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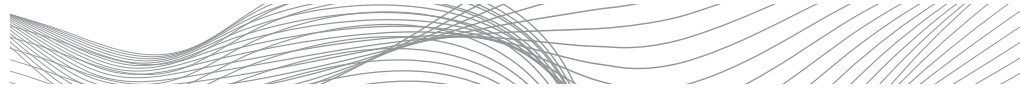
Global Edition

Sergey Ryabkov

Russia's nonproliferation policy and global strategic stability



MOSCOW, 2021



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The virtual summit between Presidents Putin and Biden of December 7, 2021, did not address strategic stability and nonproliferation issues in detail as both presidents concentrated on Ukraine-related topics. Yet, strategic stability dialogue and prevention of proliferation of nuclear weapons remain high on the bilateral Russian-US agenda, although closely interconnected with other issues. For the Russian Federation, strengthening nuclear nonproliferation regime remains top priority of its foreign and security policy.

In his paper provided exclusively for PIR Center, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov expresses Russia's position on topical issues of global security and notes the most important obstacles to disarmament and nonproliferation. The author touches upon Russia-US relations in the strategic stability domain and highlights the most pressing challenges to nuclear nonproliferation regime: the creation of Weapons-of-Mass-Destruction-Free Zone in the Middle East, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty not entering into force, risk of arms race in outer space, JCPOA, situation on the Korean Peninsula, and the risk of politicization of IAEA safeguards system. It is especially related to the upcoming 10th Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, which is going to be in the center of attention the upcoming January. Despite enormous difficulties and challenges in this field, H.E. Ryabkov expresses cautious optimism about the future, hoping for pragmatism and willingness to seek balanced and mutually acceptable solutions to the problems of nuclear nonproliferation and global security to prevail at the Conference and during the Russia-US strategic stability dialogue.

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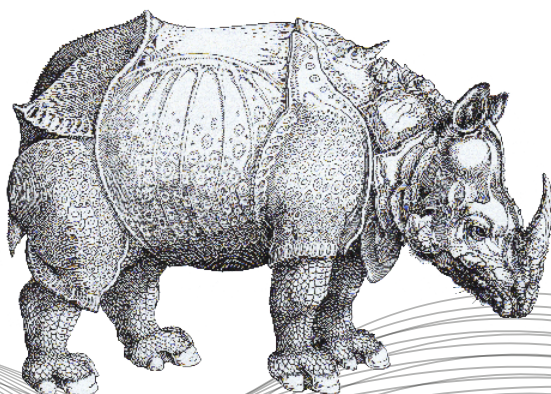
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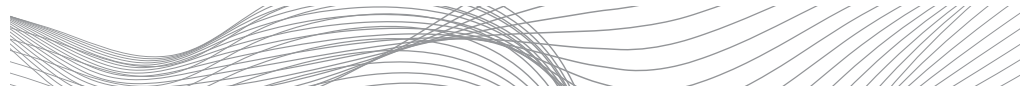
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Serves as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Holds the diplomatic rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. In 1982, graduated from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Served at several positions both at the central office of the Russian Foreign Ministry and abroad. In 1995-1999, was the Head of the OSCE Unit of the Department of European Cooperation. In 1999 – 2002 – Senior Counsellor (political) of the Russian Embassy to the U.S. In 2002-2005, served as the Minister Counsellor (Deputy Chief of Mission) of the Russian Embassy to the U.S. In 2005-2008 – the Director of the Department of European Cooperation. Since 2008 – Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Responsible for bilateral relations with North and South America, nonproliferation and arms control, Iran's nuclear programme and Russia's participation in the BRICS association. *Security Index* Editorial Board member.





Highlights

- Although Russian-U.S. relations are overshadowed by disintegration of the arms control architecture, mostly due to the destructive course of the previous U.S. Administration, the understanding reached by Presidents Biden and Putin at the Geneva summit opened a window of opportunity for constructive interaction of two major stewards of nuclear arsenals.
- The long-awaited steps agreed upon by the U.S. and Russian leaders are the following: New START extension, Joint Statement that nuclear war cannot be won and should never be fought, and launch of Strategic Stability Dialogue, which is to serve as an ensurance of of predictability, prevent arms race, build up arms control, and reduce risks of armed conflicts.
- The underlying idea of the Strategic Stability Dialogue is to jointly develop a “new strategic equation” between US and Russia, which would embrace the entire spectrum of arms possessed by the states, including offensive weapons and defensive systems.
- Among major challenges to nonproliferation regime Russia highlights the creation of weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty not entering into force, possible arms race in outer space, Iranian and North Korean crises, and the risk of politicization of IAEA safeguards system.

Russia's nonproliferation policy and global strategic stability

While the weight of accumulated problems and troubling instabilities in strategic sphere is significant, relations among nuclear powers are very far from being well-tempered. The situation is heavily overshadowed by disintegration of the arms control architecture, mostly due to the destructive course of the previous U.S. Administration. The New START Treaty is practically the last surviving pillar.

Active diplomacy has provided some glimpse of hope earlier in 2021. The understandings reached by the Presidents of Russia and the U.S. opened a window of opportunity for constructive interaction of two major stewards of nuclear arsenals.

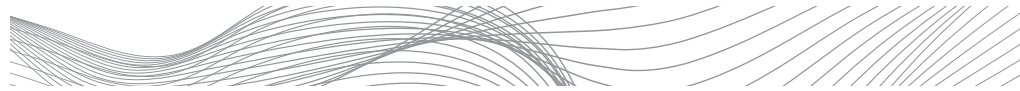
First, the two leaders agreed to extend the New START. They also reconfirmed in a Joint Statement the principle that nuclear war cannot be won and should never be fought. They highlighted the priority to reduce the risk of any armed conflict between our countries. These are very important and long-awaited steps that Russia has been persistently advocating for. It is also noteworthy to mention that Russia and China have also publicly at the highest level come out in favor of the inadmissibility of nuclear war, as well as of any armed conflict involving nuclear powers. Now, we believe it is high time for the whole P5 to jointly reiterate this formula. We would see it as a significant political message both to each other and to international community.

The above-mentioned steps on a bilateral U.S.-Russia track have created a basis for further endeavors. A necessary momentum was achieved, as President Putin and President Biden at their June meeting in Geneva instructed their respective interagency teams to resume the strategic stability dialogue (SSD). The Presidents expect this dialogue to be integrated, deliberate and robust. The sides will seek to lay the groundwork for future arms control and risk reduction measures. This means that we have to address a broad spectrum of intertwined issues on strategic agenda in a holistic way, including new and emerging challenges to the security of our countries. The task is difficult and time-consuming, but this should not prevent us from making all possible effort.

We have just started. Two bilateral interagency meetings were held. They were mainly about identifying "default settings" and actual structure of the dialogue. As a first substantial step, we initiated discussions on our respective threat perceptions and security concerns. Next, it would be logical to outline possible ways to address these concerns on a mutually acceptable basis, including through arms control and risk reductions measures. In terms of defining common goals for the interaction both delegations actually agree that this process should serve to stabilize bilateral relations in the strategic area, ensure predictability, prevent arms race, build up arms control, and reduce risks of armed conflicts.



Sergey Ryabkov



We tend to believe that there is a chance for pragmatic approach to prevail and for the U.S. to engage with Russia in good faith with a view to seek balanced and mutually acceptable solutions

With that, it is yet to be proved by practical steps that the U.S. is ready to change its destabilizing course and pursue the above-mentioned ambitious goals through interaction on an equal basis. It remains to be seen whether the U.S. is actually ready to take into account our legitimate security interests and concerns.

We tend to believe that there is a chance for pragmatic approach to prevail and for the U.S. to engage with Russia in good faith with a view to seek balanced and mutually acceptable solutions. So far, we note the professional and business-like atmosphere at the SSD meetings. As a positive sign we also see the understanding reached on establishing two expert-level Working Groups – on principles and objectives for future arms control and on potentials and actions with strategic effect.

On our part, we have presented a vision on how to frame the SSD, and what is desirable to achieve as a result thereof. The underlying idea is to jointly develop a “new security equation” that would cover all factors affecting strategic stability. We want to embrace the entire spectrum of both nuclear and non-nuclear, offensive and defensive arms with strategic capability.

As for offensive arms, we need to pay particular attention to nuclear and high-precision conventional systems that could be used in a counterforce strike against the territory of the other side with a view to weaken or even neutralize its deterrent. Our strong conviction is that discussions should focus on delivery vehicles and associated platforms, as well as deployed warheads that pose direct operational threat.

Speaking of strategic defensive systems, I obviously refer to respective missile defence assets. The principle of inseparable interrelationship between strategic offensive and strategic defensive arms remains to be the crux of the very concept of strategic stability. It is enshrined in the New START Treaty. This is why there is no way to avoid addressing the issue of missile defence in the framework of the “new security equation”.

Another indispensable topic is “post-INF dynamics” and possible efforts to mitigate the damage inflicted upon the international security by the U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty. We continue to stick to our mutual verifiable moratoria initiative that is designed to ensure restraint and predictability in this area.

It is also important to develop common approaches to preventing arms race in outer space and ensuring security of space activities.

The concepts and ideas on the American side, seem to be somewhat immature at this stage due to the ongoing review process initiated by the new Administration with regard to doctrines, postures and strategies. But both delegations believe that in the meantime there is still enough space for discussions.

It is of no surprise that so far the two sides have many discords and opposite views, with only a few points of convergence. But it is just the beginning of the journey. If political will and readiness for creative diplomacy prevail, then there are no unbridgeable gaps.

The NPT remains the cornerstone and an integral element of the international security system. More than half of a century of the Treaty existence is, in our view, by itself a strong evidence of stability and effectiveness of the NPT. During this period the Treaty has demonstrated that it serves the interests of all Participating States, both nuclear and non-nuclear.

As a State Party to the NPT and one of its depositories, Russia fulfills its obligations and confirms its strong and unwavering support for the Treaty. In particular, Russia is fully committed to the goal of nuclear disarmament. It has been consistently reducing its nuclear arsenal and diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in its national defense policy. We intend to continue working in that direction, as well as to maintain a balance between mastering “the peaceful atom” and strengthening the nuclear nonproliferation regime. In this context Russia provides support and shares its extensive experience in the area of peaceful nuclear cooperation with other Participating States, as well as contributes to strengthening of the IAEA safeguards system, which ensure reliable verification that States fulfill their NPT obligations.

We are approaching the 10th NPT Review Conference which will be held on January 4-28, 2022, New York, in a complex setting. In recent years, the NPT regime has been undergoing serious tests and challenges. On the one hand, countries that continue to stand on extreme anti-nuclear positions are reinforcing their disarmament rhetoric without taking into account the on-ground situation in the area of international security. On the other hand, the existing system of nonproliferation and arms control treaties and agreements is being a target for dismantlement or destruction efforts. The INF Treaty has been destroyed by the U.S. The future of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear programme remains unclear. We see again and again shamelessly open attempts to use the NPT as an instrument to exert political pressure or settle political scores with States.

This year marks the 25th anniversary since the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was opened for signature. Nevertheless, the Treaty has not yet entered into force, and we are concerned by not only the lack of any tangible progress in this process but even by the serious deterioration of the situation. The responsibility lies with those eight states on the so-called “List of 44 countries” whose ratification and/or signature are necessary for the CTBT to enter into force. The most destructive role in this context, again, plays the U.S., which has become the only state that has officially refused to ratify the CTBT.

We recall that Russia signed the CTBT in 1996 and ratified this Treaty in 2000, and we are working hard on making it truly universal both in bilateral and multilateral formats. As you may know the construction of the Russian segment of the international monitoring system nears completion. To date, 29 out of 32 stations of monitoring in the Russian segment of the system have been certified.

The situation around the previously rather non-contentious issue - the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ) - becomes more complicated. The additional protocols to the NWFZ



H.E. Mr. Sergey Ryabkov's official visit to the Agency headquarters in Vienna, Austria. 18 August 2020.

Source: www.flickr.com



Russia has always advocated the settlement of any regional challenges to the nonproliferation regime exclusively through diplomatic means, and on the basis of the NPT

Treaties traditionally contain binding assurances that prevent the use or threat of use by nuclear states of nuclear weapons against States – Parties to particular zone (so-called negative assurances). At the same time, nuclear states, with the exception of China, make traditional reservations when signing or ratifying protocols to the Treaties. The pressure on the nuclear weapon states to renounce the above-mentioned reservations has sharply increased in recent years.

All reservations are made by Russia when signing the additional protocols in full conformity with the “letter and spirit” of the NPT and do not contradict globally shared norms of international law. They only clarify that the security assurances given to the States Parties to the NWFZ treaties will not be valid in case of any misuse of the relevant provisions of the Treaties, as well as when these provisions are misused by other nuclear powers.

Now as a consequence of the recently established AUKUS partnership we are facing a new risk of developing of nuclear infrastructure of nuclear weapon states in a State Party to the Rarotonga Treaty. This case became for us a clear confirmation of our political understanding that certain reservations to the Protocols to the Treaties on Nuclear Free Zones are fully justified.

Another major challenge to the nonproliferation regime and a key agenda point for the upcoming 10th NPT Review Conference is the issue of establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other WMD and their means of delivery (WMDFZ). The resolution on the Middle East, adopted in 1995 at the NPT Review and Extension Conference, is viewed by the Arab states as part of a package solution, another element of which is the indefinite extension of the NPT.

In December 2018, the UN General Assembly, on the initiative of the Arab states, adopted a respective decision to convene such a Conference. Russia supported this decision. The 2019 conference on a WMD-free zone became a first practical step in many years towards the establishment of a such zone. We took part in this Conference as an observer. The next step was taken shortly. The second Conference on WMD free zone was held in New York from November 29 to December 3, 2021, where Russia participated as an observer at the meeting.

We note with regret that the negative position of the United States and Israel on the issue of establishment of WMDFZ remains unchanged. This will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the discussion of the topic during the NPT review process. We remember well that the WMDFZ issue became a stumbling point at the drafting process of the final document of the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

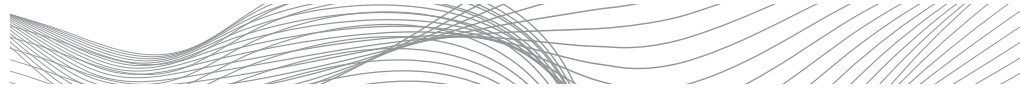
Russia has always advocated the settlement of any regional challenges to the nonproliferation regime exclusively through diplomatic means, and on the basis of the NPT. It is from this position that we consider the nuclear problem of the Korean Peninsula. We believe that it is necessary to intensify the dialogue between Washington and Pyongyang. At the same time, it is important to understand that the settlement of the nuclear issue of the Korean Peninsula is possible only through providing reliable international legal guarantees for the DPRK.

For many years Russia has been providing its unwavering support to the IAEA as the only international organization with the author-

ity and the necessary technical capabilities to implement verification measures within the scope of the NPT. However, the situation here is also far from what we would like to see. Unfortunately, the roots of subjectivity have sneaked into the Agency. The Syrian issue at the IAEA may serve as showcase for this. Allegations against this state were raised without any clear evidence but only on the basis of statements justified by “highly likely” and “very likely”. Nothing in particular, we see that the incident with disappearance in Japan of weapons-grade plutonium has been neglected and the IAEA makes public very controversial broader conclusions for countries where the U.S. nuclear weapons are located. In this context we are seriously concerned by the ongoing comprehensive reform of the IAEA’s safeguards system. We believe it may enforce and enlarge the already existing subjectivity in the Agency’s verification mechanism.

Under this complicated and highly conflicting conditions, it is important for all States to look at the international nonproliferation and arms control agenda for topics that can unite, but in no way split, the States Parties to the Treaty. This is highly relevant to the upcoming 10th NPT Review Conference. We will work hard and in cooperative manner to draft and adopt a final document of the Review Conference. ■

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Security Index Occasional Paper Series Global Edition - reports, analytical articles, comments and interviews that reflect the positions of Russian and foreign experts on the current challenges to global security and Russia's policy in this area. The aim of the series is to provide a clear analysis of international security problems and to offer specific and realistic solutions for them. The series replaced the *Security Index* journal published by PIR Center in 1994-2016. The authors and editors of the series welcome comments, questions and suggestions, which readers can email inform@pircenter.org.

THE FUTURE OF THE NPT: SHAPING RUSSIA'S POSITION

This occasional paper was written within the framework of the project "The future of the NPT: shaping Russia's position", which is part of the Nuclear Nonproliferation & Russia Program. Within the project PIR Center provides a quality expert assessment of the issue, and by arranging various platforms for discussions, to facilitate a more constructive debate of the problems currently facing the nuclear nonproliferation regime.