Russia’s vision of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation issues remains in fact very conventional. It is pragmatic and realistic. We do not feel “constrained by traditional formats and diplomatic protocol”. On the contrary, we strongly believe that in many cases using proven formats and keeping to well-established diplomatic routine is the best way to address and resolve outstanding international issues of today and tomorrow. From our point of view, this “traditionalist” – or maybe “no-nonsense” – approach might be
helpful for preventing turning serious and solution-oriented professional discussions aimed at achieving substantive results into road-shows with uncertain purpose, random participation and no clear mandate.

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Key findings

- **We do not see advancing arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation as a self-sufficient goal.** For us, it is first of all one of the means to assure Russia’s national security – in this case, by using political and diplomatic tools. We have a strong conviction that national security is the main driving force behind this process.

- **In the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation Russia is strongly committed to traditional legally-binding instruments, that is to say international treaties and agreements.** They have clear advantage over “Rules-based order” and over unilateral measures, informal understandings or even political commitments, though sometimes such commitments may also be useful.

- **Legally-binding instruments result from negotiations during which parties directly express their concerns and formulate their wishes.** This allows to address real issues without too much bias and to reach a realistic balance between what is desired and what is achievable. Also, verification is really one of the strongest points of legally-binding arrangements that no external oversight may substitute.

- **Presence of legally-binding framework can make situation in the area of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation more stable and more predictable.** This is something it badly needs today, when acute problems arise and when we face systematic attempts by certain States to
disrupt fundamental arms control agreements and regimes and to convert the entire international arms control architecture to fit their particular interests. Aspirations for military domination and search for tools that would allow stronger pressure on political opponents or “competitors” result in scrapping mechanisms that have been contributing to maintaining international security and stability for decades.

- **INF Treaty became an obstacle for USA, so this obstacle was removed.** It is clear for us that the real purpose of the pathetic set-up related to this Treaty was to create an opportunity to get rid of its restrictions and to clear ground for building additional military capacity intended first of all to exert pressure on China that the US believes to be its major military opponent and economic competitor.

- **Russia has come out for extension of the New START Treaty.** It is clear that remaining time is already too short for negotiating a follow-up agreement, and that otherwise in just sixteen months we will remain without any means at all to ensure mutual transparency and predictability between our two countries in the area of strategic nuclear weapons. Extension would maintain the existing regime of regular data exchanges, notifications and inspections that Russia and US carry out at their respective military facilities.

- **Missile defense issue is not only Russia’s strategic stability and arms control everlasting headaches.** NATO is also striving to create a capacity that would allow it to penetrate what is called “A2/AD capabilities” or “bubbles” that is, to engage and destroy in Russian territory targets protected by antiaircraft and missile defense. So, this problem works both ways meaning it requires common attention.

- **Russia is strongly opposed to diverting international arms control and non-proliferation regimes from their initial legitimate purpose and turning them into political tools.** Sad results of such an abuse may be seen at the OPCW. We also witness disturbing trends that risk reducing to zero the efficiency of what is called “the UN disarmament triad”. UN disarmament machinery reflects general deterioration of international situation that is aggravated by lack of dialogue.

- **Russia will continue to support initiatives aimed at strengthening BTWC regime and making the Convention**
more efficient. We have made a number of proposals in this sense and call on all other members to support them. But the issue of the Protocol is still pending.

This text is based on a presentation by the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Sergey Ryabkov at a meeting with the students of the dual-degree Master Program in Nonproliferation Studies, carried out jointly by MGIMO University, PIR Center, and Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey. The meeting took place in Moscow in December, 2019.

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