

## ARMS CONTROL AGENDA REMAINS VALID UNTIL NEXT U.S.-RUSSIA SUMMIT



On July 16, 2018, President Putin and President Trump finally held their first summit in Helsinki. The summit did not yield specific agreements in arms control domain, which means the current problems will have to be addressed by next U.S.-Russia summit. Now there are only two major arms control treaties that bind the two countries – INF Treaty, which is formally five-lateral, and New START Treaty. Both are in danger.

### *Preserve the existing treaties*

Mutual suspicions and accusations of violation of *the INF Treaty* continue, and no practical attempts are observed to reach mutual understanding of the situation. It looks like neither side is satisfied with this Treaty. Either the idea of transformation of the INF Treaty into a multilateral agreement, or a unilateral withdrawal from it would mean the end of the Treaty, which at the end of the Cold War served as the first step towards bilateral arms control process.

Article XIII of the INF Treaty contains a mechanism called Special Verification Commission “to resolve questions relating to compliance with the obligations assumed; and to agree upon such measures as may be necessary to improve the viability and effectiveness of this Treaty.” Its last session was held in December 2017 in Geneva. In June 2018, U.S. and Russian experts had bilateral consultations on the INF Treaty, again in Geneva. The two sides went further than just exchanging well-known accusations; however, no measures to solve the problems have been agreed upon. At least, Russia and the United States declare their readiness to continue the dialogue on the Treaty.

*The New START Treaty* will expire in 2021, and no efforts are seen either to negotiate further reductions of strategic weapons by a new treaty, or, at least, to extend the existing one for five years, as it provides for. At the Helsinki summit, President Putin reportedly suggested Donald Trump that the Treaty be extended, among other measures, including preservation of the INF Treaty; however, the U.S. side was not prepared to discuss the issue at this level before such consultations take between U.S. and Russian governmental experts.

Following the summit, President Putin noted the importance of the Treaty in his remarks before Russian ambassadors who had an annual meeting in Moscow. Although Russia has questioned U.S. reduction of some strategic nuclear arms under New START, there is clear political will to work this out and extend the Treaty. The disruption of the INF and New START Treaties would certainly result in an arms race.

### *Overcome broader political challenges*

Confrontational rhetoric, sanctions, mutual diplomatic attacks, and Russophobia in Western mass media poison the political atmosphere for U.S.-Russia strategic dialogue. The core of anti-Russian accusations is shaped by the situation in Ukraine. Russia is doing everything possible to fulfill the Minsk agreement. Unfortunately, Ukraine has its deep dramatic problems that cannot be solved by simply claiming Russia responsible for them.

Of course, there are some other political factors that worsen the U.S.-Russian relations as well as the whole political climate in the world. The most deplorable one is the unravelling of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an important achievement of long and difficult negotiations. President Trump's withdrawal from the so-called Iran Deal and restoration of sanctions against Iran that is fully compliant with the agreement is aggravating the regional stability and global security. The JCPOA should be implemented notwithstanding the current circumstances.

The situation around the Korean peninsula remains unclear. The negotiations between the United States and the DPRK are continuing; however, without full-scale multilateral process, the sustainability of the diplomatic settlement in the region is under question. With the U.S. expectations of the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, or rather the DPRK, being very high, a major inconsistency between the reality and such expectations may bring back the previous exchange of threatening statements and spark a conflict in the region. A more stable and predictable diplomatic process is strongly needed.

Getting back to the U.S.-Russian bilateral relations, I would recall the history, especially the confrontation of the early 1980s. Its root causes were different, but the climate was similar. At that time, two summits – one in Geneva in 1985, and the other one in Reykjavik in 1986 – helped to change the atmosphere. Neither resulted in specific agreements, but they turned the developments for the better. Although President Trump is facing strong domestic pressure against any meetings with President Putin, this channel of communication should be maintained.

#### ***Address other factors influencing strategic stability***

In the long run, the United States and the Russian Federation will have to include a wider spectrum of issues in their bilateral strategic agenda, namely:

- Further development of U.S. strategic ABM systems (Russia insists on the implementation of the principle of interrelationship of offensive and defensive strategic armaments as fixed in the Preamble of the New START);
- Non-deployment of weapons in outer space, whether or not used against satellites or surface targets (this issue has multilateral dimension);
- Involvement of other nuclear weapon states into arms control;
- Non-strategic nuclear weapons in vicinity of Russia that can be used against strategic targets on the Russian territory;
- High precision non-nuclear weapons that can be used against strategic targets in Russia;
- NATO military bases around Russia.

Resuming of the U.S.-Russian dialogue will require a transitional, step-by-step period, during which both sides should be patient, tolerant, and motivated to resume this dialogue. Contacts on all levels, from summits to non-governmental discussions should be intensified in order to create more favorable political atmosphere which is necessary for the dialogue. Implementing of the measures proposed above will aid the normalization of relations between the United States and Russia as well as help the implementation of Article VI of the NPT in view of its forthcoming Review Conference in 2020.

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This memo is prepared as part of the activities of the [Working Group](#) on Strategic Stability and De-escalation in U.S.-Russian Relations.