



Concept Note

Wilton Park dialogue: Adapting Strategic Stability for unstable times

Wednesday 2 – Friday 4 2022 | WP3023

Context

Russia's unjustified and unlawful invasion of Ukraine has highlighted that strategic stability is fragile. The invasion, by a nuclear power with a military doctrine that envisages potential use of theatre nuclear weapons, and which has used chemical weapons, both in the UK and on its own territory, poses questions for maintaining stability: what does "strategic stability" mean to different actors? What does strategic stability look like in different regions, including Europe and South Asia? How can risk reduction tools, to include trust- and confidence-building measures and informal arms control agreements, strengthen strategic stability in the changing geopolitical and technological landscape?

But the context is wider than Ukraine and Russia. During the cold war, strategic stability was defined by an East/West dynamic. Modern strategic stability must contend with a multi-polar and increasingly competitive world, and a lack of understanding between the key players. On top of that, we are seeing a breakdown in international rules and norms, and a willingness to test the limits of what is acceptable in conflict. Furthermore, the rapid advancement of technology offers opportunities but also challenges long-held assumptions about strategic stability, requiring us to rethink our approaches to arms control and deterrence. But the challenging international security environment means that arms control agreements which have supported strategic stability in recent history could be hard to reach.

We are in a period of enormous change and must work together to secure a long-term stable environment. It is vital that we reconsider strategic stability for unstable times and into the future.

This event

This event will explore the changing nature of strategic stability from national, regional and global perspectives, with an intent of identifying the risks of strategic escalation and tools for managing those risks. Participants will share perspectives on strategic stability reflecting different states' strategic security interests. They will build a shared understanding of what the term should encapsulate to address today's most acute security threats.

The event will consider the implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine for global strategic stability, along with other geopolitical and technological developments. Participants will consider the wider challenges of a multi-polar and competitive world, the breakdown in international rules and norms and the implications of developing technologies.

In association with:



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Finally they will suggest recommendations for how nations could work together to collectively deliver measures that will help build a stable security architecture for the future.

Output and outcomes

Participants will share views on strategic stability, inviting challenge and perspectives from a variety of backgrounds, to develop recommendations on priorities for policy work going forward. Outputs will include:

- A spectrum of views on how to define strategic stability
- Identification of risks and challenges to strategic stability, both geopolitically and from new and emerging technology.
- How states can collaborate to develop measures that will manage the risks of instability, including in Europe, East Asia, and South Asia.

Wilton Park will produce a non-attributed report following the event summarising the discussion and the recommendations. The event will form a network who can take forward further consideration and recommendations.

Participation

The event will bring together policy makers from Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence Departments with experts from academia and think tanks. It will benefit from expertise on relevant actors such as Russia and China, and topics such as arms control, military technology, and regional security policy.

In association with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands