James Acton biography

James Acton holds the Jessica T. Mathews Chair and is co-director of the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. A physicist by training, Acton’s current research focuses on the escalation risks of advanced conventional weapons and the future of arms control. His work on escalation includes the Carnegie edited volume, Entanglement: Chinese and Russian Perspectives on Non-nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Risks, and the International Security article “Escalation through Entanglement.”

Acton’s publications span the field of nuclear policy. They include the Carnegie report, Wagging the Plutonium Dog, and two Adelphi books, Deterrence During Disarmament and Abolishing Nuclear Weapons (with George Perkovich). He co-wrote Why Fukushima Was Preventable, a groundbreaking study into the root causes of the accident.

An expert on hypersonic conventional weapons and the author of the Carnegie report, Silver Bullet? Asking the Right Questions About Conventional Prompt Global Strike, Acton has testified on this subject to the U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee and the congressionally chartered U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission.