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A Keynote Conversation on the Future of Arms Control

Speakers

Jill Hruby
Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration

Bonnie Jenkins
Undersecretary for Arms Control and International Security, United States Department of State

Moderator

Ankit Panda
Stanton Senior Fellow, Carnegie Nuclear Policy Program

Toby Dalton: We’ve had a great and very full day, and thank you for being with us for this great and very full day. I'm tempted to say that we've saved the best for last, but it's a really hard statement to make when so much of the conversation before has been so good.

In any case, I think we've saved an excellent session for the last, and what more timely topic than the future of arms control? I'm going to very briefly introduce my colleague, Ankit Panda, who's going to be moderating. He is the Stanton senior fellow at Carnegie in the nuclear policy program. He's a prolific writer and an even more prolific Twitter on all things nuclear, missile, space, and often North Korea. I'm only slightly envious that he has, like, 15 times the number of Twitter followers that I have, but he'll be moderating the conversation today.

Our speakers are Jill Hruby, who is the DOE Undersecretary for Nuclear Security and Administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, and agencies whose responsibilities span nonproliferation nuclear security and, of course, arms control, as well as all of the defense programs, namely the nuclear weapons complex. It's a massive job. It comes with a massive budget, and I think probably a massive set of headaches if I had to guess. It's a job for which Jill is uniquely qualified and suited given her training as an engineer, her broad experiences at Sandia National Labs over 34 years, ultimately rising to be the lab director there in 2015.

Not to say that Jill is one of the most level-headed and quietly impressive and effective public servants that I've had the pleasure to work with. Joining Jill is Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins, who is the Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security. Previously, during the Obama administration, she was the Special Envoy and coordinator of US Start Reduction Programs. She, too, has a mammoth job that is endowed in a set of bureaus known collectively as the T family that are responsible for setting and implementing a range of nuclear policies within the US government.
Although Bonnie has spent, I think, most of her career in public service. She's probably been best known in recent years for founding and leading the Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation, or WCAPS, as it's well known. In that effort, I think she's really been an inspiration for her leadership, helping to give voice to communities that have not been well represented in our field and in our policy debates and to advance the security careers of young professionals, especially of women of color. Please join me in welcoming this excellent panel.

[applause]

Ankit Panda: Well, we'll get right into it. I guess, much like Toby's voice just a few minutes ago, another thing that seems to be underwater these days is arms control. Let's hope that like Toby's voice more recently, that arms control can once again return to the fore to become a tool that not only will serve American national security interests, but help reduce the risk of nuclear war, the cost of competition and peace time, and the consequences of nuclear war should it occur. The three traditional definitions of what arms control might do for us that we first began thinking about during the Cold War.

I want to welcome you both to the Carnegie Nuclear Policy Conference. It's really terrific to have you here today. Let me just set the stage a little bit. I know this won't be news to most people in this room, but arms control is underwater these days. We've seen several arms control agreements collapse in recent years, the INF treaty, the treaty on open skies, a couple of notable cases. Bilateral arms control between the US and Russia remains in the form of new start that's due to expire in 2026. Russia's war against Ukraine, I think, has left many people in Washington rather enthusiastic about the prospect of sitting across from Vladimir Putin and negotiating an agreement in good faith.

Of course, we do continue to have a shared interest in avoiding nuclear Armageddon with the Russian Federation. We'll talk a little bit about what arms control might look like with Russia. We look elsewhere around the world and we see troubling trends as well. Chinese nuclear buildup that's going to take China away from its traditionally lean and effective nuclear deterrent towards something that resembles the forces of the United States and Russia, if not exactly that. Meanwhile, we have North Korea that's developing tactical nuclear weapons. Mervs, ICBMs, hypersonic weapons, is North Korean arms control problem these days.

We'll get to some of this today in the course of our conversation. Of course, as we all know, I want to begin with the administration's Nuclear Posture Review. This is a panel on the future of arms controls. I want to keep our conversation very narrowly focused on what the NPR has to say about the role of arms control as a tool for advancing US national security interests. To that end, let's open with that. Undersecretary Jenkins, why don't we begin with you? Can you tell us a little bit about the discussions the administration had on arms control in the course of drafting the NPR and what the NPR ultimately has to say about arms control as a tool for US national security?

Bonnie Jenkins: Well, first of all, thank you everyone for inviting me here today for the Carnegie conference. Thank you for laying out all the daunting tasks that we
have on arms control. What I will say is, and we have a panel tomorrow that's going to be on NPR, so I don't want to steal the thunder of our colleagues who are going to be talking about the NPR. I'll just say that the NPR focuses on safe, secure, effective nuclear deterrent, extended deterrents as well, lowering the role of nuclear weapons, but also highlighting the role of arms control and making it clear that arms control and deterrents are two sides of a coin. That we need both in this environment to make things work.

I just want to highlight the fact that in our discussions that we've had leading up to the release of NPR, which I'm so happy is finally out. Arms control is always highly regarded and discussed in terms of the importance. I think just the way the things you've laid out, where we're in a situation where there's so much uncertainty and so many questions and a lot of things that we're worried about. I think the need for transparency, the need for some predictability, which arms control provides is even more important now, despite the fact that it's a challenging thing to do.

I think if anything, we see just how important we need it just to have some kind of understanding and we could talk more about that. Essentially in my world of arms control, which I've been doing for so long, the NPR just highlights the need for it as we look at strengthening our deterrent.

Panda: Well, thank you. Administrator Ruby, from your perspective and from the NNSA perspective, what role does arms control have as per the NPR?

Jill Hruby: Well, let me thank you and the people of Carnegie for having Bonnie and I do this panel. Bonnie and I are really panel buddies and so you'll see that today. In course, there is no more important ways that Bonnie and I work together than arms control. Our opportunities are open by the diplomacy that state department can do. Our opportunities are the need for us is associated with effective monitoring and verification. Let me go back and I'm really happy with the comments on the Nuclear Posture Review on arms control.

I think it lays out a strong vision that we are not going to let up in Arms Control just because the time isn't perfect. but it's also clear-eyed about the time isn't perfect. It talks about what we need to do to create an environment, the reasons why we're motivated to do arms control. It also specifically mentions that we're not going to do arms control without mutual verification. I think it sets a great stage. It talks about why it's important, it talks about our commitment to it, and it provides diplomatic and technical folks in the United States a real motivation to continue to work on arms control.

Panda: Great. I do want to remind everyone that we do, of course, still have the app for the Q&A session so get your questions in. On the NPR, I know we have two great public servants here from the administration. Insofar as you ask questions about the NPR, I would encourage you to keep them related to arms control. There will be an opportunity to talk about other questions related to the NPR tomorrow at the four o'clock session.

Let's move on a bit. Something that's come up a lot lately and the administration's also been talking about this is the notion of a new arms control framework with Russia. This word "framework" has appeared in several documents including
President Biden's letter released on August 1st at the start of the NPT review conference in which the president expressed an interest in pursuing meaningful reciprocal arms limits between the United States and the Russian Federation. What do we mean when we say framework and what might a future framework look like if not a traditional treaty that imposes reciprocal limits on strategic offensive arms? What are other ways to advance arms control?

Jenkins: Well, a couple of responses. First of all, when we were having discussions with Russia at the end of last year, we approached it as a dialogue. We didn't say arms control to start out. We said these are strategic stability dialogue. In that dialogue, we included a lot of issues, not just the traditional issues that you would want extended in a New START Treaty, but we wanted to bring in other types of weapons, hypersonics, new types of weapons "tactical nuclear weapons".

All nuclear weapons but we also brought in cyber security. We also brought in AI. We also brought in space, a military that has a strategic effect. We were willing to have a negotiation that was going to be much more broad. What actually ended up in a traditional treaty was not yet decided. It was, "Let's start the conversation by looking at the strategic environment and what we need to pull into a discussion as we look at where we are today." Then that would eventually lead to, "Let's sit down and have negotiations for what's going to follow on from New START."

That sets the stage understanding that it was not from the beginning. Let's just talk about just what's in past hard security traditional treaties. The other thing to think about when we talk about arms control, we need to think about it broadly as you're saying. There's a traditional arms control treaties that we've had in the past. What is the purpose of arms control? What is the purpose of having these discussions?

It's more broad. It's about transparency. It's about building confidence and about confidence building measures. It has different forms of doing that whether it's notifications, whether it's risk reduction. What we want to do is try to change the perception of arms control as just being one thing and understanding that we need to bring in other ways in which we try to increase predictability in this time where they are so much uncertainty. When I look at the question, it's not what's the future of arms control.

It's also about why we need arms control. Let's get back to what's the purpose of it and why we need it and not question whether it's going to exist, but how do we make sure it happens because we are in a situation where we need to have some ongoing discussions and exchanges of information, whatever that's going to be to increase predictability, particularly if you're talking about the PRC where there is not that exchange happening yet despite our efforts to try to create that.

Panda: We will come back to China in a second. I assure it. I want to ask you about something the administration announced earlier this year. The vice president announced a unilateral moratorium on the testing of direct descent anti-satellite weapons in a destructive manner against satellites. The United States has now brought specific allies and is attempting to get other countries on board.

Now, that's a very interesting innovative approach to reducing risks. Of course, it's not in the nuclear domain, we're talking about the space domain. In the six months or
so since that effort was announced and has since been built on, have you taken away any lessons that might be applicable to the nuclear domain, for instance?

Jenkins: We’re still building the international consensus on that. What we’re doing, for example, in the first committee right now, we have a resolution which we’re getting co-sponsors on. We have discussions at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, there’s an open-ended working group on space. One of the things we’re trying to focus on is developing norms.

As we look at different types of web issues today, whether it’s emerging technologies, AI, and as I talked about the way in which you’re trying to build transparency, we also recognize that there’s a role for norms. There’s a question of whether space could be a traditional arms control treaty. We’re looking at how do we develop norms with countries agreed to, to say there’s certain things we’re just not going to do. In the arms control space, it goes back to what I said before.

It’s looking at the different ways in which we can approach the arms control arena broadly defined. Of course, when we get back to talking with Russia, we don’t know where we’ll start off from. We don’t know whether where we left off in December is going to be where we start again because things have changed a lot. We are going to approach it in a broad way. Ultimately, we recognize that 2026 is when the New START Treaty ends. We need to make sure that we have something in place for them.

Panda: Can you imagine us sitting down with the Russian Federation to talk about arms control while a single Russian boot remains on Ukrainian territory?

Jenkins: What I will say is there’s two things that the president has said. One is we will get to be back together in talking with Russia when the acts in good faith. The President also said that there’s a lot of difficult issues but we are committed. We want to go back into a discussion on arms control. We don’t know what that situation is going to when that time comes, what it will look like, but we remain committed to negotiations, to have something following New START. We just haven't figured out what that's going to be or when that's going to come.

Panda: Administrator Ruby, turning over to you. I want to ask you a little bit about NSA's activities right now in support of arms control today and in the future. Recently, we've heard about the arms control advancement initiative, which is a new initiative to support arms control more generally. Can you tell us a little bit more about this? What does the initiative seek to accomplish?

Hruby: Well, thanks. Let me start maybe by just paying- I think all of you know but let's just remember the big picture here in arms control and I'm going to include proliferation in that because they're so related. It's not a good time. There has been a lot happening. The environment for arms control, because of international events, it's not good. The risk of proliferation is also not going down and is arguably getting difficult with the expansion of nuclear power with new actors.

I mean IAEA, who we count on to help us with the proliferation problem, is absolutely swapped with traditional issues and non-traditional issues. I also worry about that. The war in Ukraine has caused us to think a little bit differently about our national
security strategies. We know we've got, for example, tactical nuclear weapons are in the news at least where I live and dual-use weapons are increasingly important in strategies that both Russia and China seem to be deploying.

I do that because this is the motivation for an arms control advancement initiative. Let's look at the landscape. In my opinion, we can't just keep doing what we've been doing in terms of monitoring and verification, but which, by the way, is both reasonably simple and hasn't changed a lot through the course of our bilateral treaties with Russia. The arms control Advancement initiative is aimed to build from what we have, make sure we maintain that and improve it, and build beyond it in several ways.

One is invest more in research and development for new technologies that can address the new problems. With that, we want to build some test beds so that when the very smart people in the United States and around the world work on this problem, we can do an apples-to-apples comparison of results in the same test bed. About half of what we're proposing in the arms control advancement initiative is research.

Then in addition to that, we are building a user facility. It's a funny name for it because the number of users will be rather limited because it's at Pentax. The idea is that it's an honest-to-goodness assembly disassembly area for us nuclear weapons. For those ideas that advance beyond the research phase and look potentially practical to deploy, that we can practice CONOPS, and we can practice on real or surrogate materials and shapes that are very close to something that we would expect to see.

We're also, as part of this initiative. We want to make sure we continue and even advance our activities with international partners. With the quad, well, the UK's always a special partner, the Quad, IPNDV, and other international players because we recognize nuclear needs everybody's head in this game, and a lot of people care about it. We want to capitalize on that. Then finally, and pretty excitingly, the fourth element is we've learned from our stockpile stewardship program and the nuclear weapons side, that when not much is going on, you actually have to really pay attention to keeping people knowledgeable and aware and, training programs and sustainment programs.

We're doing that in arms control for the first time as we have a program. An element of this advance is this arms control advancement initiative aimed at human capital, teaching them about what's been done, being knowledgeable and policies-based and technologies-based about arms control. Those are the four important elements. I'm really excited about it. Corey and I actually led a study for the national academies before we had the jobs that we have now about monitoring and verification. We had a very clear idea of what we needed to do. Of course, the staff in NSA has helped flesh that out a lot.

**Panda:** That's fantastic. I want to stay on monitoring and verification for just a second longer. It strikes me that if we're talking about frameworks that might not be treaties in the future, one of the issues we'll run into is inspectors won't have legal protections. That's one of the benefits of treaties. When we think about verification and monitoring, we obviously still care about making sure that we can ascertain with
a high degree of confidence that compliance is being demonstrated by whoever we might engage in arms control.

Is technology going to solve some of those problems for us if we can't have treaties and we might not be able to have people on the ground? What technologies are you most excited about in the verification space right now?

**Hruby:** Well, this is a great question. Well, there's several ideas. The big idea is what can you do remotely, right? We are all of a mindset, including me, that one of the advantages of arms control is you've got boots on the ground. Therefore, you have a much better idea of what's going on because you've got people on both sides, well, maybe in the future, all sides looking at each other's real systems in some way. If you don't have any coverage, then what can you do remotely, either through new types of robotics. I think this is quite interesting. We say, here's our robot, here's what it does. You do all your regular checks, same vice versa. We control it from the US in foreign territory to do some of this stuff. Look, I know it's got lots of problems, but that's a technology idea. That has, I think some potential. Obviously, imaging from the sky has gotten a lot better. It has a lot more spatial resolution. It has a more temporal resolution. We can see chemical species. Technology never solves every problem. I love technology as much as anybody, but recognizing it doesn't solve all problems. We're going to have to have a will to want to do this. We're going to have to have a will to allow that it might not be perfect exactly when we start. We may have to relax what we are willing to let other people see.

It's not gonna be easy. I do think technology has, well, I can say without a doubt, that technology has advanced a lot since the equipment that we're using for a New START was developed, which was developed for START. It has actually developed before that. We're talking about technologies that are really- they're adequate. They do what we want. The treaty was designed around them to work. We would like to make sure that any treaty that we designed for the future, there's technology that can verify that in some way, and it's going to have to be different.

**Panda:** Great. Thank you. I want to come back to China as I promised. It's clear that we're seeing a significant shift in the contours of China's traditionally lean and effective nuclear forces. Most prominently, Beijing is building three new large fields for fixed land-based ICBMs and DOD has publicly assessed that the Chinese leadership likely intends to pursue a stockpile of 1000 warheads by the end of the decade. That's a big change in the arms control environment and so far as US interests are concerned.

There have been some attempts to raise this. Prominently, I think this was raised at the November 21 virtual summit between President Biden and President Xi. Undersecretary Jenkins, I wanted to ask you, does the administration have a broader theory of engagement with China on strategic nuclear matters right now? Beyond telling China that this is something we care about and we want to talk about in an arms control setting, what is the broader theory that the administration has for actually advancing arms control with China, if not now, then in the future?
**Jenkins:** Well, first of all, we have to get them to the table. Whatever theory we have is not going to work unless we can actually have a conversation with them. We do have conversations with China. I don't want to give the impression that we don't have any. We talk with them in many different aspects, in many different forums, whether it's the [unintelligible 00:27:32] conference, first committee, we have these conversations with them.

To have the type of conversations that we want, where we will just, I'm not even saying arms control, just risk reduction, as I said, as a version of arm control, just get to the table and talk to us. That has not been successful to date. That is fundamental. We have, of course, had conversations with them in the P5, but of course, the P5, it's not really functioning right now.

We are continuing to engage them, to try to get them to the table to talk more serious about ways in which we can talk, issues we can talk about that just we want to hear from them. We also talk with our allies. Many of them have relationships with China. They are also using their diplomatic avenues to encourage them to engage with the US. It's not just us trying to give the message to them, it's others because other countries also understand the importance of us having a conversation with China.

They're not having conversations with them either. They have the exact same concerns that we have that there's not the openness to try to understand and what's going on to reduce the chances of miscalculation and just to have some transparency to have that dialogue that we can build upon later. The strategists continue having the conversation between President Biden and Xi. The conversations we have with them on different forms, continuing to push the need, working with our allies and others and partners to leverage them. To date, it really hasn't been successful, unfortunately.

**Panda:** Staying in Asia for a moment, we've got another problem, right? We have a country that President Nixon once called a fourth-rate pipsqueak that's now on the verge of deploying tactical nuclear weapons and potentially MIRVs if we believe Kim Jong-un. Of course, talking about North Korea. Now, the NPR acknowledges that North Korea does present a nuclear threat to the United States. Arms control is not mentioned in the context of North Korea. At what point does that change? At what point do we treat North Korea, which is an increasingly capable nuclear adversary of the United States as an arms control problem? Does arms control and risk reduction of any role to play in managing our relationship with Pyongyang?

**Jenkins:** Once again, if they would have a conversation with us. I think arms control can always be an option if you have two willing countries willing to sit down at the table and talk, and not just arms control, but risk reduction, everything that leads up to a traditional arms control treaty and all the different aspects of arms control that we can have with them.

We've made it very clear to the DPRK, as you probably know that we're ready to talk to them. We have no preconditions to a conversation with them. We'll talk to them anytime, anyplace they're willing to do it. Again, they have not come back with any interest in having a conversation with us. The possibilities exist if we can create the
situation with them to have these discussions. It’s not as if things are off the table because we push them off the table. They’re off the table because the environment that we need to have those conversations aren’t there yet.

Panda: If Kim picked up the phone, he could expect to have a conversation with the United States about arms control.

Jenkins: If he picked up the phone and said I want to talk about arms control, we’re not going to say no. I think if anything, we would want to explore what that means. We would say, okay, you want to talk about arms control, let’s have a conversation, and see what that means. I think what we saw when President Trump was doing his outreach, there was a difference of opinion of what arms control is.

From my understanding, there wasn’t a lot of meeting in the minds on what the conversation was going to be, what we meant by nuclear disarmament, what they meant by nuclear disarmament. A lot of the groundwork was laid to really understand what we’re trying to do together. I think we’d have to start with a conversation of what is it that we’re trying to achieve, get that groundwork, and that takes time, but we will certainly not say no, if they say we want to talk arms control. We’d want to say, okay, let’s talk about this and see what that means.”

Panda: Great. I do want to go to our audience questions which are pouring in here. I don’t think we’ll have time to get to all of them, but I’d like to cover as many as we can. The first question comes from Andrey Baklitskiy, for you, Undersecretary Jenkins. Andrey notes that there are people in the United States who would argue that the US needs to build up its nuclear arsenal to simultaneously compete with two peer competitors by the end of this decade. New START limits are what is holding Washington back currently from doing this, it won’t as of 2026. How would you respond to them?

Jenkins: I would say that building more weapons is not the answer. I would say that we’ve had an arms race, and now we are in a position where-- We spent billions and billions of dollars to build weapons, we spent billions and billion of dollars to get rid of them. I don’t think that going back into that scenario is going to answer any questions. I think we should certainly be aware, be cognizant, be prepared to deal with situations, strengthening our deterrence, strengthen our extended deterrents to everything we can. Automatically assuming that building more, I’m not sure that’s the-- I think that’s an understandable belief.

Certainly, if you’re looking at the situation, I can see why somebody would say that, but we’ve lived through that. That’s not necessarily what we want to do based on what we’ve done before. I understand the sentiment, it’s a difficult time. We’re all feeling a little nervous about Russia and nuclear saber-rattling. We’re watching what China’s doing in terms of building US nuclear weapons. We haven’t had a chance to sit down and talk with Russia about another treaty. I totally get that. Before we do something like that spending money that I’m not sure we have that we could spent on it before, we need to be much more thoughtful.

Panda: Thank you. Administrator Hruby, we have a question for you from Molly Hurley, who asks, how are the bottom lines of the NNSA or labs like Sandia affected
by either moderate arms control or complete nuclear disarmament? What could this mean for the prospects of these efforts?

Hruby: Well, I've got to weigh in on this previous question.

Panda: Please do.

Hruby: It is the case that, I mean, you can create a logic for more weapons, but you really have to stand back from that. We've got 1550, Russia's got 1550, maybe China's aiming for 1550, some number like that, that's a lot of nuclear weapons. It's hard to believe that war is going to be any different with 2000 each or 3000 each. It's going to end in the same place, and that's not going to be a place that many of us want to be. I would just say that I think this administration and all the discussions we had about the NPR, not to steal the thunder, but I think it's pretty clear that we're not after just building up a nuclear arsenal that's larger. I think it's important that we say that, so just on that.

I think this question is aimed at-- Am I afraid that arms control will undercut some way the whole value of the national security enterprise? The second question you really asked me. Not at all because the national security enterprise exist to make sure deterrence is done. Look, I'm convinced, I'm a product of-- admittedly a product to that environment. The science and technology that's done by this enterprise is going to be important. It won't be the same. It'll be important.

We cannot do large science and technology. The beauty of this model that we have are federally funded research and development centers, and laboratories that really do large team science, really fundamentally understand things, will exist in some different format, working on some different problems. If we get to that point, we've talked about it for a long time, and it's not something that I worry about nor do I think anybody else should worry about it. The labs exist, the enterprise exists to do the right thing. If that's the right thing, that's what we'll do.

Panda: Great. Moving ahead, we have a question here that brings us to arms control, and new technologies, and new domains. [unintelligible 00:37:02] asks on behavioral norms as an alternative to treaty-based arms control, what measures do you envisage to reduce risks from the cyber sphere that threaten nuclear capabilities? I might also just take the chair's prerogative here to add new technologies like artificial intelligence, do codes of conduct and mechanisms that have a role to play. This question is really for either of you?

Jenkins: I guess I'll start by saying, we're actually thinking very much about codes of conduct and rules of the role, codes of conduct, norms, it's what I was talking about before in terms of space. There's two things, one, there's a lot we still need to learn about the role of emerging technologies and nuclear. I think there's still a lot yet to be understood. We certainly have concerns about AI and nuclear command and control, so we have some definitely concerns.

There's also a lot to learn in terms of its role in national security, how we can advance some things like verification when we talk about arms control. There's still a lot to be learned, and we're still doing that. We certainly also see a strong role for norms, and rules of the road, however, you want to call it in terms of AI, and all the
emerging technologies right now. It's an important, it's something that we're promoting, not just in terms of space, but that's a point we're really promoting with countries is, what is the role of norms, and how do we get countries to agree to norms in terms of a lot of these emerging texts?

**Panda:** I want to move a little bit to a question here that gets at the push and pull between the executive branch and the legislative branch of the United States? The President's Nuclear Posture Review, among other things canceled the nuclear sea launch cruise missile, but yet Congress funded the program this year. Moving forward on these new systems, like the sea launch cruise missile, will that jeopardize US leadership on arms control this tug of war that we sometimes see between Capitol Hill and the White House? Can we critique Russia's investment in and threats to use non-strategic nuclear weapons as we develop our own?

**Hruby:** Well, maybe I can start on this one. I would just say that this idea of what systems should be retained and what systems we could cancel, and how it impacted arms control was well thought out in the discussions we had on the Nuclear Posture Review. That was recognized. If we build a system, is it going to help us in arms control negotiations? Is it going to hurt us in arms control negotiations?

We have those discussions. Those were real discussions had by real people in this administration to make decisions about these systems. If anybody actually knows a 23 budget, I'd love to know it. I don't think we know what Congress is going to fund relative to these systems yet.

**Jenkins:** I would just add, just to agree. There were a lot of discussions on this. Whether the disagreement between the administration and executive branch will hurt our leadership, I will say our partners and allies know our system almost better than we do. They know that the differences between the administration and Congress is nothing new. We've been able to maintain leadership through many years despite the differences that we've had between the two branches. For them, that's the US system. That's what they do. Complicated sometimes, but I don't think that they would look at that as a testament to what- to our leadership on these issues.

**Panda:** Also, just staying on this for a moment. Emily Spiller asks, on the domestic front, do you think the ratification process in the Senate represents a significant challenge to securing any future arms control agreements? I might add to that. Are we thinking more about frameworks and non-treaty arrangements because of the Senate, or genuinely because that's the best way forward in the current international security environment?

**Jenkins:** Yes. To say it's not a challenge for arms control would definitely not be true. We recognized it. We know that what comes after New START, it's in the back of our minds. It has to be ratified. We know that. JCPOA during the confirmation, they were always like hammering us about that. CTBT is still not ratified. Yes, it's certainly a challenge. We think about that when we're in negotiations. We think about the fact that we have to bring this back home.

That definitely does play a role. At the same time, it's not a debilitating factor. We got to do what we got to do, and we'll deal with that when we take it back to the Senate. We also have a relationship with the Hill, we brief them on things. We let them know.
They're always asking for briefings on what's going on with JCPOA, what's going on with this. A lot of my folks here from the T family are on the Hill all the time talking to staffers. We do have a communication with them. We anticipate problems, but we also try to be engaged.

**Hruby:** I just want to put in a plug for this framework idea going back to the technology question, a few questions back. The framework idea, it may well end up with a way to do some things that are shy of treaties and the ratification. The beauty of it is you can introduce new technologies in time, and you maybe can change those agreements faster than you can change agreements about, say, strategic nuclear weapons, which have been until recently a pretty stable thing to what they were.

You didn't need to go back and make changes. If you have a framework that has cyber or has autonomy, or AI, and that technology is changing more quickly, this framework idea allows a more temporal ability to evaluate, I think.

**Jenkins:** Just to add to that, part of your question was, does a challenge with the Hill have an impact on what we decide to do? I would say that, for example, we're talking about the norms for emerging tech for space. A lot of that is not so much because we're worried about the Senate, it's just because that's the way we think the best way to actually move forward in those particular domains.

**Panda:** Got you. Administrator Hruby, I want to come back a bit to the arms control advancement initiative. Because we have a question here from Nick Roth who wants to know a little bit more specifically about the activities that will take place at Pantex relating to that initiative if you can share more on that?

**Hruby:** What we're hoping to do is to dedicate a space, a cell for those of you who know Pantex since I know Nick does to this initiative so that we have a place that its primary purpose or sole purpose is to allow people to come in and do testing so that they don't have to wait in line, so they don't have to get at the end of the line, and that can move this thing along faster. Now, this initiative has not started. It's a 23 request. We've done some work to get it ready. That is not happening yet. I see the Nuclear Posture Review is quite supportive of revitalizing, recapitalizing the nuclear security enterprise. I see this as part of that.

**Panda:** We haven't talked about trilateral arms control, which was an idea that the last administration was particularly enthusiastic about. Kylie Jones, our junior fellow here at Carnegie actually asks, China has mentioned on several occasions that they refuse to enter trilateral arms control negotiations with the US and Russia, and the Russians have their own reservations. Is there a future for trilateral arms control? Can China be integrated into the arms control fold with the US and Russia while a quantitative gap remains between the three countries?

**Jenkins:** A couple responses on that. As you said, the trilat was attempted, there were a lot of challenges obviously on that. We don't see that as the way to go right now. We can't even get China into our bilat. I don't think that they're very interested in having the type of conversations we want to have with them in a trilateral either. They made it very clear to us. In the P5 context where we were meeting, we talk risk reduction but they didn't want-- Even in that situation, they wouldn't have those discussions. That's not possible.
On the second one question, when we were meeting with the Russians last year, we've mentioned several times that we're doing this in the context of knowing that there's something else out there. We're going to continue to have our conversations on a strategic stability. The China is not in the room with us. We are aware that China's out there and building up their nuclear arsenal while we're talking about reducing ours.

While it's not going to be a factor and Russia was just kind of like, well, whatever. It's not a factor in terms of our desire to get back in strategic stability dialogue. It's out there, and we know it's out there. That's the other elephant in the room that's sitting out there that we have to figure out how we're going to deal with it.

**Panda:** I want to pull on this for just another second. One of the issues that I know is of interest to a lot of people in this room is Track II diplomacy. Traditionally during the Cold War, we saw Track II efforts have some success, particularly the scientific communities the United States and the Soviet Union demonstrated the value of new arms control ideas to their respective national leaderships.

When I look at China today, and particularly after the 20th Party Congress, which I think is an indictment of the demise of collective leadership, the personification of leadership, and Xi Jinping, the changing intellectual climate in China, we see less and less evidence that Track II efforts are feeding into the views that the Chinese leadership might have on arms control and disarmament issues in particular.

If you had to give this audience some advice on Track II efforts right now on Russia and China, in particular, what would be most helpful for the administration? Do you see Track II having a role to play in the current environment?

**Jenkins:** Well, Track II has always been I thought something that we should continue to do because I think there is a value in Track II diplomacy. However, I think the important thing is who's at the table and who's involved. Even in our efforts, we've had a difficult time convincing the PRC to bring the right military people to the table. You have to figure out who's making the decisions. There's influence and there's impact and direct impact.

The question you're asking is the dialogue is good in the sense that-- I appreciate when colleagues in the NGO community have Track II and come back and talk and we share information about what might help, what we should be thinking about that we might not have thought about is very valuable. Having the right people in the room, and China has been very reluctant to bring the right people to the conversations who will have direct impact on the decision-making.

I understand your question totally on that point. It's not easy. It's not easy when they don't want bring them or when they know that bringing them means that they're in a position where they have to be serious about the conversation.

**Panda:** Changing gears totally for a second, we do have a question here on the JCPOA. Jack Kennedy asks, do you think there remains a realistic prospect of reviving the agreement? Do you think the administration could have done more to make negotiations successful?
**Jenkins:** I think there'll always be a question about whether we could do more. I think when something doesn't seem like it's going to be successful, there's always that question because there's always choices that you make in a process. There's always, I can go this way or I can go this way, or I can go these two ways or this way. Every time you make a choice and it goes a different direction, that means you didn't take another option.

I think there's always going to be a question of what could else could have done, you could have done this. You make the choices that you make at the time based on the information that you have and based on the engagements that you have with people who you trust their opinions. That goes with the territory. Yes, it's very challenging right now. We still see it, the US still sees the JCPOA as the best way to prevent Iranian nuclear weapons acquisition, but we also are at a time where it's very challenging.

We also have our concerns with Iran giving UAVs to Russia and violating UN Security Council resolution. That just makes it even more challenging right now. It's not at a good point, but I will say, second guessing has its limits because you can always second guess. Circumstances that we're back then are different. I think it's healthy to look back and say what we could have done better assuming things don't work out. I wouldn't focus too much on that and just say choices were made at the time, the best that people thought that they were.

**Panda:** We have a few minutes left. We have a question here on a normative matter which Beatrice Fihn asks which is, absent new Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements, what is the United States doing to stigmatize and de-legitimize nuclear threats right now? Do you believe the TPNW can be helpful to strengthening the norms against threats to use nuclear weapons?

**Jenkins:** I know Beatrice Fihn knows our position on that. I think there's a number of things that we were trying to do in terms of highlighting the role of arms control, the need to control weapons, the importance of deterrence and the role that arms control plays in deterrence. A number of documents that we have produced during the NPT Review conference, the P5 statement that was released earlier, which is also very interesting because that was something that Russia really pushed for us to put out.

We're working and doing what we are able to do under the circumstances in terms of trying to reduce the role of nuclear weapons, which is a major point of the NPR and reduce the focus on it and try to find ways to work with all countries to disarm and move forward under Non-Proliferation Review, non-proliferation obligations and other treaty obligations. As far as the TPNW, I think people know our concerns about the treaty and whether we see it as a viable way to really get towards some of it.

**Panda:** Before we close out, I want to ask you both a closing question that sometimes comes up in discussions about the future of arms control. I remember in my last trip to Russia in 2019, specifically having this conversation with a few Russians interested in arms control, and of course, we're having this conference on the 60th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis. The question is that, does it take a crisis to get the world interested in arms control again? Does it take a crisis to get the Chinese leadership to see the value of arms control?
I see some issues with that. You roll the dice on enough crisis, sometimes the dice doesn't roll in your favor. I would want to replay the Cuban Missile Crisis, even if I knew it would lead to arms control. I'm really curious for both of your views on that idea and the role that crises play in sparking arms control.

_Hruby:_ Ordinarily I would like to answer this question, of course not. Right now, my temptation is to say, I hope so because we have a crisis. I hope we can use it to reinvigorate the global interest in arms control. I think there are opportunities to do that, they're not immediate, they're not right in front of our face, but that's what we have to be ready to do is, this could turn quick.

We have to be ready to take advantage of this pretty scary moment in time and things nuclear to advance strategic stability and risk reduction and arms control and proliferation and the whole set of things that we care about. It is a bad situation right now as you lay it out in the very beginning that we've got New START. We should remember a few others, but we do have New START. That was really close to not having New START.

We still do have what is a very important treaty at this moment in time, and we have managed to do it. We should take advantage of the crisis. We shouldn't ignore the crisis. I really hope something good comes out of this. In general, hopefully not and hopefully people can recognize the stability that has been provided by arms control. We've got a lot of good international norms and good international allies and good international partners to help us with this that are stronger as a result of what's going on. I need to, and I want to stay optimistic about this.

_Panda:_ Great. Undersecretary Jenkins, we'll give you the last word on this.

_Jenkins:_ I've been doing arms control for a long time, and this is certainly one of the more concerning times that I've seen. It has resulted in much more interest in arm control. I'm seeing a lot more people caring about the issue, wondering what's going to happen, nervous. It creates a desire to know more, to learn more. I wish it didn't take a crisis for more people to be concerned, but I recognize the fact that this is just an issue that a lot of people say, let them deal with it, we know that we feel good, things are going on, they're working on it, so we're going to focus on other things. This is a moment to really have these discussions, keep the interest in these issues because it hasn't disappeared.

People may not be focused on it, but it's still here. It's been here for a long time. We've been working on it for a long time. We will continue to work on these issues. Like Jill, I hope that something positive will actually result or at least nothing negative will result, but there is a lot to learn about it and it's a time for interest in this even though, unfortunately, it's a crisis situation that's creating it. To also highlight what Jill was saying, we do have New START, we still have notifications that the Russians give us. They're still notifying when they do things under START. We still have them as notified that they're in compliance with the treaty, is the thing that we saw.

We say good faith, that's the thing that they could be doing is continuing to abide by the New START treaty. We're looking at dates now to meet with the Russians to discuss resuming inspections. We're committed to continuing to implement New START. There's still an interest by the Russians to do that. We are just hoping that
this will eventually lead and to some point to getting back to the table with them to
discuss what happens after START. Yes, it is a crisis that gets this moving,
unfortunately.

**Panda:** We'll also think about there. Before I invite everybody to give our two
speakers a warm round of applause, I do want to let everybody know that we will be
having our closing reception for day one at the conference in Regency BCD, just
outside. I'm sure there'll be a lot to talk about given the food for thought that we've
gotten from both our great speakers today. With that, join me in giving them a round
of applause. Thanks.

[applause]

**Hruby:** Thank you.

[00:59:26] [END OF AUDIO]