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Much like the title suggests, David A. Cooper’s *Arms Control for the Third Nuclear Age: Between Disarmament and Armageddon* argues that “the United States is facing a new era of nuclear arms racing for which it is conceptually unprepared” (p. 1). Nuclear disarmament has dominated international agreements since the end of the Cold War—the second nuclear age—but the concept is not suited for the emerging multipolar nuclear world that has Russia, China, and the United States in a ternary struggle. *Arms Control for the Third Nuclear Age* demonstrates that despite a very complicated nuclear future, classic arms control concepts could be the backbone of future nuclear weapons treaties. Cooper’s work stands out among recent scholarship that shies away from classic arms control concepts like mutual deterrence.

The book is divided into five chapters, with each containing succinct introductions and conclusions that provide a useful roadmap for the chapter’s argument and key points. Chapter 1 traces the changing denuclearization paradigm established since the Cold War ended. After thirty years of disarmament serving as the dominant strategy, Russia, China, and the United States now find themselves in an incipient nuclear arms race, with the potential emergence of South Korea, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia as nuclear powers. The key to nuclear peace, for Cooper, is reaching strategic stability where no nuclear power would have a complete strategic advantage over other powers, thus deterring a nuclear first strike out of fear of retribution.

In the vein of stability, chapter 2 provides readers with a summary of classic Cold War arms control theory serving as a national security tool. The year 1961 saw the publication of two seminal books: *The Control of the Arms Race: Disarmament and Arms Control in the Missile Age* by Hedley Bull and *Strategy and Arms Control* by Thomas Schelling and Morton Halpren. Together, these two books advocated for “adversarial cooperation” to achieve “cooperative security” (p. 40). Cooper identifies that “the” critical presumption of classic arms control theory is that rivals share an overriding interest in preserving stra-
tegic stability, even within an otherwise antagonistic relationship” (p. 54). This arms control argument contrasts the more hawkish notion of deterrence through nuclear superiority at every level, which came to be primarily associated with Herman Kahn of the RAND Corporation. Cooper notes that a blend of each approach can be useful, as holding strategic advantages in certain areas can motivate adversaries to come to the negotiating table.

Chapter 3 traces how these theories served as the conceptual foundation for arms control until the end of the Cold War. Cooper admits that his account of traditional arms treaties “is not a history in any proper sense” but rather an exploration of how classic arms control theory evolved during the Cold War “in order to glean useful lessons for today” (p. 78). From the 1963 Test Ban Treaty, Cooper derives the lesson that the United States taking a hard-nosed approach with regard to weapons testing compelled the Soviets to the negotiating table. The lesson from the more robust Strategic Arms Limitations Treaties I & II of the 1970s is the importance of a bipartisan consensus that allowed talks to survive multiple administrations. Lastly, while Cooper sees Ronald Reagan succeeding by being hard-nosed in negotiations to protect US interests while willing to make concessions to achieve strategic stability, the breakthrough—and lesson for today—was Mikhail Gorbachev’s acceptance of intrusive inspections that resulted in the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). These intrusive inspections allowed each side to verify their adversary’s ability to reciprocate a nuclear first strike.

Chapter 4 revisits themes from chapter 1, describing in greater detail how the “the post-Cold War focus of American nuclear policy shifted from strategic competition to preventing proliferation and nuclear terrorism” (p. 118). The United States began making unilateral disarmament decisions in the first decade after the Cold War, but the post-9/11 fears of terrorists acquiring nuclear weapons greatly accelerated nuclear disarmament trends. President Obama’s New START of 2009 proposed deep cuts to US and Russian nuclear arsenals with the goal of bringing China to the negotiating table once strategic parity was reached. However, New START was negotiated in a short window by the Obama administration in 2010 before the original START expired. New START had less verification and fewer restrictions on key technologies, and it was only intended to be a placeholder for further negotiations. These negotiations never occurred, and the 2014 Russian invasion of Crimea ended any possibility of future talks. The situation has become bleaker since the publication of this book, with Russia launching a full-scale invasion in February 2022 and withdrawing from New START in January 2023.

Chapter 5 is where Cooper’s argument culminates by asserting that the United States should adopt two broad strategies. First, it should adopt a dual-track approach of modernizing its forces in categories like hypersonic missiles while also signaling a willingness to negotiate. Second, it should seek to negotiate only what is verifiable, something Cooper notes could be difficult given that China views keeping its adversaries uncertain as a strategic advantage. Cooper sees the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—China, France, Great Britain, the United States, and Russia—as a potential group among whom talks could begin. Cooper notes that any successful negotiations will also have to involve compromises among all parties. The book ends with an exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of Russia, China, and the United States, and what each might have to compromise to reach strategic stability.

Cooper’s sources limit the strength of the argument that Cold War tactics could have success for today. The sources are mostly manuscripts focused on the US experience, augmented by interviews with former defense officials and documents from some US archives. This makes it diffi-
cult for the book to accurately describe why the Soviet Union came to the negotiating table in the Cold War and complicates prognosticating how adversaries would respond to actions by the United States. For example, when discussing the first Limited Test Ban Treaty in 1963, Cooper suggests that the United States's hard-nosed approach to continued atmospheric testing is what motivated the Soviet Union to negotiate, but this misses the fact that the Soviet Union had reached a point where it no longer needed to conduct above-ground tests. Similarly, without an accurate understanding of China's positions today, it is difficult to prognosticate how any American proposals would be received internationally.

Despite its limitations, *Arms Control for the Third Nuclear Age* would work well in upper-division courses on US foreign policy or US history of the Cold War. The argument is compelling and accessible, which should generate a lot of discussion.

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