

**MEETING OF THE NEXT GENERATION OF RUSSIAN AND U.S.
NUCLEAR WEAPONS POLICY, NONPROLIFERATION, AND DISARMAMENT
EXPERTS**

August 25-27, 2010, Moscow

Even after the United States and Russia have completed New START as part of the ongoing reset of relations, there remain a set of difficult questions concerning the strategic roles and capabilities of nuclear weapons, adjustments to the arms control regime, and prevention of proliferation during a time of surging demand for nuclear energy. These challenges underscore the need to develop comprehensive and coherent nuclear policies both within and among countries, and the necessity of maintaining strong, youthful bases of expertise.

On August 25-27th, the Project on Nuclear Issues (PONI) at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) along with the Center for Energy and Security Studies (CENESS) hosted the first in what both organization hope will be a series of exchanges between next generation nuclear policy experts in the United States and Russia. The group consisted of seven Russian and seven American experts, who discussed the future of U.S.-Russian arms control, Iran, strategic defense cooperation, and U.S.-Russian nuclear industry cooperation. The meeting was co-chaired by Matthew Rojansky of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Anton Khlopkov of CENESS and conducted under the Chatham House Rule.

The following is a summary of each of the four sessions was prepared by John K. Warden of CSIS and edited by CENESS. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. or Russian governments, the co-sponsoring institutes, or the group of workshop participants as a whole.

The New START Treaty and Next Steps in Bilateral U.S.-Russian Arms Control

The first session began with a discussion of the yet to be ratified New START. American and Russian participants agreed that the reductions agreed upon were extremely moderate; according to one Russian participant, the new counting rule rules may even allow for higher ceilings than previous treaties. The group was pessimistic about the viability of a world without nuclear weapons and concluded that that “global zero” is more a tactic to get states to support nonproliferation than a realistic option.

While the experts were skeptical of zero, they agreed that there remains an enduring role for arms control agreements that preserve second strike strategic stability. As a result, the majority of Russian and American participants supported ratification of New START and predicted that ratification would eventually occur. However, according to one Russian participant, having negative experience in the past (with START-2 and the 123 Agreement), high level officials in Moscow have decided not to pursue unilateral ratification, and instead wait for U.S. ratification result to unfold simultaneously. The participant also noted that ratification decisions are largely controlled by the President and Prime Minister.

Despite general support, another Russian expert outlined a number of concerns with the treaty: 1) the treaty lacks a provision on liabilities if there's a breach of the inspection regime; 2) the treaty includes no definition of what a platform is; 3) telemetry sharing could advantage the United States; 4) the treaty does not include a transition schedule, which could put Russia at a strategic disadvantage if they implement their obligations quickly and then the GOP withdraws from the treaty; and 5) U.S. nuclear allies – the United Kingdom and France – are not included.

It became clear that most of the Russian participants felt that these concerns were sensible but not strong enough to justify rejecting the treaty. However, at various points during the meeting, Russian participants expressed concerns about the potential consequences of a future Republican administration and/or Congress. Would they withdraw from the New START and build-up offensive forces? Would they attempt to negate Russia's deterrent with missile defenses?

Beyond the New START, American and Russian participants were largely pessimistic about the prospects for future bilateral arms control treaties. Both sides agreed that if ratification of the New START is delayed beyond this year, it would be a bad sign for relations generally, and future arms control specifically. If the agreement is ratified before the end of the year, however, the United States and Russia should begin talking about the next agreement. There was a consensus that the United States and Russia need to take advantage of the process that has been reestablished with the New START to prevent the loss of another generation of people with experience in negotiations and verification. Russian participants also expressed a clear preference for legally-binding agreements.

While most Russian experts felt there was still space for another bilateral treaty, some argued that any future agreement should include the United Kingdom and France since their numbers are unconstrained and will become increasingly relevant in the future. Most participants recognized the high probability that the treaty after New START would be the last bilateral arms reduction treaty.

Russian and American experts had divergent perspectives on tactical nuclear weapons. The Americans argued that transparency – particularly the total number of tactical warheads – would be a helpful first step, while the Russian were opposed to disclosing the total number of tactical nuclear weapons. As one participant put it, most likely the U.S. government has an accurate estimate, but if Russia were to disclose the total number of tactical nuclear weapons there would be “no more bilateral agreements ever”. If the total number is made public, the participant argued, negotiations will be much more difficult. The U.S. Congress would likely seek parity at much reduced numbers, which would be unacceptable to Russia.

Proliferation Challenges – Iran

In the second session, the discussion shifted to the nonproliferation regime and the particular problem of Iran. Russian and American experts agreed about the importance of maintaining a strong NPT, but had different opinions on the threat posed by Iran and how to deal with Iran moving forward.

The majority of American attendants were much more concerned about the threat posed by Iran. According to one participant, the primary problem is that Iran is an irresponsible global actor and supporter of terrorism; Iran is a revisionist power that would use a nuclear capability to bully other states in the Middle East. Another American clarified that the main U.S. concern is that Iran becomes a hostile regional hegemon that can threaten U.S. access to key energy resources at a fair price. Yet another noted that the worst-case scenario is not that Iran tests and becomes a nuclear power, but that Iran becomes a de facto nuclear power while maintaining ambiguity (similar to Israel), making the regime more difficult to deter. By contrast, Russian participants expressed less concern with the potentiality of a nuclear Iran. One Russian expert said that there is no consensus in Moscow on the nature of the Iranian threat.

Suggesting that further efforts are needed to pressure Iran to be a more responsible global actor, an American participant argued that Russian cooperation could be helpful in a number of areas, such

as an exchange of intelligence data. Russian participants agreed with the goal of increased stability in the region, but didn't see very many additional opportunities for Russian influence. One expert explained that Russia had already done what they can to communicate that nuclear weapons would not help Iran and also made a political decision to limit nuclear cooperation with Iran to Bushehr.

A number of Russian participants also questioned the U.S. record in promoting stability, citing the U.S. invasion of Iraq and U.S. military assistance to Georgia. Furthermore, Russian experts were clear that Moscow is more worried about Pakistan than Iran. Therefore, lack of U.S. cooperation on nuclear proliferation from Pakistan makes it difficult for Russia to accept more close cooperation between two countries on Iran. Other Russian experts suggested that increased cooperation on Iran would require external U.S. concessions, such as restrictions on missile defense. While emphasizing that Moscow would be willing to increase cooperation, Russian experts conveyed that the United States must make realistic requests and stop asking Russia to terminate its support for Bushehr or end military cooperation; Russia can't accept those conditions politically.

While both sides presented some possible courses of action, neither was optimistic that there is a way to stop Iran from pursuing nuclear weapons. Some suggested that economic sanctions could still influence Iran, at the very least signaling unity in the international community, which caused American experts to question why Russia would support the latest round of UN sanctions, and subsequently oppose unilateral sanctions. A Russian participant explained that Russia's policy was the result of an internal debate. Many in Russia felt that supporting multilateral sanctions was a mistake after Iran reached an agreement with Brazil and Turkey, and therefore Moscow was even more hesitant to support subsequent unilateral sanctions. Many experts in Moscow felt that at that time, sanctions would send a signal to Iran that improving their behavior won't bring any benefits.

According to one American participant, there was a time and a place when offers such as U.S. security guarantees or economic investment could have led to a negotiated outcome. However, at this point, the level of distrust between the United States and Iran is so great that any negotiated outcome seems inconceivable. If Iran does change course on its nuclear program, it will likely be internally driven. Overall, the group was pessimistic about the prospects of negotiations and said that the United States and Russia should be prepared for a range of contingencies, including deterring a nuclear Iran.

Strategic Defense Cooperation

The third session shifted to missile defense and the potential for strategic defense cooperation. In the earlier sessions, Russian participants mentioned U.S. missile defense as an impediment to future cooperation on Iran or a follow-on strategic arms reduction treaty. However, U.S. participants were quick to point out that any restraint on missile defense would be extremely difficult politically. Even the New START, which includes extremely modest limitation on defense, has created a great deal of political controversy in the United States.

On the other hand, Russian experts expressed a number of concerns with U.S. missile defense plans, insisting on the need for formal, legally-binding restraints. Two primary concerns were: 1) with improved defenses, the United States might have the ability to use high-precision nuclear and conventional capabilities to strike Russia's strategic nuclear forces, and use missile defense to clean up the rest (in particular, Russian experts were concerned about the planned deployment of the

SM-3 Block 2, which is being designed to intercept ICBMs); and 2) in a conventional conflict, Russia might want to deescalate with a limited nuclear strike and would not want its missiles shot down by an American ABM system.

They were also skeptical of the repeated U.S. claim that missile defenses are targeted against Iran and North Korea. One participant argued that because Iran and North Korea have liquid fueled missiles that take at least a few hours to prepare, they can be eliminated with cruise missiles, obviating the need for missile interceptors. Another argued that the location of the U.S. deployments shows that they are targeted at Russia, not Iran, because the ideal location to intercept a missile coming to Europe from Iran would be in the Mediterranean or Southern Europe, not Romania or Bulgaria.

Despite differing views of the U.S. system, both sides saw potential for limited cooperation. There was general agreement that the United States and Russia could continue and expand joint threat assessments and rejuvenate other efforts at information sharing, such as the Joint Data Exchange Center (JDEC). Noting that previous obstacles to the JDEC, such as the liability issues, were simply an American pretext for not developing real cooperation, one Russian expert said that in Moscow, there are no serious political problems with launching this form of cooperation. The Russia perception is that JDEC, and similar projects, are not moving forward because the United States lacks interest.

American and Russian experts realized that there would be limits to cooperation. American participants argued that it would be impossible to have a joint missile defense system that gave Russia a veto over launches and expressed concern that information about U.S. interceptor technology might be passed on to third-parties, which could allow Iran, North Korea, and other to develop effective counter-measures to negate U.S. defenses. Russian participants affirmed that a joint system would be impossible, arguing that effective missile defense would require an almost automatic launch with no room for consultation or a veto. Experts on both sides agreed that the best way forward would be for the United States and Russia to take a step-by-step process to build trust and attempt to reduce misunderstanding.

Russian participants insisted that even with greater cooperation, Russia would require formal limits on U.S. defenses to even consider another strategic arms reduction treaty. The United States would need to formally recognize the link between offensive and defensive systems and agree to legally-binding limits on the deployment of interceptors. In addition to numerical limits, one Russian participant argued that there should be constraints on the geography of stations and the capacity of radars. Moscow's main objection to the proposed third site was the radar station, which would have been able to look deep into Russia, not the interceptors. The participant clarified that limiting the geography of deployments was just as, if not more, important than the numerical limit. In addition, Russia would expect the United States to formally abdicate its agreement to deploy Ground-Based Midcourse Defense interceptors and an X-Band radar in Poland and the Czech Republic respectively.

U.S.-Russian Nuclear Industry Cooperation

The final substantive session focused on the potential for cooperation between U.S. and Russian nuclear industry and was the area of most concord between American and Russian experts. The group agreed that nuclear energy cooperation could create lucrative commercial opportunities, be an important test of the possible cooperation in other areas, and have some nonproliferation benefits as well.

On May 10, 2010, President Obama re-submitted the US-Russian Civilian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (or 123 Agreement) to Congress. The agreement will enter into force after 90 days of "continuous session" of Congress unless Congress passes a law explicitly rejecting it. The 123 agreement aims to create a legal framework for cooperation and is an important prerequisite for cooperative business endeavors involving a range of nuclear technologies. As it currently stands, the 123 agreement could enter into force as early as November.

For the most part, opportunities for collaboration are more long-term. According to one Russian expert, Russian industry has an interest in building a uranium enrichment plant in the United States or collaborating with U.S. industry to build facilities in third countries. More immediately, Russia would like to supply fuel to Western reactors in third countries. As the only country that allows for the import of foreign-origin spent nuclear fuel for storage, Russia could have an advantage in seeking access to new markets, while also providing a nonproliferation benefit. Another opportunity for short-term cooperation is the development of high-temperature gas-cooled reactors. Without the 123 agreement, an ongoing project is being impeded because equipment that is produced in the United States can't be exported to Russia or tested at Russian facilities.

However, both sides had some concerns. One Russian attendant said that some in Moscow are afraid that the 123 agreement is just a way for the United States to dump waste from South Korea, Taiwan, and others in Russian territory without many tangible benefits to cooperation. Another Russian expert clarified that Russia only planned to take back Russian-origin spent nuclear fuel, which would then be reprocess and used in fast breeder reactors. While the United States still supports a once-through fuel cycle, there's little to no support in Russia. American participants argued that the main problem for new forms of cooperation, such as building Russian reactors in the United States or using Russian fuel in Western reactors, will be Iran. Politically, any projects will be connected to Russian nuclear cooperation with Iran when they're considered by Congress.