



Key challenges to arms control and nonproliferation. Russian diplomacy approaches and prospects of international cooperation

The transcript of the Trialogue Club International Meeting with

Mr. Vladimir I. Yermakov

Institute of Contemporary International Studies, Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Moscow

March 27, 2018 (Tuesday)

Mr. Vladimir I. Yermakov is Director of the Department for Nonproliferation and Arms Control of the Russian MFA.

YERMAKOV: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends. I am not that much acquainted with the rules of the Trialogue Club but I am a little bit surprised that we speak English here in Moscow. *On peut parler en français, pourquoi pas?* We should start with Russian, but if we have any misunderstanding, we can switch to any language.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, once again, I am glad to welcome you here at the Diplomatic Academy. It has already been noted that we gathered here in the times that are far from simple. First, I would like to mention that yesterday in Kemerovo, in one of the largest industrial centers of ours, we had one of the most terrible tragedies. There was a fire in the shopping center called “Zimnyaya Vishnya” and more than 60 people were killed in that fire. I would like to ask everybody to stand up and honor the victims with a minute of silence. Thank you.

Well, as we say in Russia the life is going on and we have to deal with specific issues, problems, and developments that are quite serious. The topic that we are going to discuss today is the key issues and problems of non-proliferation and disarmament. It is evident for this issue to cover we need more than 30 minutes, more than one hour, and more than even two days. I would like to present a concise general picture of how we see what is going on and may be later it could be extremely useful for all of us to discuss the issues that we are talking about today at the Trialogue Club.

I suggest that immediately we focus on the fact that we really have quite serious problems in arms control. I have been personally dealing with these issues since 1992. Nothing similar happened before. The trend we seemed to notice in the 1990s is long history. In Russia, we had illusions that we could have normal partnership dialogue with the Western countries. On our part, we have done practically everything possible for it. We opened everything. Our American partners, as we used to call them then, they were present at all sensitive sites of the Russian Federation. In many respects, the American party had more complete information than even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. We sincerely believed that it was extremely useful to develop new relations and create new partnership for many years to come.

That time I knew really well practically everybody at the working level of arms control. I am going to express my personal point of view here. I am still sure that at the working level many Americans had the same feelings regarding this issue. On the American side, there was expertise on practically all the issues on the highest level possible. Personally, I encountered no difficulties in dealing with any agencies in the US. In the course of one day, I could have consultations regarding all possible issues I was interested in in the State Department, in the Department of Defense, in the National Security Council, the Department of Energy. Approximately the same opportunities were presented to the American diplomats here in Moscow. Quite optimistically, we were building nice and shining future of intergovernmental relations. All that happened to be just an illusion. We were just cheated simply and cruelly. What we seemed to have as a deal with the Americans, all that just evaporated and disappeared like a house of cards.

One of the key moments was the barbarian bombing of Yugoslavia that started 19 years ago. I think that many of you recall the events of March 1999 when many Yugoslavian cities, industrial centers fell victims of barbarian attack of so-called democratic Europe. So-called democratic Europe that was led by the US. It happened in the end of the XX century in the very center of Europe. About 2000 civilians were killed in those attacks, mostly children, old people and women. The US used aviation bombs with depleted uranium. The population of Serbia still suffers from different diseases that are consequences of that terrible attack. Everything turned around in our intergovernmental relations. Before that, we would have some kind of partnership and after the events in Yugoslavia, we realized very well that there were plans just to kill us. And Yugoslavia, our sister country of Yugoslavia, the leader of the non-alignment movement, was an example of what could be done or some forces would like to do with Russia.

History is repeating itself. Approximately the same thing happened with Japan at the end of the WWII. The Americans showed Stalin what they would like to do with the Soviet Union and they bombed with the nuclear bombs two Japanese cities – Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Stalin learned the lesson and made the right conclusions. By 1949 we also had nuclear potential. That was the beginning of nuclear arms race started by the US. You remember then there was the Cuban Missile Crises. Some of the people call it a Khrushchev's dangerous adventure. However, did he have choice, when the US nuclear missiles were so close to the Soviet Union? Moscow could be just eradicated after 10-15 minutes after a decision to push the button. And approximately the same was prepared by our American partners at the end of the century. People in Washington were sure that Russia was disrupting, and that the Russian missile potential could be

just brought to zero quiet soon. Americans suddenly decided they had nothing special to do, and Russia would be just disrupted by itself. In this situation, Washington is easily leaving on of the fundamental treaties, the ABM Treaty. Our reaction was quiet calm and reserved. We just tried to explain to the American leadership that decision could led to major problems. And they just laughed. We warned that we would not waste money for the ABM and we would be developing Strategic Defensive Arms to compensate possible steps. At the highest level, Americans said you could do what you want. That is what we are doing.

Let us get back to the 1990s. The middle of the 1990s was the time of great achievements in arms control. The US was the real leader. On the initiate of the US, the preparatory work was conducted and the CWC was adopted and came into force in 1997. I personally worked with Americans when we wrote the text of the Convention. I told Americans that we had around 40 000 tons of toxic agents and we would not be able to destroy them in the course of 10 years. You, dear American friends, have approximately the same kind of stockpiles; you also would not have time to do it in the course of 10 years. They responded that they had all the necessary resources, state of the art technologies, and they were going to do it for themselves and help us to do it. Perfect and we agreed. An enormous work was conducted in 1997-2007. Naturally, neither us, nor the US could fulfill the provisions of the Convention, we did not destroy everything by 2007, as just I said before. There was a provision in the Convention to prolong the time limit for five more years, and all the members of the Convention did it. Also by 2012 neither the US, nor Russia could do everything in this respect. In Russia, it is quite clear because our government funding is at least 10 times less than in the US. However, we made an enormous effort and we fulfilled the obligations by the end of 2017. We are grateful to all the European countries, to the US, many others who helped us to achieve that result. However, that was a Russian state program of destruction of chemical weapons and it was the funding of the Russian budget. All the destruction was going on under a very rigid control of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

In November, 2017, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons officially stated that the complete Russian arsenal of chemical weapons was destroyed.

Where is the U.S. in all this? The United States is the only country in the world that officially possesses huge stockpiles of chemical weapons. The whole so-called “democratic West” is afraid to utter a single word about it. There is no guarantee that the U.S. is going to continue destruction of the arsenal of chemical weapons. Although officially so far we have no complaints to Americans regarding this. We came to an agreement that the Americans have the opportunity to fulfill our obligations till 2021. But we are concerned that the United States maybe won't make sufficient effort to fulfil their obligations in accordance with the Convention.

Let's look at one more important subject. Biological Weapons Convention was written and signed by the middle of the 1970s. That was the very first convention prohibiting the whole type of weapons of mass destruction. Naturally, in the 1970s we could not predict the extent of technological development that was there at the turn of the century. There is no mechanism of inspections in the Convention. At the end of the mid-1990s together with the Americans we started working at that mechanism. What came out of it? What do you think?

In the year 2000, when practically everything was ready for the states parties to confirm the mechanism of inspections, they say in Washington that they do not need such a mechanism. Imagine Geneva, representatives of all the United Nations member states are ready to accept the legal documents, to sign that protocol and here is the U.S. representative who is facing them and says “No”, and it is like spitting in their faces.

What was the development of the situation further? In the course of two decades the U.S. Department of Defense under the pretext of providing assistance starts establishing military biological labs around Russian borders. And that is what U.S. calls its program of global biological security. Good for the Americans! Yes, maybe this is global biological security of the United States. But that’s global biological danger for the rest of the world. We started to have very close discussions with our American partners regarding these issues. Our American partners did not like us asking those specific questions. Their mentality is still the mentality of the mid-1990s. For some reason, they still believe that Russia is on the brink of disruption, and you do not have to make any agreements with Russia.

One more example and again the mid-1990s. The grandiose initiative of President Clinton, draft CTBT, Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Again, Russia is supporting that initiative. The text of the treaty is ready. It is signed by the majority of the UN member states. Russia ratified that treaty in 2000. Where are our American friends? First, they pretend they have major difficulties with the Congress. They say, they work hard lobbying that Treaty in the Congress. Last year they actually made practically a statement that they were not interested in ratification of that treaty, and they are not going to work to ratify it any longer. Moreover, they launch their own program of preparation of nuclear tests so that at any moment in six months they could actually renew full-scale nuclear tests. We ask our partners these specific questions again, so what is on your mind, dear friends? They really dislike our questions.

Well, let’s go further. The enormous achievement of Russian-American relations is the new START Treaty. In 2008, we started very dynamic negotiations and the enormous result, we could not even dream about, - the treaty is signed and came into force. In the course of seven years we had to bring our nuclear missile potential down to the limits established by the Treaty. The work was very intensive and highly responsible, and highly successful on both sides. Certain issues naturally emerged but they were dealt with by the Bilateral Commission on the Treaty implementation. We are approaching the date, February 5, 2018, when the parties should officially announce that they fulfilled their obligations in accordance with the Treaty. Quite beforehand 18 months to two years before that date we started telling our colleagues so you take out all those units but let’s come to an agreement that we understand that you are doing it in the framework of the Treaty. The Treaty provides for the procedure, it is quite clear. American friends simply don’t react. They say, trust us, we actually do it. We show them these are the legal procedures of the Treaty. No reaction whatsoever.

You can see the result, on the 5th of February, Russia officially is confirming that it came to the level established by the Treaty. It’s all confirmed by all the parties, by the U.S. The official U.S. statement is that the U.S. is actually at the same level. But Russia cannot confirm that Americans actually did it because the procedure has not been

followed. We have to work quite intensively also in that direction. Practically the only thing that we have left in our relationships with the Americans.

Another sensitive issue is the INF Treaty. In the past the USSR and the U.S. provided that large-scale agreement. The whole class of missiles from 500 to 5500 km, so it was destroyed by the American and the Russian side. That was unprecedented. We have a very close dialogue with the American party regarding these issues. Since the end of the 1990s we start noticing that regarding some aspects, the U.S. started violating the letter and the spirit of the Treaty. They announce that this is a target for ABM, and they start developing missile "Gera" which is actually under the provisions of the INF Treaty, and it should not be developed. We are witnessing the development of drones that could be carriers for the weapons of mass destruction. If you open the Treaty, and if you read the description of land-based cruise missiles, it's exactly what we are talking about when we are looking at modern day drones. That was confirmed by the American party when the treaty was ratified. We start telling Americans: guys, let's come to some kind of an agreement in the framework of the Treaty". They don't listen.

Suddenly, the U.S. started putting in the territory of Europe, in Romania, in Poland allegedly launching facilities for the ABM against allegedly Iran. But these launching devices "MK-41", they were tested in the U.S. vessels, and they are capable of carrying Tomahawk cruise missiles with nuclear warheads. We just tell our American partners about this violation of the Treaty. You know what their answer is? No, it is no violation because the software is different. We ask another question, how much time you need to change the software? They say, maybe 10 or 15 minutes. Good for them! Those were the provisions of the Treaty, those were the internal discussions regarding the Treaty, we didn't make it public but we discussed them all.

Suddenly, out of the blue, our American friends start telling us that we violate the Treaty. They start telling us about it not in accordance with the procedure established by the Treaty, they just make public statements. Our answer is, tell us what we violate, let's have a discussion. They answer: no, we are not going to tell you anything, you have to admit that you violate the provisions of the Treaty. You have to make it right and make a public statement about it. Does it remind you of anything else? Does it look exactly like the dirty provocation with the Skripals in London? Something mysterious happened in London with two Russian citizens, and suddenly Russia is accused of it, and Putin directly is accused of it. They refuse to provide any information whatsoever. They say, Russia, you are guilty and admit your guilt, and face your punishment.

We have this question, is anything left in the brains of those people? Are there any normal people left that we can discuss something important? We officially state that we are ready to have a dialogue regarding any issue. We are ready to come to an agreement regarding any possible and probable issue in the field of international security. We are sorry, we survived, and did not get disrupted. Whether you like it or not, but in Russia we are in the third Millennium of our history. We are the way we are, we face difficulties but then when we overcome those difficulties, we become only stronger. We don't have any demands or any complains, we are open to a normal intergovernmental dialogue in the interest of international security and strategic stability.

Well, it is just something for us to start our dialogue here. I think now we are ready for a discussion.

Q&A

QUESTION: *At the end of last year, the American side publicly did present the main missile in question in the INF Treaty. They said is the 9M729, so the question is why don't the Russian side show the Americans the missile impression of the prohibition, make me the assess, whatever, allow all the inspections to answer all the questions there are on the table?*

YERMAKOV: The answer is simple: we are not in the nineties. We are already in 2018. We do not have any obligation to show Americans anything. As simple as that. Do we see any good will from the American side? What do you mean? The expel of Russian diplomats from our embassies? It is rather difficult for me to find diplomatic wording for what they did with our property in New York and Washington. Let us talk on some basis, on some legally binding basis first and about good will between Russia and United States, forget it. We did have a lot of good will from Russian side, all through thirty years, and a lot of cheating from the American side. Could you imagine that it goes all like this? Forget it, dear American friends.

QUESTION: *Listening to the history that you presented, I came to the conclusion that the mayor problems are not just on the material side of arms control and disarmament, but essentially a lack of trust in international relations. What can and what needs to be done in your view to restore a certain kind of level of trust that these negotiations or these problems can be successfully done?*

YERMAKOV: Just stop cheating us. That is it. Actually, I will tell you, what we really need is a stable and predictable US administration. Simply to have people to deal with them. As simple as that. Simply tell us whom to deal with and please provide for constructive dialogue. Just let us sit at the table and discuss everything. Not through mass media. Not telling that Russia is guilty or Russia must do. Russia will not talk that kind of language. It is absolutely clear. Historically, United States as a great nation, as the biggest power, now is losing ground. It is historical development. You may like it, you may accept it, but it is how our world is built. Some countries like we up, some countries are a little bit going down. I do not see any tragedy here. We are not at all against United States. We do not threaten anybody in the world. Russia is the biggest nation from the territory point of view in the world. We do have all resources that we need. We do have a lot of unique technology. We do have very good perspectives for development. What would we need? Just tell our partners in the west: do not hinder our development. That is it. If you hinder our development, we shall fight and we know how to fight. Look in the history. We know how to defend our interests. But we are ready for any kind of constructive dialogue with any country in the world. Let us sit down and agree on everything.

QUESTION: *What are the possibilities of small/neutral countries concerned about US-Russian relations to help to resolve this crisis?*

YERMAKOV: Simply pronounce your own position. Do not voice out things that are inappropriate. Simply have your own analysis on what is going on. Do not be shy to voice it out. When we come, for example, to the First Committee of the United Nations to discuss all these very important questions and we see the picture from the European Union voicing out same position, mostly written in the United States and when I come up to my friends and ask them, what is your national position? They do not have nothing to tell. They do understand that their national position coincides with the Russian position. But they are even afraid to voice it out. A good example: prevention of arms race in outer space. Why not? Let us do it! Russia and China did present a very important draft treaty, which could provide for prevention of placement of weapons in outer space and use of force. Let us do it. Americans are very nervous about it. First, only United States and Israel were against it. I asked my Israeli friends, why are you against it? -Well, simply were told from the United States to do it. They just ask us to do it. It is nothing to us- Well, fine. I understand the Israeli. We did have an agreement with EU that we go ahead together. That agreement was reached in 2005 in Moscow that we go ahead on the prevention of arms race in outer space. And what we witness now? EU countries voiced out -I do not even call it a position- but something, which is against the Russian initiative. In First Committee, we simply drafted and presented a resolution that calls upon dialogue about a possibility of all countries in the world to take a political obligation not to be the first with arms in outer space. What does it mean? If every country takes a political obligation not to be first with arms in outer space, then nobody will be with arms in outer space. Therefore, in that case we could have a global political obligation not to be with arms in outer space. As simple as that. Americans got that nervous. I never imagined they could be that nervous. My American friends were rushing from one delegation to another persuading them not to support the initiative of Russia. My dear friends, you asked me what you could do. Well, just support every constructive initiative in the field of arms control. Do it. Do not look if this constructive initiative comes from Russia. Simply look at it. If it is constructive, support it. As simple as that. Unfortunately, it happens in every field.

QUESTION: *I have two brief questions connected to the New START Treaty. You voiced a couple of concerns that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has over the US implementation. I assume they will be raised at the upcoming meeting of the bilateral commission. The first is the issue of conversion of a certain number of Trident missiles and heavy bombers, but there is also the second point about reclassification of some of the US silos as so-called training silos. Could you elaborate on that? My second question is, according to the article V of the New START Treaty, when a party believes there is a new kind of strategic offensive arms, it can address the other party and ask for clarifications. Did the US address us after President Putin's speech of March 1, and if yes, was there any answer on our part?*

YERMAKOV: This is the subject for very intensive discussions in the bilateral consultative commission. It is not a subject for the public. Next session will be in a week in Geneva and we shall discuss everything in details, but we should do it with our

American partners. We will not do it publicly, because it is wrong to do it publicly. If you want to solve any question, you must sit at the table with your partner and discuss thoroughly with him. Not to cry out at the square. Please, understand.

QUESTION: *As part of the New START Treaty, there exist annual inspections. Would it be right to say this part of the treaty is functioning properly?*

YERMAKOV: We do not have any problems with our American partners inside the START Treaty. We do have some concerns and we do not have any intention to go publicly. We still think that all our concerns about any misbehaving inside the Treaty could be solved at the table of talks on a constructive basis. Because, in reality, there is no problem. We hope that START Treaty works normally. We hope, we could have an opportunity to extend for new five years or work out a new Treaty. This is our intention. But as we do know for tango we need a partner. If we have that partner we shall dance.

QUESTION: *What kind of role do you see for the EU countries in the procedures of the INF Treaty?*

YERMAKOV: Well, actually, it is a Treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union. We still have three more partners inside, at least, partially which are Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. Actually, it is very important to have that dialogue inside the Treaty, but you may remember that it was Russian initiative to make obligations global. Actually, it was supported by US and it was supported by France. Let us work together. It could be extremely important to have an understanding that further development of missile capabilities could be dangerous for the whole world. We mean ballistic missile capabilities. Actually, we must understand all of us that there is no limits on ballistic missile technology at all in the world, except Russian-American obligations not to have intermediate missiles. Nothing is restricted. No obligation at all for any other country. Unfortunately, we do not see that people understand in the world that reality. It was actually a Russian proposal to have some global agreement on ballistic missiles. Again, our partners from western countries do not listen. Simply they do not listen to us. That is why we have all these problems.

QUESTION: *Regarding the Structured Dialogue on European Security within the OSCE framework. What would be the Russian position on this matter? Would Russia be engaged and participate cooperatively to build confidence in the upcoming meetings?*

YERMAKOV: We fully support your initiative. It is great that you started to work on it. I do not know if you remember or not, but it was Russia who was asking Germany and all European countries to start that kind of dialogue. Do you remember what the answer was? Some ten years ago and then so forth and so on. Look, guys from Moscow, please go to Washington, agree with them, and we shall support it. That was your position. That was the position of all NATO countries. I do not know what influence was on you from the United States. Did they suppress you or anything else? I don't

know. Actually, I do not bother. But it was the position of all NATO countries except United States that it's up to Russia and the United States to agree upon, well, security in Europe and then it could be accepted by all European countries. But it was wrong. We are Europeans. Actually, Russia is the biggest European country. European territory of Russia is bigger than the rest of Europe and it was our proposal to have an overwhelming treaty on European security. Did you work on it? Have you ever talked about it? That is my question. For all European countries. The problems we have and you also have now in Europe, they all could have been solved beforehand, if you could at least listen to Russia, listen to our proposal on a comprehensive overwhelming agreement on European Security, which was proposed by the way by then President of Russia Dmitry Medvedev.

FINAL REMARKS

BUZHINSKIY: On the one hand, the situation in Syria is slightly better because the civil population is starting leaving Eastern Ghouta. Moreover, radical Islamist groups are also leaving the area with the help of the Russian center for reconciliation. But on the other hand, there is a constant threat of further provocations with chemical weapons in Syria, and especially in Eastern Ghouta and somewhere in the western areas. Our intelligence is warning of possible provocations which could be used by the US as a pretext for hitting Damascus by the cruise missiles. If you remember an unprecedented statement made by the Russian Chief of the General Staff, General Gerasimov, since there are Russian servicemen, policemen and Center for reconciliation operating in this area, Russian forces in Syria and those in the Mediterranean will intercept cruise missiles and will deliver blows on the carriers. Since almost all the US cruise missiles are delivered from its naval ships in the Mediterranean, a Russian blow against the US would mean war.