

**Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov's remarks
at the Russia-US Dialogue on Nuclear Issues,
co-organized by the Center for Energy and Security Studies (CENESS)
and the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS)
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International relations are characterized today by the growth of political turbulence, tensions and unpredictability. We are witnessing the worsening of old and emergence of new threats to international and regional security as well as multiplication of military and political factors undermining international peace. The arms control system that has traditionally served us as a kind of a “safety net” for global strategic stability, is now experiencing an unprecedented crisis. The world is also facing sharp deterioration in relations among nuclear powers.

Our assessment is that current deplorable situation in the area of international security is largely the result of aspirations to military domination and search for tools that would allow stronger pressure on political opponents. Actually, some concepts such as “peace through strength” and “great power competition” do not really correspond to the need to maintain strategic stability and promote arms control for they are based on the idea of racing for superiority. I have to note that all previous attempts to achieve peace through strength have notoriously failed, and competition is hardly an appropriate basis for building stable and cooperative relationships.

Russia consistently opposes attempts to weaken the established architecture of treaties and agreements in the area of security, stability, non-proliferation and arms control. We equally support the development of new arrangements, where appropriate. Russia stands for a substantial, constructive and result-oriented dialogue on such matters, which would enable us to reduce problems and tensions in the area of strategic stability, providing predictability and restraint based on the principle of equal and indivisible security for all. This concept is reflected in the NPT review process disarmament-related language for several years, decades now, and I quote “in a way that promotes international stability, peace and undiminished and increased security” and “based on the principle of increased and undiminished security for all”.

One important thing to note here. We do not see advancing arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation as a self-sufficient goal. For us, this is one of the means to ensure Russia's national security – in this case, by using political and diplomatic means. Let's also bear in mind that arms control consists of deals, so it would be totally unrealistic to expect one side to give away its interests for nothing. This is always “a two-way street” and it will be so in future.

We in Russia are ready to proceed on such basis with all interested States in the spirit of consensus, equality and balanced consideration of legitimate security concerns of parties. The ultimate goal here should be to launch discussions involving all nuclear-armed States. But we also consider it to be counterproductive to try to press someone or bully someone to participate in such discussions and, even worse, to use the so-called “third country excuse” to create artificial obstacles for the development of dialogue and interaction on the most pressing issues of today.

I am strongly convinced that our bilateral arms control agenda with the U.S. is far from being exhausted. Under current circumstances it is very important to keep the communication lines open. We are glad that after a long – maybe, way too long – break this year we had a very intensive dialogue with the U.S. Russia has been calling for reopening the axis of communication for quite a period of time. It is a venue that allows us to address our respective security concerns and ways to promote them.

Meetings that we had with the U.S. have shown that we have different and somewhat conflicting approaches to the very subject of this dialogue. The prospects of the New START Treaty were naturally a focal point of the strategic dialogue. Russia consistently advocated its extension for five years without any preconditions. Our main concern was to preserve the due level of openness and predictability between Russia and the U.S. Extension naturally would also buy time for more comprehensive bilateral discussions on the future nuclear and missile weapons control taking into account all factors affecting strategic stability. In general terms extending the Treaty would be a reasonable step to prevent further deterioration of strategic environment and to avoid a complete collapse of nuclear arms control. Unfortunately, no agreement on the extension of the Treaty was reached so far.

At the strategic dialogue meetings with the U.S. Russia has presented numerous proposals on the draft framework for eventual future arms control arrangements. Those proposals are broad and ambitious, but still realistic and balanced.

The underlying idea is to jointly develop a new “strategic equation” taking into account all factors affecting strategic stability, including emerging kinds of weapons, prospective technologies as well as new political realities. We want this equation to cover not only traditional strategic arms such as ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers with their respective ordnance, but also all nuclear and non-nuclear weapons that are capable of accomplishing strategic tasks, with particular attention to means usable for launching a first strike to neutralize or weaken the deterrent potential of the other side. If adopted, this concept will really make the world a much safer place.

Thus, we have proposed to identify weapons that pose threat to the national territory of each side, taking into consideration quantitative and qualitative aspects of balance of forces between Russia and its allies on one hand and the United States and its allies on the other hand, regarding both nuclear and conventional weapons, as well as the specifics of their deployment.

We are equally ready to define the structure and quantitative limitations for deployed nuclear warheads that are capable to strike the national territory of the other side and to discuss quantitative and geographic limitations for deployment of missile defence systems.

Let me say a few more words on missile defence issue. We can not just walk away from this topic. It requires a serious discussion, for there is a direct an undeniable interlink between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive ones. This interrelationship becomes even more important as missile defence assets reveal their capacity to intercept strategic missiles that represent the backbone of a nuclear deterrence.

Since Washington pulled out of the ABM Treaty some twenty years ago, there are no political, no legal constraints on missile defence assets and technologies which have been developed and continue to be developed in the most destabilizing way undermining international security. This in turn, practically entails the emergence of new generation of weapons specially intended to maintain the efficiency of the deterrence. Plans were already announced to deploy missile defence assets in space and to carry out missile defence by preemptively hitting adversary missiles on the ground “left to launch”. People who promote such ideas should remember that the particular logic of “preemptive disarming first strike” has generated the multiplication of “counterforce” nuclear scenarios that were fueling an arms race for decades and that have repeatedly brought the world to the brink of a nuclear war. There is a clear need for an honest, professional and comprehensive discussion on this topic.

Coming back to our bilateral strategic dialogue, Russian proposals to the U.S. on the draft framework for future arms control imply development of common approaches to ensuring security of space activities, preventing an arms race in outer space and excluding the possibility of placement of weapons in outer space.

Naturally, appropriate verification measures to control the implementation of commitments and obligations corresponding to their subject and the scope should be agreed as well. Verification is really one of the strongest points of legally-binding agreements that no external oversight may or should substitute. Those familiar with Russia-U.S. nuclear arms reduction and limitation treaties know that they always include verification mechanisms intended to control and monitor their implementation.

Russian approaches to strategic stability also envisage de-escalation measures, including creation of mechanisms to respond to crisis situations that may generate threat of a nuclear weapons use. Our principled conviction is that *a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought*. Such a credo stimulates us to consistently advocate for reaffirming – both on bilateral Russia-US track and also within the P5 format – this well-known “Gorbachev-Reagan formula”, thus stressing the inadmissibility of a nuclear war, and ideally any war between nuclear states. We believe that at these turbulent times international community is really looking for such a political message.