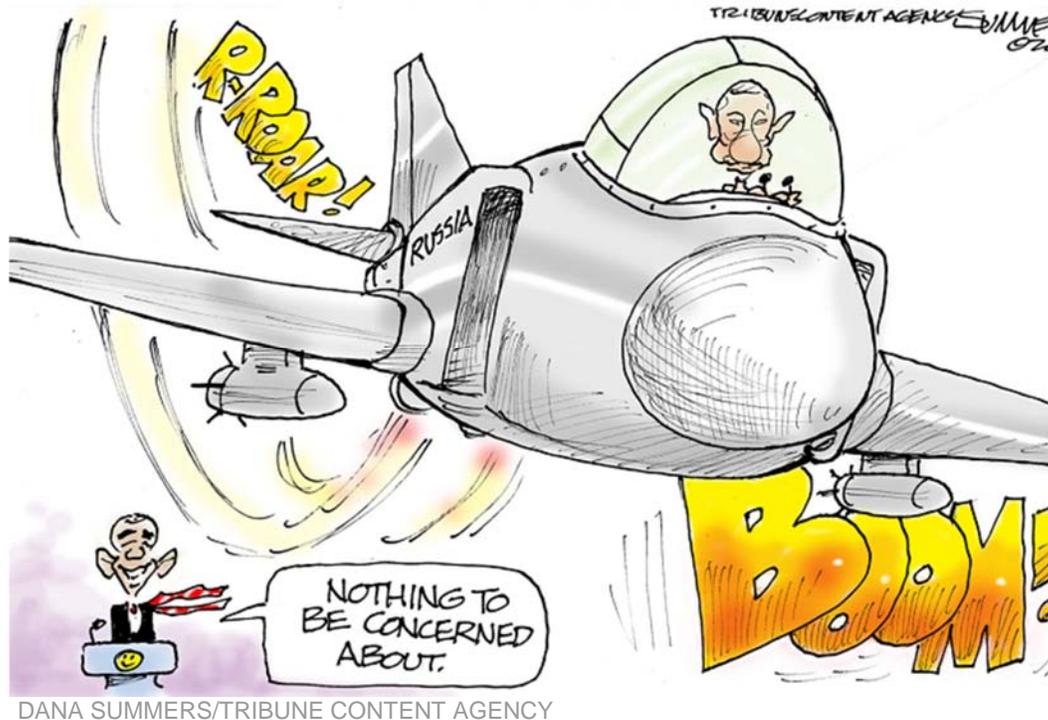


## The New Arms Race

Russia and China are developing new weapons, and America sits idle at its peril.

By [Lamont Colucci](#) | Contributor April 26, 2016, at 12:45 p.m.



Great power conflict is now acceptable to discuss. Since 9/11, those of us who warned that an over-abundance of attention paid to counterterrorism would result in enhancing the myth that great power conflict is over have been proved right. Great power conflict is not back, because it never left. All the time and energy spent on how to defeat al-Qaida and likeminded groups has always been a side-show to the threats that could be posed by a resurgent Russia and rising China.

Finally, it is understood that these threats have reappeared in the new frontier of space weapons. We are now witnessing the opening salvos in this renewed arms race. Amid talk of Cold War-level simulated air attacks and increased naval forays by the Russians,

maritime adventurism by the Chinese, and the shadow that the events in the Ukraine and Crimea will be replayed in the Baltics is the looming threat of new weapons that seek to undermine American military strength and defenses.

The new categories of weapons fall under three main categories: hypersonic missiles, new drones and anti-satellite systems.

The most dangerous of the three is the hypersonic missile: this hypersonic rocket re-enters the atmosphere, then a glider pulls up to fly horizontally, unpowered, for up to thousands of miles at preliminary speeds in the high hypersonic range of Mach 10 to 20 (about 7,000 to 14,000 miles per hour). There is no defense against this type of missile.

Aside from speed, the missile can travel close to the ground, and evade defenses; the highly vaunted Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system is incapable of hitting it.

Russia is exploring missiles like the 3K22 Zircon system, while China is working on the Dongfeng 21D, often referred to as the aircraft "carrier killer," or the Dongfeng 41, which is potentially the longest range ICBM in the world. (The dragon is leading the bear quite significantly in this area.) China may be able to have its missiles operational by 2020, and hope to have conventional versions that can target American naval assets in the Pacific.

The second category comes from new sophisticated drones. The Russians are pursuing unmanned submarine drones that could carry a nuclear payload that would, in theory, allow them to sneak in or near an American port. Russia also seems to be revisiting Cold War concepts where they would develop an underwater nuclear device to create the conditions of a tsunami or, in another case, to produce clouds of radiation.

The third category is anti-satellite weapons, primarily weapons used to jam, blind or shoot down American satellites. Both Russia and China are feverishly attempting to find newer and better means to do this. According to the head of Strategic Command, "Russia's 2010 military doctrine emphasized space as a crucial component of its defense

strategy, and Russia has publicly stated they are researching and developing counter space capabilities to degrade, disrupt, and deny other users of space. Russia's leaders also openly assert that Russian armed forces have anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons, conduct ASAT research, and employ satellite jammers."

However, all this talk of weapons platforms is meaningless in a strategic vacuum. The question should never be focused on when these weapons will be deployed, or how. The question is why? Why the pursuit of weapons that will inherently threaten the United States from an existential perspective? The threats here are not about degrading American influence in a region like the Middle East, the threat here is to topple America from a position of strategic primacy, which guarantees international stability. It will overturn the old concepts of Mutual Assured Destruction and lead to inevitable thoughts of preemption and prevention. The side that wishes the arms race would not happen has already been left at the wayside of history.

The question for the next president is how to overcome this looming threat. It will mean the United States will not only need to accelerate its own timetable on these weapons, but will need to create innovative new ones. America will need to invest in new missile defenses such as the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense Extended-Range. Finally, and most crucially, the U.S. will need to commit to controlling near Earth orbit and beyond: space weapons, space defense, spacecraft and, ultimately, platforms and bases.

If America chooses to ignore this due to naiveté, strategic foppery or bean counting, we will be subjects to those powers that are more fastidious and realistic in their approach. We will wake up one morning like the French knights at Agincourt wondering how their ranks were decimated by the English longbow.

<http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2016-04-26/russia-and-china-are-starting-a-new-arms-race-and-the-us-has-to-join>