

Russia and the United States

There can be no coherent, effective security strategy to reduce nuclear dangers that does not take into account Russia—its strengths, weaknesses, aims, and ambitions.

—Senator Sam Nunn

Since 1991, the United States and Russia have had a shared commitment to reducing nuclear weapons in the arsenals of both nations. The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), signed by the United States and the Soviet Union in July 1991, was the first strategic arms control treaty to actually call for a reduction in the number of nuclear warheads deployed by the two parties.

One of the most difficult issues facing the new administration will be relations with Russia. It is safe to say that over the past decade the post-Soviet promise of a democratic Russia has not materialized, and concerns about how Russia is exercising its interests in eastern Europe and the states of the former Soviet Union are increasing.

As Washington and Moscow struggle to resolve their foreign policy differences, preventing WMD proliferation and terrorism remains a critical shared interest. Both countries acknowledged this common aim as recently as April 2008, when they agreed to the U.S.–Russia Strategic Framework Declaration. Despite serious differences on many foreign policy issues, the two sides agreed on a Joint Framework for their relationship that emphasizes strategic arms, nuclear nonproliferation, and the fight against global terrorism. It is remarkable that during a tense period, the United States and Russia could come together to chart a new relationship. Their Joint Framework provides a basis for moving forward on many of the recommendations of this Commission.

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Biological Cooperative Threat Reduction

At its peak, the illicit biological weapons program of the Soviet Union employed an estimated 50,000 scientists and technicians. After the Soviet breakup in 1991, the United States launched a major effort to prevent this dangerous expertise from migrating to rogue states and terrorist organizations. The United States sought to find civilian employment for former Soviet bioweapons scientists. In recent years, however, the United States has reluctantly cut back its biological cooperative threat reduction (CTR) activities in Russia because of Moscow's bureaucratic and political obstacles. Increasingly, the Russian government has viewed biological CTR programs with disinterest and even suspicion, arguing that its growing economic strength obviates the need for continued foreign assistance. Yet despite these assertions, Russia's former bioweapons scientists and inadequately secured collections of highly dangerous pathogens remain a global proliferation concern.

Nuclear Security Initiatives

The 2005 Bratislava Nuclear Security Initiative contained a comprehensive joint action plan for cooperation on security upgrades that accelerated security upgrades, performed in Russia by U.S. officials, of nuclear weapons and material sites. It also included specific benchmarks and timelines for upgrades of the nuclear sites controlled by the Federal Atomic Energy Agency (Rosatom) and the Ministry of Defense. Since the signing of the Bratislava Initiative, additional sites have been added to the Material Protection, Control and Accounting Program; work there is to be completed by the end of fiscal year 2010. More needs to be done, however; in particular, both the focus on Russian civil nuclear facilities and the pace at which they are secured must be increased. The Bratislava Initiative is a successful model for bolstering efforts to cover additional nuclear sites in Russia, and the United States may seek to follow it in addressing the remaining military and civilian sites.

While security upgrades for sensitive Russian nuclear facilities have expanded and accelerated under the Bratislava Initiative, senior Russian officials have not paid sufficient attention to their need to sustain these upgrades after the U.S. programs come to a close. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2003 mandates that a sustainable material security system be transferred to the exclusive support and manage-

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ment of the Russian Federation no later than January 1, 2013. The current Joint Sustainability Plan identifies the requirements for Rosatom to sustain the improvements made possible by U.S.-provided assistance, and the two sides are working on an implementation plan. But to date, the Russian government has not shared with Washington its plans to fund sustainment of the security upgrades. More needs to be done to secure a Russian commitment to increase funding for these efforts.

Strategic Nuclear Arms

When the Soviet Union broke apart in December 1991, some of the nuclear weapons covered by START were located in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. After a series of U.S. initiatives and offers, these nations agreed to eliminate all of their nuclear weapons during the seven-year reduction period outlined in START I and to join the Non-proliferation Treaty as non-nuclear-weapons states. The treaty limits land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers on the territories of the parties and imposes a complex verification regime.

All the nuclear warheads located in Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Belarus were returned to Russia for elimination. The United States and Russia completed the reductions in their forces by the designated date in December 2001. START will expire in December 2009 unless the parties agree to extend it. The United States and Russia have indicated that although they do not support extension of START as a whole, they are interested in extending some of the treaty's verification provisions. According to the treaty, the parties must begin discussions about the future of the treaty one year prior to its expiration. Senior-level discussions between the United States and Russia began more than a year ago, but basic questions, such as which START transparency provisions should be extended, have not been resolved.

The United States and Russia committed to further reductions in their strategic nuclear arms in the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty. This pact, referred to as the Moscow Treaty, was signed in May 2002 and entered into force in June 2003. It has two basic requirements: (1) that the United States and Russia reduce their strategic nuclear warheads to between 1,700 and 2,200 warheads by the treaty's expiration date of December 31, 2012, and (2) that both parties meet at least twice annually in a Bilateral Implementation Commission established by the treaty

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to discuss its implementation. The May 2008 Report on the Implementation of the Moscow Treaty states that the number of U.S. operationally deployed nuclear warheads was 2,871 as of December 31, 2007. Although the U.S. estimate of the number of Russian warheads is classified, it is known that Russia is also making considerable progress toward the Moscow Treaty limit. Neither party expects to have any difficulty meeting the treaty limit. The treaty contains no monitoring provisions.

The recent political environment has led to fears of a resurgent Cold War relationship between the United States and Russia. The upcoming expiration of START and, not long after, of the Moscow Treaty will end the formal U.S.–Russian arms reduction and transparency regime unless the two nations reach agreement on further strategic reduction measures. Despite the political tensions, they have been discussing possible ways of resolving the limits and transparency issues. But significant differences remain.

The Commission believes that the shared interests of the United States and Russia on crucial security matters such as further reductions of nuclear arsenals must transcend the tensions of the past several years.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The next U.S. administration should work with the Russian government on initiatives to jointly reduce the danger of the use of nuclear and biological weapons, including by (1) extending some of the essential verification and monitoring provisions of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty that are scheduled to expire in 2009; (2) advancing cooperation programs such as the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, and the Proliferation Security Initiative; (3) sustaining security upgrades at sensitive sites in Russia and elsewhere, while finding common ground on further reductions in stockpiles of excess highly enriched uranium; (4) jointly encouraging China, Pakistan, and India to announce a moratorium on the further production of nuclear fissile materials for nuclear weapons and to reduce existing nuclear military deployments and stockpiles; and (5) offering assistance to other nations, such as Pakistan and India, in achieving nuclear confidence-building measures similar to those that the United States and the USSR followed for most of the Cold War.

Findings and Recommendations

The Commission believes these recommendations can best be achieved by undertaking a number of specific actions.

ACTION: The United States must work with Russia to reinvigorate cooperative biological threat reduction programs in Russia.

The next administration should launch a high-level political initiative that impresses on Russian leaders the need for continued international cooperation on biological security and nonproliferation issues. In addition, in view of the changes in Russia since the CTR program began in the early 1990s, the Department of State should lead an inter-agency effort in 2009 to rethink and restructure the CTR program to align it with the circumstances and challenges in Russia today.

ACTION: The United States must work with Russia to sustain security upgrades at Russian nuclear sites.

The United States should continue to press hard for a Russian commitment to adequate and transparent funding for the long-term sustainability of the security measures at Russia's sensitive nuclear facilities. Plans should be accelerated, consistent with U.S. and Russian commitments and statements under the Bratislava Initiative, as well as the U.S.–Russia Strategic Framework Declaration of April 2008 and other agreements.

ACTION: The United States must work with Russia to negotiate a post-START strategic nuclear framework.

The Commission believes it imperative that we continue to reduce the size of the U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles in a structured and transparent manner. Consequently, we believe that the next administration should engage with Russia at the earliest possible date to negotiate additional reductions in both countries' strategic stockpiles and to agree on transparency measures that can be in place by the end of 2009, when START expires. Such an agreement would send an important signal to the rest of the world regarding U.S. and Russian commitments to negotiate in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament.

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ment. Setting additional benchmarks for further reductions would serve as a natural reinforcement to continue this important strategic partnership in fighting terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

ACTION: The United States should work with Russia and others to promote India–Pakistan confidence-building measures.

India and Pakistan have agreed to confidence-building measures that cover peripheral issues such as providing an annual listing of some of their nuclear facilities and establishing hotlines between their military directors general and between their diplomats. To date, because of a fundamental lack of trust between the two governments, these measures have not addressed core security issues or questions of nuclear command and control issues due to a fundamental lack of trust between their governments. If the United States and Russia were to lead a multi-national effort, drawing on their own experiences during the Cold War, this might help India and Pakistan to begin implementing confidence building measures to ameliorate expected destabilizing aspects of their future nuclear force modernization.

Additional measures that could be taken under the leadership of the United States and Russia to promote nuclear stability in South Asia are discussed in the preceding section of this report.