

Why Arms Control?

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America survived the nuclear age through a complex combination of diplomatic and military decisions, and a good deal of luck. One of the tools that proved its value in both reducing the risks of nuclear use and setting rules for the ongoing nuclear competition were negotiated, legally binding, and verified arms control agreements. Such pacts between the United States and the Soviet Union arguably prevented the nuclear arms racing from getting worse and helped both sides climb off the Cold War nuclear precipice. Several important agreements remain in place between the United States and Russia, to the benefit of both states. Arms control is under threat, however, from domestic forces in the United States and from Russian actions that range from treaty violations to the broader weaponization of risk. But arms control can and should play a useful role in reducing the risk of nuclear war and forging a new agreement between Moscow and Washington on the new rules of the nuclear road.

Nuclear arms control agreements that effectively constrain an opponent's capabilities in exchange for some form of American constraint can benefit American security and the security of its allies. Specifically, bilateral nuclear arms control agreements between the United States and the Russian Federation and between the United States and other nuclear-weapon states, and eventually broader multilateral arrangements, have the potential to enhance American security and global stability by reducing the risks of nuclear use and avoiding the dangers associated with arms racing and arms race instability. Such agreements have in the past reduced the risks of nuclear conflict, shaped and limited areas of nuclear competition, and tailored the global landscape in ways that benefitted global and American security.

Reaching such agreements, and making them effectively verifiable, takes time, leadership, political commitment, clear goals, and political compromise: commodities currently in short supply in the United States. However, this state of affairs is far from permanent and it remains likely that a future president may pursue such negotiated agreements.

Arms control agreements are far from perfect, but the same is true of deterrence, reassurance, military planning, and, of course, armed conflict. All of these elements of American nuclear statecraft entail risks. Some arms control

agreements have produced major security wins for the United States, while others never entered into force or collapsed due to neglect or outright violations. Even in the wake of an imperfect record, arms control can be used in the future to improve U.S.-Russian nuclear stability and global security. Rejecting the idea of arms control out of hand due to past failures or ideological opposition is dangerous: it risks depriving security officials of a proven method for addressing both emerging and uncontrolled areas of military competition. Just as it would be folly to support arms control blindly without a clear strategy and well-crafted agreements, it is folly to reject arms control when it can produce real benefits.

Assessing how critical arms control agreements were in building and preserving a stable U.S.-Soviet nuclear relationship and providing a mechanism to end decades of nuclear competition is a complex challenge.¹ During the main period of strategic arms control between Moscow and Washington – 1969 until 2010 – nuclear arms control agreements helped reduce the scale and impact of the Cold War arms race, created confidence between the United States and the Soviet Union that neither sought to initiate a wholesale nuclear conflict, codified an end of efforts by both states to gain nuclear superiority, and created norms of behavior and methods for communication that helped avoid conflicts that could escalate to nuclear war.² In some cases, these agreements shaped the landscape, and in others, deals were used to lock in a certain dynamic.

Perhaps the main feature of Cold War arms control was that the United States and the Soviet Union were able, over the course of their negotiations, to develop confidence that they had a shared goal: to create a strategically stable condition in which neither had an incentive to use nuclear weapons first or to initiate a nuclear conflict. Each was able to gain confidence that it could retain a critical element of deterrence, a survivable second-strike retaliatory nuclear force capable of inflicting unacceptable damage on an attacking state.³ This shared definition of strategic stability was an essential element for why agreements from 1972 until the mid-2000s were sustainable. The breakdown of confidence that this remains a shared U.S.-Russian goal, as much as any other single factor, has undermined the role that arms control can play and has increased the risk of nuclear use through either deliberate acts, via escalation, or through accident or miscalculation.

Today, nuclear arms control is a polarizing term in the United States, and some analysts believe that legally binding, Senate-approved arms control deals have no viable future due to perceived costs and objectionable Russian behavior.⁴ While some experts and officials see nuclear treaties as commonsense enhancements to national security and defense policy that should be pursued despite partisan opposition, critics see nuclear deals as dangerous and an unnecessary constraint on American freedom of action in the face of growing Russian and Chinese dangers.⁵

To be sure, there are risks associated with arms control agreements. This is true of most features of the nuclear debate including deterrence and, ultimately,

war-fighting. Arms control deals require the United States to accept constraints on areas of possible military procurement and deployment, some of which could be militarily useful both for deterrence and in a conflict, should deterrence fail. And in such deals, there remains the ever-present risk that the partner may not fully live up to its commitments. It is this history of noncompliance that currently dominates the debate over the future of arms control with Russia. These risks, however, are acceptable if they are needed to gain a commitment from a treaty partner to in turn constrain their capabilities (symmetrically or asymmetrically).

It is, of course, of concern that Russia has violated past arms control agreements. Even when the option for legal withdrawal is available, Russia has consistently either skirted or materially violated some arms control agreements. This lack of legal compliance has a direct bearing on both American security and the viability of negotiating future agreements with Moscow. However, the United States' consistent efforts to verify the terms of agreements and its ability to respond in a timely manner to potential Russian breaches has helped prevent Russia from gaining a clear military advantage through its violations. It also is true that Russia remains in full compliance with important agreements, including the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START). That pact provides the United States with irreplaceable information on Russian nuclear activities and developments and remains squarely in the interest of America and its allies. However, in the face of Russian violations of multiple agreements, experts and politicians wonder why any new deals should be negotiated. Such behavior raises the bar on negotiating such agreements and suggests that the United States needs to consider new steps to improve the durability of negotiated deals, including considerably extending the timelines for withdrawal and the mechanisms for addressing issues of noncompliance.

While America should expect a treaty partner to abide by its commitments, good agreements have verification provisions built on the assumption that this will not be the case. Past arms control agreements were negotiated to enable the United States to take steps to protect its interests even in the face of violations.⁶ Thus, even when Russia has proven to be less than 100 percent reliable, the United States has been able to pursue and implement other agreements. When Russia has violated its commitments, verification has made timely detection possible, allowing the United States to take steps either to bring Russia back into compliance or to secure its objectives through other means.⁷ Despite the bleak current outlook for the future of nuclear arms control, negotiated, verified, and legally binding treaties and other understandings continue to hold great promise in managing the new competition between Russia and the United States, who together hold more than 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons.⁸

Reviewing the role that arms control has played in the past and can play in the future with the appropriate investment in political and strategic capital is also critical in thinking about the long-term effort to address the risks posed by nuclear

weapons. Nuclear-weapon states – the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China – and indeed all states under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remain committed to ending the arms race and to general and complete disarmament. The global discord over the extent to which the United States and Russia (and other NPT nuclear states) are fulfilling this commitment is real, even if its effects are uncertain. Negotiated, verified agreements will clearly have to be part of that broader effort as envisioned by the originators of the NPT. Thus, questions about the future of U.S.-Russian arms control, how and at what point to expand the process (quantitatively or qualitatively) to include countries with smaller nuclear arsenals (China, France, and the United Kingdom), and how finally to expand an effective nuclear constraint system to include the countries outside of the NPT that possess nuclear capabilities remain undefined and daunting. These hurdles become much higher even to contemplate if the possessors of the world's two largest nuclear arsenals, with a history of engagement and cooperation to prevent nuclear risks, can no longer muster the political will or commitment to continue the arms limitation and reduction process.

Arms control is not done as a favor to any one or group of countries. Agreements and constraints, both legal and political – if part of broader strategy for stability and security – can make America and its allies safer and reduce the risk of conflicts (intentional or accidental) from escalating to the nuclear level. Agreements can also close off or manage the growth of new areas of military competition through transparency and constraints, saving money and enabling investment in other military or domestic areas.

Crafting effective nuclear agreements requires a common understanding among the parties of the nature of stability and the elements that need to be controlled to maintain or enhance that state. This crucial element of the Cold War discourse between Russia and the United States is missing today, and arguably is absent even in the United States.⁹ It is no longer a given that differing parts of the American national security establishment remain committed to the concept of mutual vulnerability or to the idea that the goal of U.S. strategic nuclear doctrine should be to create conditions in which neither the United States nor Russia (nor any other state) has an incentive to use nuclear weapons first or early in a crisis or conflict. Until America knows what it wants, arms control may only play a limited role in American security.

Given today's global security picture, however, the United States would do well to recommit itself and gain Russian commitment to a set of strategic principles and seek to develop new, broader agreements that stabilize the bilateral nuclear relationship and manage new and dangerous areas of technical competition. Steps that would reduce the risk of nuclear use would be a good starting point, but others can and should be considered as well.

Sadly, the consensus for negotiated constraints on nuclear forces has been weakened by the broader domestic polarization in the United States and a lack of strategic consensus on how to deal with the geopolitical challenges posed by Russia and China. Ideological commitment to certain programs – primarily national missile defense – at the expense of preserving global nuclear stability and the inability of the American political system to sustain support for negotiated treaties from one administration to the next have increased instability and reduced the perceived viability of arms control.¹⁰ Building support for new agreements in the United States will take time, patience, and an investment of political capital, but in the end should be pursued if they enhance American security.

Fortunately, circumstances can change quickly and negotiated agreements have proven to be flexible and valuable tools, able to adapt to new circumstances and requirements. Just as the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty looked different and covered different territory than START and New START, so too can future agreements address new and even more complex areas that undermine U.S. or mutual security. The technical means for addressing certain systems, whether substrategic nuclear weapons, hypersonic missiles, or a new generation of INF range missiles, either exist or can be brought to bear quickly if an appropriate level of political support can be achieved. More exotic and complicated challenges, including those associated with doctrine, cyber capabilities, or AI-related challenges will take more time and technical advancements, but can be the focus of joint efforts by the United States and Russia that can also generate trust and mutual cooperation.

The prospect for new agreements remains viable because there is little public support for a new arms race, and concern about the risks of nuclear use are growing.¹¹ Moreover, there is little evidence that arms control issues have much if any impact on electoral politics either way, creating space for political leaders to champion arms control as a component of a new strategy for improving American security if they choose to do so. It remains true, even in the face of vocal but limited opposition from certain parts of the national security community, that arms control agreements have provided multiple advantages for the United States in the past, including direct military and national security benefits, and can provide them in the future if properly configured and implemented.

Arms control agreements have effectively managed or limited the introduction of new technologies that could have negatively affected strategic stability. There is no stronger case than the early agreement between the Soviet Union and the United States recognizing a relationship between offensive and defensive forces and that controls on one were impossible without controls on the other. This understanding, based on the embraced logic of deterrence and mutual vulnerability, led to the negotiation and implementation of the ABM Treaty in

1972. This agreement limited both sides to no more than two missile defense facilities (later reduced to one) with no more than one hundred interceptors.¹² This meant that both sides could retain a large enough nuclear force to hold the other at risk without having to overwhelm more than one hundred interceptors, reducing the incentives to massively increase the number of nuclear weapons and offensive launchers both possessed. This agreement was based on the counterintuitive concept that, to be secure, one had to leave oneself vulnerable to attack, something that created broader political challenges that eventually led to its undoing at the hands of more conservative voices in the United States.¹³ It should also be noted that the immature state of technology at the time, which precluded the development and deployment of effective missile defense, led the United States to eliminate its only ABM site (Safeguard) and the existence of the ABM Treaty likely saved the United States from investing billions of dollars in an attempt to build a working ABM system.¹⁴

The ABM Treaty, and the decision to acknowledge mutual vulnerability with the Soviet Union, was controversial from the start. Its long-term future was questioned as early as Ronald Reagan's 1983 Star Wars speech that called for the development of global missile defenses capable of shielding the United States from nuclear attack.¹⁵ Russia, which had come to rely on the deterrent model that left both countries vulnerable to retaliatory attack – thereby reducing the risk of first nuclear strike or nuclear escalation – immediately began to question whether the offense-defense relationship both states had embraced in 1972 was going to remain valid.¹⁶

The United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty during the George W. Bush administration, eliminating a major pillar that underpinned the nuclear arms reduction process.¹⁷ When the ABM Treaty was in force, Washington and Moscow were able to agree on multiple nuclear control agreements including SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) I and II, which limited the growth of nuclear forces, and START I and II, which significantly reduced the number of strategic weapons and missiles capable of striking the other country. In addition, the two negotiated the 1987 INF Treaty that helped enhance crisis stability and lengthen command decision time in both NATO states and Russia, to their mutual benefit. Following the death of the ABM Treaty, the United States and Russia were able to negotiate the New START agreement that sustained a viable verification and monitoring approach, but the process of both deep reductions and mutual steps to enhance strategic stability has broken down since 2003. Of course, the current prospect for a renewed arms race is not driven entirely by America's pursuit of missile defenses: Russia's need to rely on nuclear systems to compensate for its conventional inferiority, violation of other agreements, and domestic political concerns have also played a role. Yet the breakdown in the shared model for strategic stability, embodied by the ABM Treaty as much as any other element of the bilateral relationship, has clearly contributed to the poor state of U.S.-Russian nuclear relations.

Second, and while not the preferred outcome, the decision by the United States to withdraw from the ABM Treaty by using its legal provisions and providing notice gave Russia advance warning of the move and reduced the potential shock value of what could have happened in the absence of any agreement on defenses. It remains unfortunate and dangerous that Russia has failed to exercise withdrawal provisions of multiple agreements, including the INF Treaty, and instead has violated them covertly or without explanation. While Americans would likely prefer Russia to comply with and stay in agreements that serve a common goal, much of the distrust that has grown in the United States is based on Russia's apparent willingness to violate agreements instead of exercising legal withdrawal provisions.

If one accepts the ABM Treaty model as beneficial, then there are multiple areas in which U.S.-Russian agreements could play a role in managing areas of destabilizing competition in the future. The development of national missile defenses and their ability to undermine deterrence remain a critical issue, and it is possible to see how numerical constraints on missile defense on both countries – setting strict limits on the number of interceptors with constraints on rapid growth – could restore some stability and enable further nuclear reductions. While such constraints would be highly controversial politically, such opposition could be overcome if the benefits provided by such an agreement were clear and if opposition to it were confronted directly.

Of course, arms control did not solve all problems and, in some areas, failed to adequately anticipate or address emerging dangers. One of the most glaring historical lapses was the SALT I agreement's failure to constrain the development and deployment of multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles. This meant that the treaty limits on launchers did little to constraint a massive growth in the number of nuclear weapons that could be delivered against either country. START and New START, however, constrained these systems by assigning a specific number of weapons to specific launchers and enabled deep reductions in the level of strategic nuclear weapons deployed by both states. It is possible that the New START failure to include hypersonic systems will be seen historically in the same context.

Arms control agreements, including both treaties that limited the number and types of weapons systems each side would have and bilateral arrangements that helped the two states determine in advance how their militaries would operate in the face of incidents and potential conflicts, have also had the important benefit of preventing conflicts or accidents from becoming nuclear flash points.

Some of these agreements, including the 1987 INF Treaty, had multiple beneficial effects on the U.S.-Russian relationship.¹⁸ The INF Treaty eliminated an entire class of launchers – ground-based missiles with ranges from 500 to 5,500 kilometers – and treated all such missiles as potential nuclear-delivery vehicles. In

adopting the agreement, the two sides made clear their desire to reduce the pressures on leaders of both sides to make nuclear launch decisions too quickly, which could lead to the early and possibly accidental use of nuclear weapons.¹⁹ With missiles in Europe having very short flight times to Moscow and Russian missiles having very short flight times to NATO capitals, INF systems posed a unique challenge to stability in Europe. If a small number of nuclear weapons could be delivered against key targets in Moscow with little or no warning, Russian commanders would have to be ready to launch nuclear responses with little or no warning. This raised the risk that Russian leaders – possibly through a misinterpretation, as was the case in 1983 with the Able Archer event – might seek to preempt a decapitating first strike by launching its own nuclear weapons first.

The INF Treaty was also an important harbinger of more effective arms control agreements in that it was the first to allow for on-site inspections.²⁰ By accepting the presence of U.S. inspectors on Russian territory and vice versa, the two states were intentionally moving away from the idea that opacity and hiding capabilities were sources of strength and stability, and embraced the idea – with obvious limits – that transparency and access provided a more stable basis for deterrence and a steady bilateral relationship. The broadening of these transparency measures, including steps that enabled U.S. monitoring at key Russian missile production facilities and military bases, would form the basis for the intricate and advanced inspection procedures implemented in the 1991 START and the 2010 New START agreements.

While not formal arms control agreements per se, there are other negotiated commitments that set norms and expectations of behavior that have served to enhance crisis stability in certain regions. Such arrangements have reinforced the view that both Washington and Moscow wanted to set limits on the extent of their military and geostrategic competition to avoid or at least reduce the risk that lower-level incidents or interactions might quickly escalate and go nuclear. The 1972 U.S.-Soviet Incidents at Sea Agreement and the 1963 Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Establishment of a Direct Communications Line, for example, have proven their value.²¹ While direct communication is now an afterthought, in a crisis, secure communication links may prove critical, and in the face of stepped-up military exercises by both NATO and Russia, the Sea Agreement has proved its worth and helped to manage interactions. There appears to be room to expand such deals to include interactions between aircraft and naval forces, air-to-air interactions, and even land-based incidents. Russia has recently negotiated deals with Baltic states on civilian air traffic and discussed conflict resolution and avoidance agreements with other NATO states.

One of the most important benefits of arms control agreements, and a pre-eminent one today, is the transparency and predictability they can provide for defense and security planners. It is one thing to guess at how

many missiles and nuclear weapons your adversary might have that are capable of striking you or your allies, and it is another to have high confidence that the numbers fit within a specific range as supported by direct evidence and inspections that can both detect and deter violations.²² The Cold War's early years and even some during the early days of arms control agreements are replete with examples in which the lack of insight into Moscow's nuclear capabilities led to worst-case planning that, in turn, led the United States to build more capabilities than were needed, driving Moscow to do the same in a cycle of arms racing and technical escalation.²³ The bomber gap, the missile gap, and the famous Team B exercise that overestimated Russia's nuclear capabilities and led the United States to direct resources into areas that did not enhance deterrence or stability are clear examples of this dynamic.²⁴ Having confidence in the size of an enemy's possible forces allows you to more effectively and sustainably plan for your own nuclear forces, balancing investments in nuclear and other competing defense and non-defense priorities.

The risk that the last remaining strategic arms control agreement – New START – could soon expire illustrates this concern. As less information is available on Russia's nuclear capabilities, it is easy to imagine how more militaristic or fearful strategists in Washington could pressure for expanding America's arsenal. Allegations of secret or undocumented programs and unverified numbers of weapons could become the basis for force planning in the United States. U.S. actions could again be seen in Moscow as cause for new actions of their own, fueled by their own lack of insight into U.S. force structure, as the arms race between Moscow and Washington quickens its pace.

Currently, New START provides a remarkable level of transparency and data exchanges, including through on-site verification in both Russia and the United States.²⁵ This feature, in the face of growing tension and instability in the U.S.-Russian relationship, is a critical element in U.S. national security decision-making. New START's possible expiration or demise would leave the two largest nuclear powers with no active and intrusive inspection or information exchange provisions to cover their strategic nuclear weapons, and could result in a large-scale expansion of the number of nuclear weapons each might determine it needs to maintain deterrence. As other areas of military competition expand, it seems essential that American intelligence and military officials have some confidence in their ability to determine the size and scope of Russia's strategic nuclear capabilities and to maintain some access to those systems through treaty inspections.

There are multiple areas of technological development that may likely have significant impacts on nuclear deterrence and stability.²⁶ It is worth considering how the lack of agreements covering such weapons and capabilities, and therefore the lack of transparency and predictability, are already affecting the strategic landscape. There has been some consideration over the past decade of whether

hyperglide missiles are ripe for limits or constraints, and it is interesting in retrospect how the tacit decision by Russia and the United States not to include hyperglide missiles in the New START agreement opened up an area of competition now cited by voices concerned about Russian military actions as a growing threat to the United States and its allies. This is one future area in which numerical limits on such systems could, if analyzed in the broader context of nuclear and related systems, be subject to future political or legal agreement bilaterally or more broadly.

A clear case for sustaining New START could be made on this basis alone. The United States is only at the starting point in modernizing its strategic nuclear forces, whereas Russia is nearing completion of its modernization cycle (something we know in detail because of the transparency provided by New START verification). Given the cost and schedule uncertainties that come with America's nuclear efforts, it makes great sense to maintain constraints and insight into Russia's nuclear systems while the U.S. modernization program advances. Lack of such controls combined with significant cost increases or schedule delays could put the United States in a major numerical mismatch with Russia, leading it to have to take other steps – such as uploading its forces – in a way that could increase uncertainty and instability with Russia.

Perhaps few images inspire as much derision as the idea of large U.S. and Soviet negotiating teams in Geneva or Vienna spending weeks at a time reading and responding to long, laborious, and frankly boring plenary and working-group statements. Decades of sitting across tables in ornate rooms hardly seems the setting for negotiating dramatic agreements that could decide the fate of hundreds of millions of people. And yet the hard, slow, and detailed work of negotiating and implementing arms control agreements provides one of the more important elements of the benefits that come from arms control treaties. Engagement, communication, and the willingness to work seriously toward a common solution have salutatory benefits that must not be overlooked.

It has quickly become apparent over the past half-century of engagement when both sides are serious about reaching agreements, and when they are not. The composition of delegations, the willingness to discuss real, pressing, and substantive issues as opposed to airing grievances, and seeking unrealistic solutions or compensation versus actually engaging on issues of mutual concern have all been indicators as to whether American and Russian officials and leaders are serious about using arms control to manage the strategic competition.

This motivated good faith is sometimes the case, and sometimes not. Recent negotiations provide examples of each.

Among the discouraging cases, it was clear from 2013 on that Russia was not treating U.S. concerns about Russia's development and testing of the 9M729 land-based

cruise missile in a way that enhanced confidence about Russia's intention to honor the INF agreement. The 9M729 was, according to U.S. sources, tested in a way that violated the INF Treaty, and Russia has now deployed several battalions of 9M729 land-based cruise missiles that Washington and NATO believe have a range beyond the INF limit of 500 kilometers. Russia's refusal to acknowledge the existence of the missile and later to deny and refuse steps to not deploy and even eliminate the offending system fed into concern within both the Obama and Trump administrations that Russia had no desire to preserve the INF Treaty. Of course, Russia likely has similar views about Washington's refusal to engage constructively on issues of concern raised by Russia, including the ability of the Mk-41 missile defense launchers to possibly hold and launch offensive cruise missiles. These cases strengthen the view in both countries that neither side remained fully committed to the benefits derived from the INF Treaty's ban on land-based medium-range missiles.

There are multiple examples, however, in which the implementation bodies set up to aid in fully implementing agreements or resolving disputes have proven their worth and reinforced the perceived value of and commitment to arms control treaties. The ABM dispute over the Krasnoyarsk radar is one example, and ongoing discussion between the United States and Russia over the method by which the United States is converting nuclear-associated launchers to a non-nuclear role is another. The extent to which Washington seriously engages with Russia's concerns and how visible this engagement is to Russia will be important factors in preserving what is left of the partnership on basic predictability and transparency associated with New START.

There are several major areas that need to be addressed for arms control to assume a more central role in addressing and improving American security. First, the United States needs to have a clear concept of what situation it would consider stable and what mix of nuclear and non-nuclear systems it would need in the face of Russian activities to maintain deterrence and stability. That will require a clear-eyed assessment about what systems Russia has and is developing, and what specific capabilities pose new and unmanageable threats to the United States and its allies. For too long this conversation has been left to civilian and military officials to determine. It needs to include not only strategic thinkers from other parts of the U.S. government, but also from Congress, foreign policy experts, and the broader informed public. Developing and maintaining a new consensus on the principles of strategic and crisis stability is required to pursue them either through military or diplomatic means.

Second, the United States and Russia need to pursue sustained, high-level, and interagency engagement on a broad set of issues related to both nuclear and broader strategic stability. The lack of engagement at the presidential and leadership levels of the Department of State, Department of Defense, and the intelligence

communities has both created a major gap in our understanding of and confidence in Russia's strategic perspective and left us to guess at Russia's plans and intentions. In fact, the United States and Russia are now in the midst of the longest gap in either arms control negotiations or strategic stability discussions since before the Cuban Missile Crisis. This dangerous state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. Talks do not in and of themselves offer the promise of new agreements, or even agreement on the current problems. But lack of engagement does guarantee that the state of affairs will maintain, if not worsen.

Third, the United States and Russia need to broaden the scope of possible negotiations beyond strategic nuclear weapons. While extending New START or finding a viable replacement that can replicate the level of confidence we have in the overall size and nature of Russia's strategic nuclear capabilities seems both commonsense and essential, it will likely prove impossible to pursue deeper reductions and more qualitative constraints through arms control unless the thorny issues of the offense-defense relationship and the impacts of advanced conventional, new intermediate-range, and other new military technologies are addressed in some way. Not all of these issues need to be included in one agreement, and not all need to be subject to binding, verified arms control. Some features could be pursued via political commitments and restraints, and other as unilateral declarations. It is hard to see how the United States and Russia can find common ground for anything other than sustaining the limited scope of strategic arms control agreements unless they begin to address sources of instability being pursued by both states. If so engaged, a wider range of agreements, understandings, and constraints could become viable.

Last, even if some semblance of a consensus can be developed in the United States, and if that domestic platform can be used to negotiate new broader deals with Russia, it appears that new norms within arms control agreements need to be considered and addressed to make them more durable. As evidenced by President Trump's readiness to withdraw from agreements, even those approved by the Senate and ratified by successors, as well as by multiple examples of Russia's violation of agreements, both Russia and the United States need to consider ways their commitments to treaties can be made more durable and their reversal less rapidly achieved. One idea would be to increase the declared withdrawal time to more than the three to six months included in current treaties to one year or even multiple years. The length of time it takes to design, build, and deploy new missile and delivery systems would not seem to preclude this as a starting point for negotiations. In addition, while the Trump administration has talked about wanting to make treaties more "enforceable" but has yet to propose any substance behind this idea, it behooves those who support the pursuit of new agreements to consider whether there can be certain terms of punishment built into an agreement, including *a priori* determination of economic or political sanctions or other

consequences for proven violations. Of course, this might require submitting issues of treaty compliance to outside arbiters, but that may also have some positive implications in certain cases that should be openly discussed by the parties.

Yogi Berra once said that “predictions are always hard, especially about the future.” This has always been the case with nuclear weapons. By possessing the means of our own and the world’s destruction, the future is always uncertain and the best we can accomplish is to reduce the scope of uncertainty and increase our ability to manage crises when they inevitably occur. Using arms control agreements – in their many forces and for the many potential benefits they bring – to our advantage must remain a viable part of our nuclear strategy. Without effective agreements, the costs of our nuclear complex as well as risks of conflict and the global danger of nuclear destruction only rise. That sobering thought should inform decisions by current and future leaders about how best to position the United States and Russia to enable arms control to play a continued role in our joint survival.

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