

The Importance of an Interconnected Approach to Arms Control: Interview with Nicolas Roche



Nicolas Roche is the director of the *Centre interdisciplinaire d'études sur le nucléaire et la stratégie* (CIENS) at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*. He graduated from the *Ecole nationale des chartes (archiviste paléographe)*, the Political Science Institute of Paris and the *Ecole nationale d'administration* (ENA). As a French diplomat, he has been posted in different positions, notably in the Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense and the French Atomic Energy Commission.

The *Centre interdisciplinaire d'études sur le nucléaire et la stratégie* (CIENS) is a public academic research centre dedicated to nuclear and strategic studies. What are its main lines of research in the field of arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament?

CIENS is an academic teaching and research centre dedicated to nuclear and strategic studies founded in 2015 at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* of Paris. Our multidisciplinary team offers a coherent set of seminars on History, Ethics, Security studies, International Relations, Culture and Art, as well as research publications and exhibitions. Our activities focus on current and past proliferation crises, the history and contemporary evolutions of nuclear doctrines and strategies, the moral dimension of nuclear weapons, the re-emergence of debates in Europe and Asia on deterrence/extended deterrence, arms control and strategic stability. We also focus on less studied fields, such as the relationships between art, culture and war. Our activities are conducted in partnership with the French Ministry of Defence and the *Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique et aux Energies Alternatives* (CEA), which are the financial sponsors of our two postdoctoral fellowships at the CIENS. Besides our regular publications on strategic issues, especially on nuclear deterrence, proliferation and disarmament, we also organise international annual conferences with the ambition to discuss different perspectives on these topics. Among others, we organised the "[From West Berlin to North Korea: challenge to extended deterrence](#)" conference in 2018; the "[Getting Rid of Nuclear Weapons: Philosophical Foundation and Historical Circulation of Ideas in Nuclear Disarmament](#)" conference in 2019, and we will hold the "[Nuclear deterrence in Europe. Visions, debates, opportunities, and challenges from 1945 to present](#)" conference in July 2021.

CIENS puts a strong emphasis on history and the interconnection of various disciplines, including geography, to "decode" the complexity of disarmament and deterrence issues. What is the added value of such an interdisciplinary approach? Can the analysis of the historical evolution of arms control shed light on today's strategic dilemmas?

A strong interdisciplinary approach is needed to understand deterrence, arms control and strategic stability. These issues are indeed at the crossroads of history, geography, philosophy,

economy, law and political science, but are also less common approaches to War Studies like linguistic and aesthetic studies. The "nuclear grammar" developed during the Cold War must be better understood, revisited and adapted. The idea is not to replicate those concepts but to better understand them in a different context, which is characterised by nuclear proliferation and nuclear multipolarity, the integration of systemic competition fields, as well as increased economic dependency. Reviewing history and updating past analytical tools, shedding a philosophical, legal, economical or even aesthetical light on them, is necessary to understand today's challenges: nuclear escalation, multi-domain arms control regimes, deterrence of malicious actions under the nuclear threshold and in the grey zone, management of misunderstandings between nuclear powers, social and ethical dilemma related to disarmament etc. Only an interdisciplinary approach to nuclear and strategic studies can account for the complexities of deterrence, arms control and disarmament in our modern environment.

How can arms control and deterrence be reconciled?

A key notion to bridge this gap is strategic stability, which has different definitions. To put it simply, it can describe a situation characterised by the absence of incentives to change the status quo with force. Arms control is a way to achieve a stable balance of power at the lowest possible level of forces and capabilities – both nuclear and conventional – through negotiation and legal agreements. It has to be articulated with existing weapon systems, force posture and strategies. The difficulty today is to define a new arms control regime in a geopolitical context with multiple powers, a greater variety of destabilising weapon systems, lack of trust between powers, while the traditional arms control architecture has been weakened and partly demolished over the last years. The Europeans in particular must study these challenges anew if they don't want to simply watch over while others define an agenda that will have a major impact on their security. An interdisciplinary approach to studies related to arms control and deterrence, putting together history, geography, social science and philosophy, is therefore necessary to better understand the dynamics at play and to be able to influence them.

REGULATING THE USE OF ROBOTICS IN THE BATTLEFIELD

Artificial intelligence (AI) represents both an opportunity and a challenge, especially if it is applied to the military and defence sector. Autonomous lethal weapons are the most extreme and controversial examples in the field of development and application of Autonomous Technology.

Even though military powers such as the United States, Russia, China and Israel are investing a lot of money to develop these weapons, completely autonomous weapons do not exist yet. However, many systems of weapons with a high level of autonomy are used. The economic impact of AI (civil and military) is expected to amount to around 13 trillion dollars by 2030.

In 2013, the [Campaign to Stop Killer Robots](#) was founded by a coalition of about seventy-two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) urging national governments and international organizations to ban autonomous weapons and underlining that the use of such weapons entail the risk of violating fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, which provides for the protection of civilians in conflicts.

Autonomous weapons do not abide, in particular, by the principles of proportionality, distinction and military necessity, because only human beings are able to respect them. The Campaign asks governments to maintain significant human control as a crucial element to avoid a future where totally autonomous weapons can be deployed on battlefields.

Within the EU, only the [European Parliament has clearly spoken out against completely autonomous weapons](#) although not in favour of an absolute ban, but rather in favour of the establishment of a regulatory framework. It is absolutely a priority that the European Union expresses a shared opinion as soon as possible in order to achieve a common understanding on where to draw limits to the use of these weapons. The daunting challenges posed by autonomous weapons call for common solutions based on binding rules for all European states and at the global level.

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Latest Publications

Preventive Arms Control for Small and Very Small Armed Aircraft and Missiles, Mathias Pilch, Jürgen Altmann and Dieter Suter, Technische Universität Dortmund, 2021

The U.S debate on the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Alaïs Larioux, Peace Research Center Prague, 2021

International and EU Regulation of Countering the Hostile Misuse of CBRN Materials and Knowledge, Tatyana Novosiolova, the Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD), 2020

Incentives of Europe for Non-Proliferation Outreach Activities, Quentin Michel, Wolfgang Lehofer, European Studies Unit (University of Liège)

EU NEWS

Arms Exports Control: the EU Council adopts a Decision establishing a Common Approach on End-User Certificates

On 15 January 2021, the Council of the European Union, adopted a decision paving the way toward a more uniform EU approach to the export of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and their ammunition.

With the goal of increasing clarity for the defence industry and its clients and of reducing the risk of arms diversion to illicit or unintended users, the decision aims at establishing a set of common standards on end-user certificates for the export of SALW and their ammunition.

Specifically, the decision establishes a number of essential requirements that the end-user certificates must fulfil and it outlines specific commitments that states need to undertake, such as, for instance, ensuring that the goods will not be used for purposes other than the ones declared.

The decision, published on the Official Journal of the EU, adds to the Conclusions reached by the Council on 16 September 2019 following the review of the Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP. Contributing to the convergence in member states' arms export policies, the 2019 Conclusions defined common rules on the exports control of military technology and equipment. It does so by setting, upholding and implementing high common standards for the management of transfers of military technology and equipment.

For more information:

[EU Council Decision of 15 January 2021](#)

[Council Conclusions on the review of Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP on the control of arms exports](#)

Network Calls

ESSAY COMPETITION

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Institute for Peace Studies and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (IFSH), in cooperation with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), the Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO) and the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP), have launched the 2nd Edition of the essay competition on conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures.

The Call is open to students and young professionals, nationals of OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation.

More info: [here](#)

Any queries can be sent to: essay-competition2021@osce.org

NETWORK NEWS

Calls for Applications

The Future of Europe? From Lockdown to Recovery

Applications are open for the online course "*The Future of Europe? From Lockdown to Recovery*", which will take place at the Institute of International Studies, Charles University Prague, Czech Republic from 12 April to 16 April 2021.

For more information [click here](#)

or contact: katerina.kuklikova@fsv.cuni.cz ; spring.university@fsv.cuni.cz

The UK PONI Annual Conference

Applications are open to submit a proposal presentation for the 2021 UK PONI Annual Conference, which will be held virtually from 8 June to 10 June 2021. Proposals can be submitted for plenary (on-record discussion) or smaller roundtables (off-record).

For more information [click here](#)

or contact: ukponi@rusi.org

The Impact of New Technologies: Between Destabilization and Enabling Resilience

Applications are open to submit a contribution to the 2021 Science, Peace and Security Conference on "*The impact of new technologies: Between destabilization and enabling resilience*", which will take place from 8 September to 10 September 2021 at RWTH Aachen University, Germany. Abstracts for idea pitches (5 minutes) with subsequent discussion, talks (10-20 minutes) or posters (with a 2-minute pitch in front of the full audience) can be submitted until 31 March.

For more information [click here](#)