Robert Hamilton, research professor, Eurasian Studies, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College

Richard W. Harrison’s book *The Soviet Army’s High Commands in War and Peace* chronicles the development and operational record of the High Commands, a peculiar formation in the Soviet Army that sat—often uneasily—between fronts comprised of several armies, and the supreme political-military authority in Moscow. The first thing readers might ask is whether it needed to be written. By the author's own admission, the role of the High Commands in the Second World War was limited in scope and mostly undistinguished in achievement, and the post-war High Commands never saw combat. Notable wartime commanders such as Giorgi Zhukov and Aleksandr Vasilevsky give short shrift to the High Commands in their memoirs. Fortunately, the book's title is modest: it is about far more than the High Commands.

The book tackles the development of Red Army doctrine and strategy, the problems of military geography (matching forces to terrain and enemy), command-and-control arrangements, and civil-military relations in the Soviet Union. Extensive primary source research allows Harrison to delve deeply into the topics he covers. The book provides a fascinating look inside the Red Army as it fought a war for national survival and as it later navigated the Cold War, where it faced less immediate but no less existential threats. As a bonus,
Harrison intersperses dozens of short biographies of major Soviet military figures throughout the book.

Harrison lays the foundation for his examination of the High Commands with the first two chapters. Chapter 1 examines the development of Russian thinking on military geography, doctrine, and strategy against the backdrops of World War I, the Russo-Polish War, and the Russian Civil War. Harrison notes Russia’s extended borders and multiplicity of threats have conditioned the Russian military mind “to think in broad strategic terms, involving the movement of large armies over broad fronts” (1). The arrangement and control of these armies bedeviled Soviet planners, who worked to establish a common doctrinal lexicon to define and differentiate the terms *theater of war, theater of military activities, front,* and *strategic direction.*

Chapter 2 reviews how the Red Army applied these theoretical concepts in its system of strategic command and control. Joseph Stalin’s government formed a State Defense Committee to run the war against Germany. While this concentrated immense power in the hands of a small group, it gave the Soviet war effort focus and agility it would have lacked otherwise. A State Defense Committee decree of July 10, 1941—shortly after Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union—mandated the establishment of the first three High Commands: Northwestern, Western, and Southwestern. Harrison notes the “enormous scope of the conflict and the deep inroads made by the German armored spearheads increased considerably the problems of troop control” for Soviet leadership (76). The Soviet Union created the High Commands as “intermediate control [mechanisms] between the fronts and the central military apparatus” to relieve the center of some of its operational and organizational functions.

Chapters 3 through 7 examine the performance of the High Commands in World War II. Each High Command united several fronts, and each front controlled several Soviet armies. Aside from the Far Eastern High Command—formed in 1945 to prosecute the Soviet Union’s war on Japan—the record of the High Commands lacks distinction. The four High Commands formed to fight Nazi Germany—the Northwestern, Western, Southwestern, and North Caucasus—struggled and mostly failed to stem the German onslaught. Harrison attributes some of their failures to their inheritance of a “disastrous . . . strategic situation,” but he notes even their rare successes would have been possible with a competent front command in place of the High Command (322). The Far Eastern command inherited a much more positive strategic situation. It reaped the advantages of lessons learned over four years of war against a formidable opponent, faced a depleted enemy, and suffered less “trivial interference from the center” (351). As an added benefit, Vasilevsky, its commander, enjoyed Stalin’s trust and empowered his own subordinate commanders.
A clear theme of micromanagement from Moscow emerges from Harrison’s examination of the High Commands in the western theater. Sometimes this micromanagement manifested as direct communication from the Stavka (the high command of the Soviet military) with front commands or even armies, leaving the High Command out of the picture. Other times, micromanagement took the form of Stalin himself admonishing a High Command and exhorting it to fight with more grit and zeal. Given the fact that every senior Red Army officer had lived through the purges of 1937–38, this personal attention from Stalin was unwelcome, to say the least.

Harrison concludes his book by tracing the postwar arc of the High Commands. Their association with Stalin, who had a “weakness” for them, resulted in their dissolution after Stalin’s death in 1953 (351). In the 1970s, when “the possibility of a major conventional war involving broad fronts and several strategic directions simultaneously” began to dominate Soviet military thought again, a debate over reviving them began (371). The accession of Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, who had served in the Far Eastern High Command from 1949–53, settled that debate in the High Commands’ favor: starting in 1979, one High Command in the east and two in the west existed until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The book’s lively and colorful but precise style suits its highly technical and theoretical subject matter. Livelier and more variegated language might have resulted in inaccuracies; more precise language would have made the book too dry for all but the most dedicated readers. Although the book does contain some maps, its detailed descriptions of the many campaigns the Red Army fought, especially from its founding through the end of World War II, will often leave readers wishing it had more maps—a minor flaw in an otherwise excellent book. Although not for the casual reader, *The Soviet Army's High Commands in War and Peace* provides an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the Soviet military.
Stalin’s War: A New History of World War II

by Sean McMeekin

Reviewed by Dr. Reina Pennington, Charles A. Dana Professor of History, Norwich University

Stalin’s War displays little that is new and much that is reminiscent of Cold War Soviet-bashing. The history of the Second World War and in particular the Eastern Front has already been carefully reappraised by authors utilizing the wealth of newly declassified materials and archival sources that only became available in the post-Soviet years—sources and analyses that are not used in Stalin’s War. Sean McMeekin, a respected scholar of the First World War, not only displays a lack of expertise in tackling the Second World War, but also abandons scholarly conventions such as objectivity and reasoned argument. Instead, we are presented with an ideological work that is more diatribe than monograph.

The title is a statement of the author’s argument that the Second World War “was not Hitler’s war at all” but Joseph Stalin’s war (2). The author spends 670 pages bashing the Soviet Union. Even the photographs amount to a tirade. Of 50 photographs in the book, 18 show American or British equipment used by the Soviets, with only six photos of Soviet-produced equipment; 12 photos show Soviet invasions and atrocities while one shows Soviet defensive actions; and two photos show German atrocities.

In McMeekin’s view, the Western Allies were bullied by Stalin. McMeekin continually suggests that the Lend-Lease Act was the main factor in the Soviet military victory. He even suggests that the United States and United Kingdom should have attacked the Soviet Union rather than aiding it. Far from being a new interpretation of history, this idea simply dusts off the tired conspiracy theories of the Cold War.

There are more errors, exaggerations, and counterfactuals in this book than I can begin to delineate in this brief space, some of which have been examined in more lengthy reviews. One of those reviewers, Omer Bartov, sums up Stalin’s War as riddled with “bizarre assertions and outlandish speculations, held together under a well-weathered ideological umbrella masquerading as a daring new
interpretation of the past” (Times Literary Supplement 6174, July 30, 2021). I cannot put it any better than that.

Chapter 24, “Lend-Lease and Stalingrad,” exemplifies the weaknesses of this work. The chapter opens with a line about the “stupendous” amount of goods that “Stalin’s agents were able to requisition” from the United States before Stalingrad and goes on to state that “the Russians had blown through the first $1 billion already” (403). Lend-Lease aircraft amounted to roughly 12 percent of what the Soviets produced during the entire war, and most arrived after Stalingrad, so it is hard to conclude that Lend-Lease aircraft were a major factor in 1942. In the book When Titans Clashed (University of Kansas Press, 1995), David M. Glantz notes that “Lend-Lease aid did not arrive in sufficient quantities to make the difference between defeat and victory in 1941–1942” (Glantz, 285). The same chapter concludes with the statement that “it is an imperishable historical fact that Anglo-American capitalism helped win the battle of Stalingrad” (432). Given that the Red Army was tying down the vast majority of the Wehrmacht from 1941 to 1944, it would be just as accurate to say that “it is an imperishable historical fact that Soviet communism helped win the battle of North Africa”—or D-Day, or any battle in Europe throughout the war, for that matter.

There is no context of the big picture of Lend-Lease: of roughly 50 billion dollars spent by the United States, 63 percent went to the United Kingdom and only 23 percent to the USSR. Since the United Kingdom received nearly three times as much Lend-Lease aid as the Soviet Union, it is incongruous to portray Stalin as a greedy bully with “exorbitant military and war-industrial needs” (404–5). It is also absurd to describe Lend-Lease as “unreciprocated American generosity,” (publisher’s blurb) given the horrendous price paid in blood by the Soviet people in absorbing the main efforts of the Wehrmacht. Millions of German soldiers and dozens of divisions were eliminated that the United States might otherwise have had to face.

John Barber and Mark Harrison in The Soviet Home Front, 1941–1945 (Longman, 1991) provide a far more balanced and accurate view of Lend-Lease.

All this was supplied free of charge to the Soviet Union, but it was never an act of charity. Both the British and Americans understood that the main thing was to encompass the defeat of Germany . . . the only people engaged in direct combat with the German ground forces were Russians, and it was in the western Allies’ own interests to help them (189).

Stalin was a reprehensible dictator responsible for the deaths of millions. Soviet-American relations were difficult at best. How does one treat this subject with proper objectivity? Many authors have done so. Serhii Plokhy’s excellent Forgotten Bastards of the Eastern Front (Oxford University Press, 2019) offers an in-depth, balanced treatment of Americans and Soviets involved
in Operation Frantic. Mark Stoler offers a superior critical analysis of diplomatic relations in *Allies in War* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2007) and *Allies and Adversaries* (University of North Carolina Press, 2000).


---

**China**

**The Avoidable War:**
**The Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict between the US and Xi Jinping’s China**

by Kevin Rudd

Reviewed by Dr. Andrew Scobell, distinguished fellow, United States Institute of Peace

This is a mistitled book. The volume holds much promise and great insights, but readers may be disappointed because the contents do not match the cover. Kevin Rudd, the author, is a high-profile influencer and prominent former government official with a significant academic background in Chinese studies and extensive real-world experience with China. Rudd studied China and Chinese at the university level and went on to have a distinguished public service career in his native Australia where he rose to the pinnacle of power—first as foreign minister and later as prime minister. He is currently president of the Asia Society and based in New York. The book's title is an attention grabber, raising reader expectations that the volume will focus on the specter of war between the United States and China and concentrate on how the two sides might avert such a frightening conflagration.

On balance, the book is well worth a gander. Rudd's central argument is the “best chance of avoiding war is to better understand the other side’s strategic thinking and to conceptualize a world where both the [United States] and China are able to competitively coexist” (18). In this reviewer’s judgment, the volume has three key takeaways. First, Xi Jinping will likely remain China’s senior leader “well into the 2030s,” and he has an ambitious set of goals—“ten concentric
circles of interests”—placing his country on a potential collision course with the United States (11–12). Second, as a result of Xi’s ambitions, the 2020s will be, in Rudd’s view, “the decade of living dangerously” for the United States and China (331). Third, despite the very real threat of war, the two countries can avert military conflict if both make concerted efforts to understand the other’s interests and priorities and choose the path of what Rudd dubs “managed strategic competition” (13ff).

While all three key takeaways are worth delving into, the latter two require less page turning—each is contained in a single chapter—but more reader reflection. In Chapter 16, Rudd usefully sketches out ten scenarios for the future, most of which involve either direct conflict or military confrontation between China and the United States. These scenarios underscore three insights regarding the potential for conflict often overlooked in the current overarching rubric embraced inside the Beltway of long-term China-United States competition. The first insight is war between the United States and China, though increasingly conceivable, is not inevitable—at least not with the kinds of conventional military campaigns studied in US institutions of professional military education. The conflict could start in or be confined to the non-kinetic realm of cyberspace or other gray zones. Second, any war is not likely to be instigated by the two countries in a vacuum or to unfold as a two-player contest. Other countries and actors have agency and can spark or complicate a war for one or both of the main protagonists. Third, Taiwan is not the only potential location or trigger for a China-United States military conflict. Although the Taiwan Strait is the most plausible scenario for a war and Taiwan has long been the most contentious issue in China-United States relations, other flashpoints and hot button issues could escalate and bring Washington and Beijing to the brink of avoidable war.

While readers are treated to a thoughtful and fluid discourse about China, the volume does not zero in on a China-United States military conflict—how it might start, how it might be fought and how it might end—nor does it give much attention to how the two sides might avoid it until 330 pages in. Indeed, much of the book—11 of 17 chapters—concentrates on providing the reader with a cogent and absorbing account of how China’s senior-most leader sees the world. Moreover, given the author’s wealth of life and work experience in China, and, most relevantly—given the true focus of the book—his multiple interactions and conversations with Xi over the years, readers will look in vain for citations and sources for Rudd’s insights and observations. This is unfortunate, since one is left to wonder whether a particular judgment or comment is the author’s “best guess” expert opinion based upon years of experience or grounded in a specific primary or secondary source.

Rudd insists he did not set out to write an academic tome, and hence, has deliberately eschewed footnotes or even a bibliography in an effort to reach
a wider audience. Yet, the “intelligent general reader” is precisely the person likely to hunger for more and wonder where to look for authoritative and accessible writings on a host of China-related topics (17). It is a pity Rudd did not decide to tack on a shortlist of sources or recommended readings at the end of each chapter.

Nevertheless, there is so much to like about and learn from this book. Readers almost certainly will be left wanting more—but will probably be unsure of where to look for it.