



DACOR

An Organization of
Foreign Affairs Professionals

Letter to the Editor of the *The Washington Post*

February 6, 2023

Response to February 6, 2023, column by David Ignatius

Dear Editor,

Thank you, David Ignatius, for injecting some sense into the “political fracas” triggered by the cross-country trek by the Chinese balloon (Wash Post, February 6, “The inside story of how the U.S. shot down the Chinese balloon.”)

That said, the rhetorical outrage on display over discovering China’s 60,000-foot-altitude intrusion of US airspace obscures the real tragedy – our diplomats lost an important opportunity to engage Chinese leaders on “strategic stability measures,” as Mr. Ignatius notes, “and other guardrails that could limit the likelihood of unintended escalation over Taiwan or other issues of potential conflict.” Besides Taiwan, pressing issues of mutual concern include tech competition and economic policy.

Cancellation of Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s scheduled trip to Beijing was understandable, but it is not without consequences. Among the top issues on America’s diplomatic agenda is persuading PRC President Xi Jinping to slow its rapid, destabilizing nuclear expansion, which allows China to act more coercively towards its regional neighbors including Taiwan. US diplomats also want to begin a bilateral dialogue with China’s leaders on nuclear confidence- and security-building measures. Achieving this is all the more important since Russia’s Vladimir Putin has shown little interest in updating the 2011 Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms.

This treaty, known as New START, currently limits the number of strategic nuclear warheads that Russia and the U.S. are permitted to deploy and sets extensive protocols for monitoring



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and controlling such warheads in both countries. New START expires on February 4, 2026, and cannot be renewed again without ratification by the U.S. Senate.

Given the diplomatic task ahead, there is no time to waste.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James Dandridge II". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

James Dandridge II, President
DACOR Inc. / DACOR Bacon House Foundation
Washington, D.C.

DACOR is an organization of 1,600 foreign affairs professionals. Founded in 1952, its mission is to bring foreign affairs professionals together in support of diplomacy, the Foreign Service, and public understanding of diplomacy, and to preserve the historic DACOR Bacon House.