Evgeny Buzhinskiy. Prospects and significance of nuclear arms control

Amy Woolf. The future of nuclear arms control

Analysis

Evgeny Buzhinskiy. Prospects and significance of nuclear arms control

After U.S. withdrawal from the INF Treaty it has become
obvious that nearly fifty years old history of nuclear arms control is coming to its end. The New START treaty is set to expire on February 5, 2021 and there is little doubt that it will be the end of it. It could be extended if both countries agree (they should express their intention to extend the treaty not later than September 2, 2020).

Given the current tensions between the two countries, such an extension would be a practical way forward. However even this relatively straightforward step is in doubt. President Trump condemned New START as one of the “bad deals” negotiated under his predecessor (I’m sure that in view of a certain group of US politicians and experts the Treaty is “bad” because it does not contain special limitations for Russian MIRVed and heavy ICBMs). There are also forces in the United States that believe (for different reasons) it is not in the U.S. interests to participate in the START. There is no need to negotiate the extension as some experts think. The Treaty has been ratified and has an Article XIV according to which it may be extended to the period of no more than five years should the parties agree to such an extension. So, the Treaty’s extension is only a matter of political will of the leaders of the U.S. and Russia. Technically the extension will only require the exchange of diplomatic notes.

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Amy Woolf. The Future of Nuclear Arms Control

Relations between the United States and Russia have shifted over time—sometimes in
reassuring and sometimes in concerning ways—yet most experts agree that each nation is the only one that poses, through its arsenal of nuclear weapons, an existential threat to other.

Over the years, the two nations have signed numerous arms control treaties in an effort to restrain and reduce the number and capabilities of their nuclear weapons, but both still deploy more than 1,550 warheads on missiles and bombers that can reach the other nation’s territory. The collapse of the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the possible expiration of the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) in 2021 may signal the end to mutual restraint and limits on such weapons. This reality – that the last treaty restraining U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons may expire in early 2021 – has raised questions about the future of arms control. The near-term question, and the focus of much of this paper, is the debate about whether the United States and Russia can salvage any of the benefits of these two treaties, through either formal agreements or informal cooperation to maintain transparency and restraint in nuclear deployments. The longer-term question is less specific: can the United States and Russia maintain stability, exhibit restraint, and reduce the risk of war if the era of formal arms control treaties has ended?

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Acknowledgements

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About the authors

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**Evgeny Buzhinskiy** - Lieutenant-General (Retired) and a Ph.D. in Military Sciences. Gen. Dr. Buzhinsky is the Chairman of the Executive Board of PIR Center and the Co-Chairman of the *Trialogue* Club International and a Vice President of Russian International Affairs Council. His research areas include political and military aspects of international security, nonproliferation and arms control, Russia-NATO and US-Russia relations, military use of the outer space.

**Amy Woolf** - works for the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress, providing expert information and analysis to Congress on issues related to U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons and arms control. She also speaks to students and other groups outside Congress, providing insights into the role that Congress plays in supporting U.S. nuclear weapons and arms control policies and in providing oversight and funding to U.S. nuclear weapons programs.

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