

## THE GREAT STRATEGIC TRIANGLE

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The “Great Triangle” of the Asia-Pacific region formed by the United States, Russia, and China is particularly important in both geopolitical and military-strategic terms. The strategic arsenals and military programs of the two traditional superpowers and the steady buildup of the nuclear and missile capabilities of China, the newly emergent superpower of the twenty-first century, give global significance to the Great Triangle they form.

### Key Features of Great-Triangle Relations

- The United States and Russia maintain a relationship based on nuclear parity, mutual nuclear deterrence, and a forty-year experience of arms limitation and reduction agreements.
- Unlike the United States and Russia, China’s approach to strategic stability is not based on missile and nuclear parity and mutually assured destruction. China is the only one of the “big five” nuclear powers that does not provide information on its nuclear forces.
- If China’s nuclear forces are as limited as they are believed to be, they would be unable to deliver a retaliatory strike and are operationally most likely oriented toward a preemptive attack. The Chinese second-strike capability is only viable if China has hidden missile reserves.
- China must be taken into consideration when discussing subsequent U.S.-Russian initiatives on arms limitations and reductions.
- China would join the disarmament process only if its concessions regarding transparency and weapons limitations are offset by U.S. and Russian concessions.

### Incentives for China to Participate in the Disarmament Process

- The United States could commit to cease its buildup of sea- and land-based ballistic missile defense (BMD) assets in the Pacific Ocean.
- The United States and Russia must assume an obligation that China will be able to take part, in a format acceptable to Beijing, in BMD cooperation projects that the two superpowers agree upon.
- One such project might be an Asia-Pacific joint center for the exchange of missile launch data. This center would be similar to the Russia-United States and Russia-NATO centers, which were initiated or discussed in relation to Europe but never became operational.
- The United States and Russia could proceed with negotiations on the next strategic arms reduction treaty including limitations on conventionally armed strategic weapon systems. This would fulfill the necessary precondition for China to also limit its precision-guided missiles armed with conventional warheads that are indistinguishable from nuclear warheads.
- Progress must be made in limiting U.S. and Russian nonstrategic nuclear weapons (excluding, in spite of the NATO position, their redeployment from Europe to Asia). This would establish the necessary conditions for limiting the Chinese intermediate- and shorter-range missile systems.

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