

[SE9-CV-2] New START I

Caroline S. Reilly
Princeton University

Full Summary

Russia's current inventory of delivery vehicles falls short of the limit mandated by New START; consequently, Professor Ivanov noted that maintaining strategic parity with the United States would require Russia to undertake a considerable expansion of its strategic forces. This could be an endeavor which Moscow may be unwilling to pursue given the country's current economic climate; what's more, there is common regard among Russian specialists that the country will not seek this upper limit, reflecting a marked change from the past.

Finally, Professor Ivanov anticipated that further progress on strategic arms control would require both the U.S. and Russia to consider the methodologies utilized by each state's defense and military establishments to determine the appropriate mix of strategic and tactical nuclear forces necessary for maintaining the "minimum level of deterrence." Currently, neither side publicizes the calculations that justify their optimal strategic nuclear force size, structure, and posture. Although much of this information is classified, Professor Ivanov urged the U.S. and Russia to increase the transparency of these assessments.

General George contended that the New START Treaty was more symbolic than substantive in nature, particularly since the counting rules specified by the agreement largely reflect technological and financial realities on both sides. Although the treaty does not necessarily have the ability to "drive a new future," the symbolism of New START is not insignificant; indeed, the consideration by the United States and Russia to address the size of their nuclear forces and stockpile is critical to international security, particularly since the two powers possess ninety percent of the global nuclear war-fighting capability.

In order to assess the implications of the New START agreement, General George explained that it is critical to distinguish between capabilities, which are slow to evolve over time, and intent, which can change more quickly. For example, the U.S. and Russia still maintain the most substantial strategic nuclear capabilities in the world, much like they did during the Cold War; however, the status of U.S.-Russia relations was different thirty years ago than it is today. In 2011, the U.S. does not believe Russia is an immediate national security threat, a

view that is hopefully reciprocated by Russia. For General George, this implied a bright and prosperous future for bilateral relations; however, it would not be prudent to “blindly disregard” the capabilities on both sides.

Thus, while the U.S. does not intend to use the planned BMD system against Russia, General George understood Moscow’s concerns and recommended the U.S. provide a great degree of transparency about the Phased Adaptive Approach as it progresses. Similarly, General George called on Russia to enhance U.S. understanding of their reliance on tactical nuclear weapons so that the two countries can work through the issue and move forward. The next round of negotiations must address these issues so that there can be a larger, multinational approach to arms control.

While the cap placed on strategic nuclear warheads by the New START Treaty was a step in the right direction, the agreement did not stipulate limitations on the thousands of warheads awaiting dismantlement in both the U.S. and Russia. In closing, General George surmised that a future round of arms control must address the size, capability, and intent associated with those remaining nuclear weapons.

Mr. Colby focused his remarks on the prospects for nuclear arms control between United States and Russia. He believed the next agreement would not expand beyond the bilateral realm to include other nuclear weapons states; it would focus solely on the capabilities of the U.S. and Russia. Furthermore, he felt this agreement should not necessarily strive to make reductions in the U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals; this conclusion was motivated in large part by Mr. Colby’s view that the goal of a nuclear weapons-free world is neither feasible nor desirable, and thus should not drive arms control, which has traditionally been distinguished from the objectives of disarmament.

If not nuclear abolition, then what should drive the future of U.S.-Russian arms control? Mr. Colby believed the goal of any future agreement should be strategic stability – which he defined as a situation in which neither side has strong incentive to use its nuclear weapons – and the security of nuclear weapons and materials. More specifically, both sides should be encouraged by arms control to move to force postures that ensure a devastating second-strike capability; in other words, even if each side were to absorb an attempted first strike, they would retain the ability to retaliate with a devastating counterattack. Mr. Colby observed that while the United States is in good position to provide an assured second-strike capability, with its robust strategic submarine force and ICBMs on launch-ready alert, Russia is increasingly reliant on delivery systems that could prove to be destabilizing, such as silo-based ICBMs armed with multiple independent reentry vehicles. While Russia is currently encountering some technological challenges in the development of its next generation SLBM,

improvements in the sea-based leg of Russia's strategic nuclear triad could enhance the overall survivability of Russian forces, augmenting the prospects for strategic stability. Consequently, one objective of the next round of U.S.-Russian arms control could be to shift each side's forces away from heavily MIRVed, silo-based ICBMs, similar to the modifications the United States is making to its Minuteman III missiles.

While Mr. Colby did not anticipate U.S. agreement to strict limitations on ballistic missile defenses, he recommended some other measures the United States could implement to allay Russian concerns without limiting the U.S. ability to defend its interests. For example, particular radar basing modes might help demonstrate that the U.S. is not trying to threaten Russia's nuclear deterrent capabilities. The U.S. could also invite Russian representatives to view the types and numbers of interceptors it deploys. Finally, the U.S. could make political commitments to limit the numbers of interceptors it will field and tie this pledge to the development of security threats to its European allies.

With respect to conventional weapons, Mr. Colby asserted that in addition to the lengthy timeline required for the development and deployment of Prompt Global Strike, he did not believe the capability would be fielded in large numbers or in ways that could degrade Russia's confidence in the ability of its nuclear forces. While there are steps the U.S. could take to show in good faith its conventional systems and basing modes, Russia should increase the survivability of its nuclear forces and bring them closer to a second-strike capability, for example by moving its force structure towards more mobile systems and improving its early warning capabilities.

Mr. Colby stressed that tactical nuclear weapons will have to be a part of the next round of arms control, particularly since they are a major concern of U.S. allies in NATO. He urged Russia to take measures that could enhance U.S. understanding of the security of these weapons; such steps could be implemented through the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, which on the whole has been seen as quite successful. This is also an area where the U.S. and Russia can have mutual confidence building. Ultimately however, the United States is unlikely to make large concessions in exchange for significant decreases in the Russian tactical nuclear inventory; thus, tactical reductions may have to take place unilaterally.

Mr. Colby concluded by highlighting some improvements to U.S. strategic forces that could serve to balance a future arms control effort while maintaining effective deterrence, such as additional funding for the U.S. nuclear weapons complex; additional funding for modernization of the U.S. nuclear triad; expansion of the conventional strike program; exploration of nuclear earth penetrating weapons; and rebuilding U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.

Following the prepared remarks, Mr. Ryabikhin called on panel attendee **Dr. Igor Khripunov**, Distinguished Fellow at the Center for International Trade and Security at the University of Georgia, to compare the New START Treaty with the START I agreement, which Dr. Khripunov had been involved with on behalf of the Soviet Union. What, in Dr. Khripunov's opinion, is the connection between the two agreements? What are the benefits for Russia? What issues are still beyond the frame of this treaty?

Dr. Khripunov was struck during the experts' commentary by how little had changed since the Cold War. When the Soviet Union and United States negotiating teams were working out the terms of START I in the 1980s, they addressed very similar issues. The fact that the U.S. and Russia continue to focus on concerns like the dangers that incentives for a successful first strike pose for each country and the possibility of cheating highlight lingering stereotypes and hostilities that may indicate the U.S. and Russia have become "benign adversaries."

Dr. Khripunov highlighted one mechanism for addressing the considerable distrust in the nuclear superpower relationship: confidence-building measures (CBMs). During the initial stages of bilateral arms control, the U.S. placed priority on implementing CBMs so that a greater degree of trust could be developed before reductions in strategic forces were made. Although the importance of transparency in nuclear arsenals is a large part of the thinking about strategic relations, Dr. Khripunov criticized the lack of attention placed on CBMs. In his opinion, the time may have come to develop "new versions of confidence building measures to address old stereotypes." In particular, he suggested, the U.S. and Russia need to go beyond the military and encourage wider participation from communities of politicians in the planning process related to strategic forces. Dr. Khripunov proceeded to highlight what he considered to be two successful CBM endeavors: the 1991 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives and the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Their successful implementation underscored the level of mutual trust between the two superpowers and may have useful implications for how CBMs can be resurrected.

In response to these remarks, Mr. Colby explained that during the negotiations over New START, the conviction that the United States and Russia need to transcend a strategic relationship based on concerns about strategic stability was strongly represented; in fact, the decision not to focus the treaty entirely on traditional items of strategic stability, such as MIRVed strategic nuclear delivery vehicles, is a reflection of that point of view. However, in defense of the position that consideration of strategic stability should remain essential to bilateral relations, Mr. Colby noted that in spite of the end of the Cold War, the U.S. and Russia continue to have different interests on a range of issues that may cause tension in the relationship. In light of the possibility of conflict, the U.S. needs to prepare for the possibility that Russia might have advantage to strike first.

The final question from the audience asked the panel participants for their views about current state of the political relationship between United States and Russia. While this participant recognized that there is much hope in the wake of the New START agreement, he expressed concern about structural problems in the relationship.

Both General George and Mr. Ryabikhin reflected positively on U.S.-Russian relations. General George emphasized the genuine respect and personal friendship between the two presidents, as well as their singular understanding – they are not as bound by Cold War conventions. Mr. Ryabikhin believed that the ongoing discussions about ballistic missile defenses represent a critical moment for the relationship. Since Russia does not want the BMD issue to damage relations, there is a clear understanding from the Russian leadership to pursue potential areas for U.S. and Russian cooperation.

Mr. Colby believed that having areas of dissonance in the political relationship could give a greater position for arms control, which can serve as a useful bilateral channel when two countries do not have particularly perfect relations. This supposition also has implications for engaging China on strategic nuclear reductions. With the U.S. and China as two large and assertive nations, friction is inevitable; arms control could be one way to manage those relations.

* The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

* The views expressed here are panel overviews of the Asan Plenum. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the author or the institutions they are affiliated with.
