Negotiating with Putin's Russia: Lessons Learned from a Lost Decade of Bilateral Arms Control

BY MICHAEL ALBERTSON

Livermore Papers on Global Security No. 9
Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
Center for Global Security Research
March 2021

Negotiating with Putin's Russia:
Lessons Learned from a Lost Decade of Bilateral Arms Control

BY MICHAEL ALBERTSON

Livermore Papers on Global Security No. 9
Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
Center for Global Security Research
March 2021

This work was performed under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Energy by Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in part under Contract W-7405-Eng-48 and in part under Contract DE-AC52-07NA27344. The views and opinions of the authors expressed herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the United States government or Lawrence Livermore National Security, LLC.
ISBN: 978-1-952565-10-6 LLNL-TR-818271 LCCN: 2021902659 TID: 60099-21

Table of Contents

About the Authors 4

Preface 5

Introduction. 6

Putin and Arms Control at the Beginning:
The Failure of the Grand Offense–Defense Bargain 13

Putin—the Disillusioned Revisionist 24

Understanding the Misperceptions on Strategic Stability 35

Putin, the Dealmaker? 45

Implications for U.S. Negotiating Strategy. 51

Recommendation 1. Understand the History and Time Dimensions of the Arms Control Negotiations Process. 53

Recommendation 2. Understand Your Negotiating Partner. . . .56

Recommendation 3. Identify Your Goals 60

Recommendation 4. Avoid Taking Something Off the Table Before You Get to the Table 64

Recommendation 5. Come up with a Concrete Proposal that Meets U.S. Security Requirements 67

Recommendation 6. Map Out an Active Negotiating Process 71

Conclusion. 76

About the Authors

Michael Albertson is deputy director of the Center for Global Security Research (CGSR) at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Prior to his current position at CGSR, he served for 16 years in the federal government handling a wide variety of deterrence and arms control-related portfolios for various organizations. From November 2018 to September 2020 he was a senior policy advisor in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) in the Office of Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy, facilitating extended deterrence dialogues with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Asian allies. Before OSD, Mr. Albertson worked as a team lead in the Department of State's Office of Strategic Stability and Deterrence Affairs from 2015 to 2018 on Russian strategic nuclear arms control issues including implementation and compliance of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) and New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) treaties. He served from 2013 to 2014 on the National Security Council Staff as a director for Russia covering Russian military-security issues; from 2010 to 2012 as a policy advisor to the senior advisor for Arms Control and Strategic Stability to the Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) participating in the negotiation, ratification, and implementation of the New START Treaty; and from 2004 to 2010 as an intelligence analyst and then senior intelligence analyst in the Department of Defense studying Russian military capabilities and doctrine. He holds a B.A. in international relations and government from Claremont McKenna College, an M.S. in strategic intelligence from the National Defense Intelligence College, and an M.A. in security policy studies from George Washington University.

Brad Roberts has served as director of the Center for Global Security Research at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory since 2015. From 2009 to 2013, he was deputy assistant secretary of defense for Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy. Prior to entering government service, Roberts was a research fellow at the Institute for Defense Analyses and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, editor of *The Washington Quarterly*, and an adjunct professor at George Washington University. He has a Ph.D. from Erasmus University, The Netherlands.

Preface

Brad Roberts

Every expert on the art of negotiation from Sun Tzu to the Harvard Negotiation Project has preached the virtues of knowing the adversary. The prospects of success in gaining one's objectives in a competitive process are greatly increased if one understands the adversary's objectives and strategy, interests and stake, strengths and weaknesses, and beliefs and anxieties. Yet this lesson seems largely forgotten in the current arms control debate. Arms control experts in the United States have been focused on winning the five-year extension of the New START Treaty and generating a menu of options for a successor agreement. The resulting literature is both voluminous and nearly devoid of evidence that its authors have a robust understanding of the Russian arms control strategy as shaped and led by President Putin.

Happily, the time is ripe to fill this gap in collective knowledge. With New START extension having been won, the policy and expert community can take a longer view. As part of that effort, it can take a fresh look at Putin as a partner/opponent in the arms control negotiating process. Given Putin's longevity, there is plenty to look at. He has been in power through four presidential transitions in the United States (and he may yet witness another three or four if he serves out the full period allowed by the Russian constitution). A careful review of Putin's history as a negotiator can illuminate timely and significant lessons for the United States and the West more generally, as they struggle to shape Putin's choices and "get to yes" on a successor to New START that serves the interests of all concerned.

There is no one better suited to this task than Mike Albertson, whose biography attests to his deep experience on the subject. The arguments presented here were first developed for a CGSR workshop on the future of arms control in summer 2018, where they generated considerable discussion. We are very fortunate that Mike joined CGSR as deputy director in 2020. The views expressed here are his personal views and should not be attributed to the Laboratory or its sponsors.

Introduction

Despite a late flurry of meetings in 2020 between the United States of America and the Russian Federation, it is clear that we have come to the end of a decade with no forward progress on strategic arms control since the Treaty was signed between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START Treaty) on April 8, 2010. In hindsight, we can look back and note that this has been a lost decade marked by extremes of over-optimism and over-skepticism, stymied by a difficult and often misunderstood negotiating partner on the other side of the table. This decade has involved misjudgments by U.S. experts and policymakers in many areas, including: the appeal of the U.S. proposals, the strength of perceived U.S. leverage, the interests of the Russian side, the centrality of arms control in the bilateral relationship, and the strengths and weaknesses of arms control as a tool of national security policymaking. The U.S. side is overdue for a certain degree of self-examination and self-assessment to determine the root causes for the lack of results over the last decade and to find recommendations for making substantive progress in the decade ahead.[1] The beginning of the five-year grace period granted by the recent extension of the New START Treaty is the perfect time for just such a step in the United States.

But in any negotiation where a long-term relationship is at stake both sides must be willing to compromise, and most in the United States would agree that the primary blame for the lack of progress should be laid at the feet of the Russian side. President Vladimir Putin's Russia has taken very strong positions on arms control issues, those positions have hardened over time, and Moscow has shown little flexibility in suggesting practical solutions to its concerns and concerns raised by the United States. There is a barrier blocking arms control,

1 I would like to thank in particular Dr. Brad Roberts, AMB Ron Lehman, Dr. Rob Soofer, Paul Amato, and Matt Rojansky for their support during this effort and their time and attention in reading and providing feedback on previous iterations of this paper. The views expressed here are my personal views and should not be attributed to my employer or any other organization that has been affiliated with this process, including its sponsors.

and no amount of creative thinking in the arms control idea space on potential agreement formats or verification regimes can ignore the fact that this barrier exists across the negotiating table. The U.S. has spent a great deal of time and intellectual energy trying to come up with creative ways to go under the barrier, over the barrier, through the barrier, or around the barrier via generation of new policy proposals, and not enough attention has been paid to analyzing the problem staring us in the face. The current historical moment provides us with a good opportunity to analyze Russia's arms control strategy under Russian President Putin more deeply and to explore why this barrier exists and what can U.S. negotiators do about it.

Most solution sets to the problem of what to do about bilateral U.S.–Russian arms control have tended to fall under two predictable approaches, and successive administrations have tried to implement one or the other with the same lack of results. The first approach—a "reset" approach—is a lengthy recounting of the events that brought us to this point in the bilateral relationship with suggestions of straightforward agreements to begin to repair the relationship. This low-hanging fruit generally includes arms control, that is, something that can be done easily because it is perceived by experts as a historical behavior where the United States and Russia have cooperated in the past to their mutual benefit. As in détente, arms control is seen as a visible marker of a thaw in diplomatic relations and a capstone of bilateral summitry. The second approach—a "peace through strength" approach—lists the myriad bad behaviors of the Russian side and calls for a return to a unilateral military buildup, coupled with a take-it or leave-it negotiating approach. Boiled down, this second approach attempts to recreate the successful Reagan administration approach of the 1980s: the Russians want arms control more than we do, they will go bankrupt if they try to keep up with the United States in military spending, the United States holds all the cards, and thus the United States can force Russia into a one-sided agreement addressing U.S. and allied concerns for little or no cost. Both these approaches—successful during the Cold War—have failed. Russia has refused to be enticed into arms control, and Russia has refused to be threatened into arms control. This suggests a larger problem in assessing the current Russian regime and its approach to arms control.

As George Kennan noted in *The New York Times* op-ed in 1981, understanding the Russians demands a move beyond oversimplifications and towards an appreciation of human psychology. We must understand why they believe what they believe and how those beliefs have evolved over time:

> It is not that there is no truth in many of the things that people say and believe about the Russians; it is rather that what they say and believe involves a great deal of exaggeration and oversimplification. And this is serious, because there are times when exaggeration and oversimplification, being harder than falsehood to spot, can be fully as pernicious...
>
> In a relationship of such immense importance as the Soviet–American one, there should be no room for such extremisms and oversimplifications. Not only do they produce their counterparts on the other side, but they confuse us. They cause us to see as totally unsolvable a problem that is only partly so.
>
> Soviet society is made up of human beings like ourselves. Because it is human, it is complex. It is not, as many of the oversimplifications would suggest, a static, unchanging phenomenon. It too evolves, and the direction in which it evolves is influenced to some degree by our vision of it and our treatment of it.[2]

As Kennan said, the Russian system is "made up of human beings like ourselves," which evolves "by our vision of it and our treatment of it." One man in particular stands at the top of the Russian system. Given that the policies of the current Russian system have been personified by this one man, and given the recent changes to the Russian constitution, it is likely that they will continue to be shaped by him for the foreseeable future, so it makes sense to start any analysis of a potential path forward on arms control with the Russians by looking at Vladimir Putin. By focusing on Putin, one can better understand the long-standing and the evolutionary views in Soviet/Russian strategic thought and the overlapping and often complementary roles of nuclear policy, strategic stability, and arms control. These views are particularly

2 George Kennan, "A Risky U.S. Equation," *The New York Times* (February 18, 1981). https://www.nytimes.com/1981/02/18/opinion/a-risky-us-equation-e.html. Accessed February 8, 2021.

valuable to understand because they will likely outlast him and continue to be influential with any successor in a post-Putin Russia. Like the Soviet Union or czarist Russia, Russia under Putin is not a pure monopolar system: every strong leader has his or her proverbial swords around the throne, with bureaucratic divisions driven by parochial interests. But there is a clear, strong, central figure at the middle of the system, and Putin—given his long tenure in office—has shaped the bureaucracy around him with people who suit his purposes and reflect his views.

Additionally, in the Russian system, nuclear deterrence and its adjunct sphere of arms control negotiations are driven from the top down, making it even more striking that, while there have been many excellent studies done of Putin in power and of the future of arms control, little attention has been paid to matching his thinking, his statements, and his mark on arms control negotiations with future progress. How Putin has evolved on this subject and how he believes he has been treated by the United States in this arena should be the focal point of any analysis of a possible way forward.

This paper posits that, given the Kremlin bureaucratic system and his own lengthy tenure in power, Putin's arms control strategy is for all intents and purposes Russia's arms control strategy, and his arms control strategy has remained largely consistent over his tenure. It is not pro-arms control or anti-arms control; it is instead a reflection of Putin's approach to other areas of Russian national security policy and to the bilateral relationship, with a focus on opportunism rather than any set plan, conflict and mistrust with the United States, and a predilection for tactical short-term gains at the expense of strategic bets on longer-term security solutions. The paper is structured into two halves looking in turn at the opposing sides of the negotiating table, focusing first on Putin and then on how the United States should negotiate with him.

The first half of the paper is devoted to looking more closely at the mentality of Putin and hence Putin's Russia vis-à-vis strategic arms control. This examination addresses a major gap in the literature regarding the past failures in arms control and provides a necessary foundation to inform any future arms control work. The second chapter examines President Vladimir Putin's initial experiences with arms control, including those predating the U.S. withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, to provide some context into how he personally approached the topic of arms control from the very outset

of his administration, what he was attempting to accomplish, and how he perceives he was treated by the U.S. side. The third chapter looks at how and why Putin's, and thus the Russian government's, overall line on arms control has hardened over time into a revisionist "treasuring of grievances." This has resulted in a return to a long-standing Soviet and Russian negotiating tactic with implications for how the United States should approach these issues at the negotiating table. Just as Putin's initial experiences with arms control have an important psychological dimension for how he approaches the topic, so does the treasuring of grievances have an impact on the inability of the larger Russian bureaucracy to adapt to changing circumstances and develop concrete arms control proposals to address its longstanding security concerns. The fourth chapter looks at the concept of strategic stability,[3] and how U.S. and Russian approaches to this topic have affected progress on arms control. Finally, the fifth chapter analyzes whether Putin has been a successful dealmaker on arms control using this negotiating tactic during his tenure. This chapter focuses on the question of whether his approach to arms control, the U.S.–Russian bilateral relationship, strategic stability writ large, and the lack of results in this arena, have in fact improved Russian security.

Following this examination, the challenges of working with this negotiating partner in field of arms control should be better understood. Unfortunately, an increased understanding does not necessarily make it easier to make substantive progress with the Russian side. Many negotiators both overestimate their own persuasive abilities and their own potential leverage at the table, and consequently forgo many of the important steps necessary to adequately frame the issue under negotiation. These steps include understanding the mindset and desires of the negotiating partner, the internal pressures within the other side's negotiating team, the options of regarding available trade space, and the potential range of acceptable outcomes within the negotiation process. Authoritarian regimes become more set in their ways and in-

3 Strategic stability is term that has elicited a great deal of discussion both inside and outside of government circles; however, in this paper it will be used in its most narrow traditional sense, that is, dealing mainly with nuclear weapons strategy and challenges such as first-strike stability and crisis stability. There are many interpretations of strategic stability that have arisen in arms-control-related discussions, including a Russian definition that takes into account broader geopolitics and the overall balance of power. For an excellent study of the various historical interpretations of strategic stability, see Elbridge A. Colby, Michael S. Gerson, eds. *Strategic Stability: Contending Interpretations* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2013).

creasingly inflexible in their approaches, and this tendency should give pause to those who believe a new set of negotiators or a new proposal can quickly change the current climate.

Given the now better-understood but increasingly inflexible mindset on the other side of the negotiating table, the sixth chapter of the paper focuses on what the United States can do to improve its chances for a path forward on arms control with this partner. Many studies on the future of arms control tend to fall into several camps in their recommendations. Some list all the insurmountable problems and conclude that no progress can be made with this partner. Others present a one-sided list of demands, ignoring that in a real negotiation the other side gets a say in the final agreement. Many studies list a set of mutual goals that should be easily achieved, grounded on the belief that Russia shares U.S. objectives and approaches with regards to arms control. This paper takes a different approach, with the main thrust of the recommendations being related to U.S. approach and process. If the Russian side of the table is a constant, then the paper argues that the U.S. side needs to shift its negotiating approach and improve its internal processes if it wants to achieve results. The U.S. approach is what can be changed and thus that is what the focus of recommendations for near-term and long-term progress should be.

The examination of the negotiating partner and some self-assessment about the U.S. approach in this paper is particularly critical at this time because the dynamics on strategic arms control are shifting in a negative direction. Many of the structural benefits that U.S. arms control negotiators have enjoyed in past decades have significantly eroded, particularly the work of previous agreements in framing the issues, the expertise of the long-serving officials in the executive and legislative branches, the constant contact between delegations to clarify positions and find common ground, senior level attention paid to the issue necessary to break logjams, and a strong nuclear modernization program.

The United States' strategic forces have been relatively constant over the past two decades, its strategic modernization program is just beginning, and the funding for its nuclear forces remains hotly debated during each budgetary cycle. At the same time, Russia's hand at the negotiating table has grown stronger as it has successfully implemented its own strategic modernization program and has begun to develop additional nuclear-armed strategic range capabilities. It has rebuilt its de-

fense industrial base for both delivery systems and nuclear warheads. The negotiating dynamics have shifted decisively away from the power advantages enjoyed by U.S. negotiators over much of the last three decades. The core argument of this paper is that, to move forward on arms control in the shrinking window of time remaining, more attention needs to be paid to the negotiations basics—that is, the history, the players, the mindsets, the interests—required in any notional future arms control process. The Russian side is made up of serious negotiators who have long historical memories, deep subject matter expertise, and little professional incentive for compromise with the West. The U.S. side needs to approach the process with the same level of knowledge, preparation, and mentality; exercise a degree of reflection; and set its expectations realistically. Without serious changes in approach, the status quo trajectory as seen over the last decade likely leaves us in a place in the next five years without strategic arms control.

Putin and Arms Control at the Beginning: The Failure of the Grand Offense–Defense Bargain

Any understanding about where Russian strategy is today, including in narrower areas such as arms control, should have two major foundational pillars. The first pillar is an overall understanding of Russian/Soviet historical tradition.[4] Much of the substantive literature on arms control with regards to first the Soviets and then the Russians has traditionally fallen into three main categories: the memoirs, the biographies, and the autobiographies of the primary U.S. interlocutors of the negotiations themselves;[5] broader diplomatic histories, where arms control with the Soviets and Russians plays a role depending on the individual and the era;[6] and the primers on bilateral negotiations and negotiating theory, which are few in number and examine in detail the unique strategic and negotiating culture of the Soviet Union or Russia.[7] The best literature on arms control unsurprisingly is that which combines all three of these elements together. Such a combination of the personal, the historical, and the psychological and cultural dimensions allows the reader to best explore how and why arms control has played such a unique and interesting role in the context of the overall bilateral relationship between the two nuclear great powers over the last fifty plus years. The role of arms control in the bilateral relationship has shifted over time. In the 1960s, it attempted to stabilize a strategic relationship, which had come so close to nuclear war in the Cuban Missile Crisis. In the 1970s, arms control was first the beneficiary and then the victim of the U.S. détente policy with the Brezhnev regime. In the 1980s, after years of frustrations and stalemate, there were the substantive proposals and

4 One fantastic resource is James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: an Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966).

5 For examples of this genre, see John Newhouse's *Cold Dawn, The Story of SALT* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973) or Gerard Smith's *Doubletalk: The Story of SALT I by the Chief American Negotiator* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980).

6 See for example Henry Kissinger's memoirs or Strobe Talbott *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy* (New York: Random House, 2002).

7 Two excellent examples from the 1980s are Raymond Smith's Negotiating with the Soviets (Bloomington, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1989) and Leon Sloss and M. Scott Davis' *A Game for High Stakes: Lessons Learned in Negotiating with the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1986).

breakthroughs of the Reagan–Gorbachev years. Finally in the 1990s, late Cold War successes in arms control were forced to transition into a new post-Cold War world. A knowledge of history provides the reader with insights into both Russian strategic culture as well as recurring situations in history with regards to negotiations and interactions with the West. With some examination of history, very little in dealing with Russia on arms control today turns out to be wholly unique.

The second pillar is an overall understanding of the evolution of an authoritarian leader who has stayed in power for almost two decades, how his thinking on issues was initially conceived, and how this conception evolved or hardened over time based on his experiences. As mentioned previously but always worth highlighting, Russia is not a unipolar state, just as even the Soviet Union with all of its highly centralized command structures was not a unipolar state.[8] Although President Putin is the pre-eminent decision-maker in the Russian system, he has advisers who have their own parochial or organizational interests. There is a functioning government system where organizations within the Russian state raise decisions up for discussion and guidance at the highest levels. These organizations—with often competing defense, diplomatic, intelligence, or domestic equities—compete amongst themselves for the attention of the leadership to bring about their preferred outcomes. This is particularly true of a field like arms control, which cuts across foreign policy, military, scientific, economic, and intelligence fields. Nevertheless, any discussion of Russian strategy, and in this particular case Russian strategy regarding arms control, has to begin with Vladimir Putin: what were his first experiences on directing arms control policy, what did they show about how he viewed the subject, and how did his early experiences shape his thinking on this subject up to the present?

Given his relatively unknown status on assuming the Russian presidency, one could have assumed Putin would need time to get up to speed on arms control and strategic nuclear issues more broadly. After

8 John G. Hines et al., *Soviet Intentions 1965-1985. Volume II: Soviet Post Cold War Testimonial Evidence* (BDM Federal Inc.: September 22, 1995), available at https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB426/docs/22.%20Series%20of%20five%20interviews%20with%20Colonel%20Danilevich%20by%20John%20G.%20Hines-beginning%20December%2018,%201990.pdf. Accessed February 16, 2021. On the Soviet military bureaucratic processes, see also Edward L. Warner III, *The Military in Contemporary Soviet Politics: An Institutional Analysis* (New York: Praeger, 1977).

all, these are highly complex policy fields. He would have had little to no experience in strategic arms control given his background in the Soviet intelligence services in places like East Germany, in domestic politics in the Government of St. Petersburg, in his Moscow career on the presidential staff, director of the Federal Security Service, or in his short stint as prime minister. While his background in the Soviet and Russian intelligence services may have shaped his outlook on dealing with the West and may have provided some insights into strategic nuclear forces related issues, one could expect a steep learning curve for Putin on arms control. A new Russian President Putin would have been expected to be tentative at first on these issues as he got up to speed and deferential to the entrenched defense and foreign policy players on the subject. His mindset would be expected to evolve over time as he learned from experiences both positive and negative and to now be fairly entrenched on the subject given a lengthy tenure in power.

Based on this expected learning curve, the safest approach would be to index Russian arms control policy with the familiar overall narrative arc of Putin's foreign policy relationship with the West. As covered in summaries of U.S.–Russian relations over the last two decades, one would have seen the arms control relationship move up and down with the bilateral relationship: start positive with the high point of the Putin phone call pledging Russian support after the 9/11 attacks, go negative after the U.S. decisions to go to war in Afghanistan and Iraq, harden late in the George W. Bush administration with signposts such the 2007 Munich Speech and the 2008 Russia–Georgia War, rebound with the early "reset" achievements, and then rapidly deteriorate in the wake of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, leading to the low point in the bilateral relationship today. One could assume there would be a correlation between these broader political trends and the key waypoints on arms control: the U.S. unilateral withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, the ratification of the Moscow Treaty, Russian "suspension" of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, the negotiation and ratification of the New START Treaty, and Russia's violation and the subsequent U.S. withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

This story would begin in the somewhat forgotten, but nevertheless extremely important, sliver of history of the U.S. President Bill Clinton–Russian President Vladimir Putin overlap of late 1999 through

early 2001. This to some extent is Putin's arms control origin story, one that defines how he views arms control as fitting into broader Russian security strategy and foreign policy. From this formative experience, one can find the lessons that helped to shape Putin's and thus the current Russian regime's mindset on arms control over the next two decades. Of all the events that would come later, this period is the most important regarding of Putin's thinking on arms control. He came into office with a strong grasp of the issues and likely a mindset of the West, and he had no time for a learning curve. His views on arms control, both as a foreign policy instrument and as a military tool, were formed in an earlier era and have remained remarkably constant over time. Confirmation bias has in fact hardened initial trends and suspicions even more as we will see in the next section. The Putin of the early years has largely been forgotten as the myth of the man has grown over time. As with many long-tenured authoritarian leaders, it is hard for experts to remember them as new to the job; instead, their long tenure in office, as with Putin, leads the commentary toward the all-knowing, all-powerful, playing eight-dimensional chess caricature. It is remarkably instructive however to compare Putin's statements from this early period as to now for their consistency over time. His opinions on the subject were very clear; they simply were not heard. Most importantly, his initial experience with arms control was a misfire, and the fallout and inability to develop a new strategy has caused Russian positions on arms control issues to revert over time into a list of intractable grievances.

Putin came into office December 1999, and almost right away he faced a series of major arms control decision points. First, there was the problem of convincing the Duma to ratify START II, an impediment to any further strategic nuclear arms reductions at a time when Russia's nuclear arsenal and defense industrial base were in serious decline, and Russian conventional force erosion was threatening the breakup of the state. Looking at the Russian Duma now, the idea of legislative approval would not seem like a major issue, but at this point in time, the Duma still had the independent power akin to the U.S. Senate's statutory role in arms control ratification. When Putin arrived in office, he was up against an obstinate legislature that had refused to ratify an agreement signed by Presidents Bush and Yeltsin in January 1993. This longstanding delay by the Russian legislature had led the

U.S. Congress to pass legislation prohibiting unilateral cuts below the levels of START I in the absence of Duma ratification. Second, there was the challenge of the ABM Treaty, a treaty long under strain from the changing security environment and technologies. The expanding desire by the United States to develop theater missile defenses in a treaty-compliant manner to deal with emerging challenges in North Korea and Iran had morphed by March 1999 into a Senate bill. This bill mandated a U.S. policy to "deploy as technologically possible an effective" anti-missile system capable of "defending the territory of the United States." The offer placed on the table by the U.S. side late in 1999—a proposal similar to many attempts to evolve the ABM Treaty in the 1990s—was threefold: (1) the United States would proceed with a limited national missile defense system without violating the ABM Treaty, (2) the ABM Treaty would be amended to make it more relevant in a world with new proliferation threats, and (3) this agreement on missile defense would be paired with even deeper cuts in an accompanying START III agreement.[9] The Russian side would also receive incentives for cooperation in the form of shared early warning data and missile defense interceptor technology.

Looking back with the perspective of twenty years of hindsight, this was the major pivot point in recent U.S.–Russian arms control history, the culmination of roughly a decade of attempted progress to build on the successes of the 1980s and 1990s. The central question was how the new Russian leader would approach this challenge. Putin made a number of early 2000 statements on missile defense and arms control, both with a surprising grasp of the details as well as an ambitious strategic goal: rejecting the fixes proposed by the outgoing Clinton administration. Instead, he wanted to bind the START II/III process with the ABM Treaty process so the United States, perhaps under a more arms control skeptical administration in the future, would not withdraw. According to the Russian desire, the two pillars of the strategic arms control architecture covering both strategic offensive and strategic defensive systems would remain in place, albeit in a form that reflected Russian desires rather than the evolving international security and U.S. domestic political environments. The key data point in this

9 Strobe Talbott, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy* (New York: Random House, 2002), p382.

critical period is Putin's April 15, 2000 speech to the Duma on START II ratification,[10] which perfectly encapsulated, even at this early stage, the role arms control would play in Putin's and Russia's foreign policy and security strategy. This strategy turned out to be both a gamble and an overreach, the failure of which stalled momentum and continues to impact bilateral arms control today.

Again, at this point in the power dynamics, Putin is not ordering the Duma; he is attempting to persuade a recalcitrant legislative branch by walking them through all sides of the case. He notes that there has been a reluctance by the Duma to ratify the START II agreement and that there are more hawkish members who would prefer to stay at the higher START I levels and build more strategic delivery systems. He stated that going to lower numbers was an inevitability given the current state of Russia's nuclear forces, reminding Duma members of the experience and consequences of the Soviet military buildup and economic bankruptcy. Putin argued that the treaty was important for maintaining a correlation of strategic nuclear forces with the American side. He highlighted that there were many systems, such as nonstrategic nuclear weapons and sea-launched cruise missiles, that START II did not capture, where "we and the Americans have approximately the same potential for deploying them." Putin then outlined his larger strategy to the Duma, that ratification on the Duma's terms would create a "unbreakable connection" between START II and ABM, which would stabilize this part of the strategic balance. It would also allow Russia to channel money towards the real threat of local conflicts as "we are all witnessing attempts to wreck Russia right now—they lie in local conflicts, the main threats." Most revealing, however, is the following statement, outlining the central question that should underline all strategic arms control related discussions:

> You and I have to answer two questions: Does this preserve the nuclear shield or not? Does this create the conditions for the development of the armed forces, does this make them more effective or not? The answer to both questions is: Yes. After the adoption of a decision on START II our nuclear forces—nuclear deterrent forces—will be capable at any moment of ensuring the guaranteed destruction of any enemy anywhere

10 "Putin Speech on START Ratification," *Kommersant*, April 15, 2000.

> on the planet many times over. Even if we have to fight—this is scarcely likely even in a nightmare—even if you assume we have to fight against several nuclear powers simultaneously.[11]

This speech reveals some important themes about Putin's approach to arms control, providing broader insights into Russian thinking about arms control in general and where it fits in with broader military goals. First, it is apparent that Putin has an intimate familiarity and deep understanding of his nuclear forces. He references concepts such as the correlation of forces; he knows which systems are in the force and where he wants to go in terms of future systems. He speaks about specifics such as flying hours for strategic bombers, defense expenditure rates for new programs, the poor state of the SS-18 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) industrial complex in Ukraine, and age-out rates of the Soviet legacy systems in the arsenal. Second, Putin recognizes that arms control can serve as a useful tool for addressing geopolitical realities when you face economic challenges and competing urgent military threats. This is not arms control for arms control's sake, nor is arms control for Putin about sharing a podium with the United States as a great power. This is a cold security calculation based on realism, and Russia has demonstrated it has many ways outside of arms control to grab headlines and punch above its geopolitical weight. Third, Putin is openly telling his military industrial base that what is not specifically limited by arms control is fair game—for both sides—in which to compete and seek competitive advantages. While some experts express surprise when Russia develops and deploys systems and capabilities not specifically limited by strategic arms control agreements, it is stated here clearly that mutual restraint and legally binding limitations in certain areas does not forgo competition and the pursuit of potential military advantages in other areas. Fourth, Putin displays the notion of a holistic strategic arms control strategy, the attempt to aggregate and link treaties together for larger security ends—in this case the START II Treaty, the START III process, and the ABM Treaty. Finally, Putin sees the value in using arms control as a geopolitical messaging tool, with discernable advantages to be exploited regardless of the decision made by the other side. Already here Putin is setting the Russian side up for a win–win: either the United States agrees to Russian demands to

11 Ibid.

link further disarmament with "abandoning the course of national anti-missile defenses," or "becoming in the eyes of the whole world the obvious culprit to blame for destroying the basis of strategic stability."[12]

In these five themes, you see the positives and negatives of the next roughly twenty years of arms control in Russian foreign policy and security strategy. Arms control does not exist in a security vacuum for Putin—either from a national security standpoint or an international messaging standpoint. Russian senior leadership is much more closely linked to their defense programs than their Western counterparts, hence the Ministry of Defense, the military, and the defense industry have a larger stake in the negotiations process. Economic challenges or other more pressing conventional and regional security threats exert a powerful influence on Putin's thinking on arms control. Limitations in some areas using arms control and open competition on other military systems can coexist without cognitive dissonance, leading via norm erosion into knowing circumvention and violation in cases like the Krasnoyarsk radar in the ABM Treaty and the SSC-8/9M729 ground-launched cruise missile in the INF Treaty. There is a broader arms control agenda but one that lacks flexibility and responsiveness to other non-U.S. parties or to U.S. domestic politics. The attempt to create an unbreakable link between the START reductions process and the ABM Treaty—and the failure of this attempt—is a point from which Russia's strategic thinking on arms control never really evolved, remaining fixated on a 1970s past with formal bilateral arms control limitations binding strategic offensive systems and strategic defensive systems.

Most importantly, arms control is painted here at a very early stage in Putin's tenure, not as a cooperative process, but as another form of long-term strategic competition. At best it constituted a wary truce in a particular narrow area where a compromise was made: the world was safer, but no one side walked away completely happy with the outcome. This concept would be familiar to anyone who has sat across the negotiating table with the Russians and attempted to come to a mutual agreement. Any arms control agreement with Russia is a series of protracted competitions: from the framing of the problem, to the negotiations, to conforming the text, to the legal interpretations, through the implementation of the agreement itself, and to battles

12 Ibid.

about implementation issues. The strategic messaging here was clear before the fallout of the 2002 U.S. ABM Treaty withdrawal—either accept the Russian proposal, or Russia would paint the United States as the culprit for destroying strategic stability. The Russian side, and Putin himself, places the United States into a dilemma—either continue to self-limit in accordance with the treaty or face international condemnation—while Russia benefits strategically whichever path the United States chooses. It was a masterstroke of tactical negotiating but one that had serious longer-term strategic consequences.

Clear as it may be in retrospect, this was a time when it was difficult to decipher the signals coming out of Moscow and particularly the relatively unknown new president of the Russian Federation. How much of Putin's rhetoric was bluster for a Russian domestic audience or an attempt to hide weakness? How seriously should the U.S. side take Putin's signals? Did Russia have the capability to follow up on its threats? Strobe Talbott commented that Putin, like many other Russian negotiators, was "the master of the oblique refusal," where instead of strongly stating his opposition to things, which the American side could at least easily interpret even if they disagreed, Putin would be more noncommittal. In contrast to Yeltsin's theatrical and emphatic no's, Putin's "that's interesting" would often be misinterpreted as acquiescence if not agreement.[13] There was no time however for the outgoing administration to think through all of these questions in detail on what was a peripheral issue.

Ultimately Putin's initial arms control strategy failed to achieve its desired outcome in attempting to return to an earlier age. Instead, it placed the outgoing U.S. administration into an impossible position where the easiest outcome was not to make a difficult decision. He underestimated the change to a more arms control skeptical U.S. administration and lacked the persuasive skills to shift the new administration's deeply held opinions on missile defense. And he had squandered the window of opportunity presented to make future progress on strategic arms control with a complex gamble linking strategic offense and defense:

> In mid-December [2001], the Bush administration gave up on reaching a compromise and decided to pull the plug on the

13 Talbott, p372.

> ABM Treaty…The president and his team concluded that there would never be a better moment to ride out whatever flak they would take. But they also did everything they could to help Putin cope with the inescapable impression that Russia, yet again, had been told to shut up and eat its spinach.[14]

This metaphor of being told to "shut up and eat spinach" is an apt conclusion to Putin's origin story with U.S. arms control, and a few trends emerge here that will be repeated over the remainder of this piece. The first is the Russian tendency to misread U.S. domestic politics and the increasing partisanship of U.S. arms control thinking. Rather than a search for short-term opportunism and compromise or a longer-term approach to building trust with its negotiating partner, the Russian side tends to stick to hard positions until the last moment, always assuming there is a better deal to be had. While Russian movement on longstanding issues can be rapid at the end of a negotiations, often the sides do not have the patience to get to this point in the process. The second was the failure to anticipate that the United States will call bluffs; it is willing to walk away from agreements, even a long-standing one that has been viewed as a pillar of the bilateral relationship. The third is that the established rules on arms control do not necessarily matter in terms of global condemnation. The war of words on the ABM Treaty withdrawal was at the time largely confined to small circles of policymakers and experts without any larger scale fallout in the bilateral relationship or in a country's standing as a great power, a trend which Russia later exploited with abandon on other treaties like its "suspension" of the CFE Treaty, its violation of the core tenet of the INF Treaty on producing and flight-testing ground-launched missiles, and its selective implementation of the Open Skies Treaty. Fourth, it sets missile defense up as Putin's dominant focus in arms control. Despite the many attempts of the United States over the last two decades to reach an amicable resolution on missile defense outside of a legally binding agreement centered on restrictions and limitations, the ABM Treaty remained the rigid standard—one which the United States could not permit and the Russians could not forget. Finally, it is instructive that Putin, for all of his understanding about Russian military systems and the concept of strategic stability, fundamentally misread

14 Talbott, p418.

the situation and failed to exploit a window of opportunity to reach an agreement that would have gone a long way to resolving one of the great Russian worries of the last two decades in unconstrained U.S. missile defenses. Some agreement on missile defense would have been preferable to none. He is not infallible, and as Talbott noted:

> As for Putin himself, I wondered if he had second thoughts about the wisdom of his decision to stiff Clinton on the package of amendments to the ABM treaty and offensive reductions that the U.S. had been prepared to offer Russia in 2000. It might have been harder for Bush to make a clean sweep of SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks), START, and the whole institution of negotiated, legally binding agreements if he'd inherited from Clinton an agreement rather than an impasse caused by Russian stonewalling.[15]

Unfortunately, it was this technique of stonewalling that would be the dominant theme in Russian negotiating strategy over much of the next two decades.

15 Talbott, p419-420.

Putin—the Disillusioned Revisionist

In the 1951 compendium *Negotiating with the Russians*, Professor Philip Mosely, founder and director of the Russian Institute at Columbia University and a State Department advisor, authored a chapter titled, "Some Soviet Techniques of Negotiations," which was often cited during the Cold War for its insights into Soviet negotiating behavior.[16] Among other observations from his experiences, Mosely identified the Soviet technique of:

> The treasuring of grievances—where the Soviet official covers up his own aggressive behavior and lack of substantive proposals by piling on grievances, real or imaginary, against the negotiating adversary usually amid disconcerting ripostes and accusations of bad faith.[17]

An offensive negotiating strategy masking itself as a defensive one, the treasuring of grievances proved very effective when facing a negotiator operating under traditional Western negotiating instructions to reduce friction points, seek the middle ground, quickly reach a mutually beneficial agreement, and move on to the next agenda topic.

The power in the technique was the itemization of a huge backlog of issues that needed to be dealt with in addition to the item on the immediate agenda. It distracted or deflected attention from the complaints by the other side. It also created additional time pressures on the other side to get issues resolved, which typically was successful given the political time constraints facing Western negotiating partners. Mosely noted that this technique would often be followed by the "head-against-stone wall" technique—where the Soviet negotiator would build up a sufficiently impressive and protective record by erecting a massive wall of long-standing grievances. The Western negotiator, given the intractability of his opponent, would simply be left feeling like he or she was beating

16 Philip E. Mosely, "Some Techniques on Negotiations with the Soviets," in Raymond Dennett and Joseph E. Johnson, eds., *Negotiating with the Russians* (Boston: World Peace Foundation; 1961), p271-304.

17. Ibid., p281-282.

a head against a stone wall trying to make progress on the single issue on the agenda. Again, given the noted differences in U.S. and Soviet/Russian negotiating styles, this technique has proven remarkably effective in delaying discussions the Russians do not want to have, forcing the other side to feel the impact of time and thus moderate its positions, and magnify the perceived negotiating leverage of Russian-held issues.[18]

In arms control and strategic stability, as in any other field of the bilateral relationship, Russian grievances or criticisms have certainly been treasured over the decades.[19] These threads have accumulated over time, with some dating as far back as the late 1960s, and they have been woven together into a narrative that is sharpened by repetition into a few key themes. Much of the narrative we see today was presaged by President Putin in 2000, although it is a listing that continues to evolve over time as more challenges compound in the bilateral relationship, and history grows ever more revisionist in what led to this point in time. These grievances are not mere propaganda, which can simply be hand waved away as the two sides sit down at the negotiating table. This narrative is a powerful one—raw in their minds; deep-seated; confirmed by broader themes in Russian history and national security policy; and filled with heavy emotional connotations of lies, disrespect, and power dynamics. A 2015 article from *The Atlantic* provides an excellent description of the concept of narrative psychology:

> In the realm of narrative psychology, a person's life story is not a Wikipedia biography of the facts and events of a life, but rather the way a person integrates those facts and events internally—picks them apart and weaves them back together to make meaning. This narrative becomes a form of identity, in which the things someone chooses to include in the story, and the way he tells it, can both reflect and shape who he is. A life story doesn't just say what happened, it says why it was important, what it means for who the person is, for who they'll become, and for what happens next.[20]

18 These styles are outlined in wonderful detail in *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior: Emerging New Context for U.S. Diplomacy, Special Studies Series on Foreign Affairs Issues, Volume I* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1979).

19 It is worth noting that for some on the U.S. side, the narrative history of arms control also resembles a treasuring of grievances but with the obverse of Russia as the bad actor in place of the United States.

20 Julie Beck, "Life Stories," *The Atlantic*, August 10, 2015. https://www.theatlantic.com/health archive/2015/08/life-stories-narrative-psychology-redemption-mental-health/400796/. Accessed February 9, 2021.

With Russia, the narrative psychology as whole for the country can be accurately represented by that of President Putin and his mindset, and this narrative about the existing arms control framework has been one of grievances. For anyone engaging in arms control negotiations, it is a mindset that must be heard and understood, even if there is a stark disagreement in the content.

To illustrate the role of a narrative of grievances for Putin, there is no better example than the stories he told at the podium of the Valday Club. There are two points of interest in the Valday remarks: timing and audience. First, the timing of the Valday remarks cited here came at a point where arms control had largely stalled as a policy driver in the bilateral relationship. The negotiation and ratification of the New START Treaty, coupled with a strong commitment to U.S. strategic triad modernization in 2009 and 2010, was intended to be the first step in a robust arms control agenda. Using formats such as the U.S.–Russian Bilateral Presidential Commission with its many attendant working groups, the United States intended to tackle many of strategic stability and arms control related challenges. The next several years were spent on attempts at a mutual understanding on U.S. missile defense; a way forward on conventional arms control in Europe; and a proposal by President Obama in Berlin, Germany, in June 2013, to reduce deployed strategic nuclear weapons by one third and pursue reductions on U.S.–Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.[21] All of these initiatives failed, although these were seemingly areas where the Russians had longstanding concerns and where the Russians would have benefitted more from a deal, no matter how small, rather than no deal at all. Therefore, it is useful to try and understand why this failure occurred, and why this failure may have been due more to the hardening of Putin's thinking and the Russian narrative over the intervening years as opposed to a lack of effort or imagination on the part of the United States. Productive negotiations in any sphere often fail to materialize because one of the partners in the negotiation is either uncooperative or unreasonable.

The second point of interest with the talk to the Valday Club is the audience. This event is noteworthy for its invitations to outside

21 The White House, "Remarks by President Obama at the Brandenburg Gate—Berlin, Germany," June 19, 2013. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/19/remarks-president-obama-brandenburg-gate-berlin-germany. Accessed February 16, 2021.

Russia experts to come and have a question-and-answer session with the Russian President. So rather than a Duma speech focused on an internal domestic audience, here there is a clear attempt to influence the outside expert community, to distract and deflect blame away from Russia for a lack of progress on arms control and strategic stability issues. Reading remarks such as these should be viewed objectively, as signposts and indicators of Russian thinking. A treasuring of grievances—and the extreme repetition, hardening, and mistruths that often accompany them—tend to lead some to dismissal of the grievances as propaganda. This tendency has increased over time as many of these themes have been highlighted continually since 2002 and have been in the public's eye since Putin's condemnatory speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007. By viewing these remarks objectively, however, one looking with an eye to future negotiations cannot only track evolutions over time in the nuances of the major grievances, and thus the major discussion points of any future negotiation, but can also attempt to assess the value the other side places on each of these grievances.

At Valday in 2014, President Putin displayed a hardening of the disillusionment he experienced with arms control early in his tenure in a speech titled, "The World Order: New Rules or a Game without Rules?"[22] Pointing at the United States' actions on missile defense, he underlined that:

> From here emanates the next real threat of destroying the current system of arms control agreements. And this dangerous process was launched by the United States of America when it unilaterally withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002, and then set about and continues today to actively pursue the creation of its global missile defense system.

He noted that Russia did not start this trend and argued that the world was shifting where "instead of the balance of interests and mutual guarantees, it is fear and the balance of mutual destruction that prevent nations from engaging in direct conflict."[23] Putin then used the familiar Russian tactic of expressing openness to engage while high-

22 Putin's Remarks at Valday Conference, October 24, 2014. http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/23137. Accessed February 9, 2021.

23 Ibid.

lighting the destabilizing actions by the other side that prevents such an engagement, all the while failing to outline a concrete proposal:

> We insist on continuing talks; we are not only in favour of talks, but insist on continuing talks to reduce nuclear arsenals. The less nuclear weapons we have in the world, the better. And we are ready for the most serious, concrete discussions on nuclear disarmament—but only serious discussions without any double standards.
>
> What do I mean? Today, many types of high-precision weaponry are already close to mass-destruction weapons in terms of their capabilities, and in the event of full renunciation of nuclear weapons or radical reduction of nuclear potential, nations that are leaders in creating and producing high-precision systems will have a clear military advantage. Strategic parity will be disrupted, and this is likely to bring destabilization. The use of a so-called first global pre-emptive strike may become tempting. In short, the risks do not decrease, but intensify.[24]

The remarks at the 2015 Valday conference repeated the concerns about both the capabilities and intentions of the other side, again fixating on missile defense as the single most important issue for the Russian side. The first ballistic missile defense test in Europe, which occurred just two days prior to the conference, was "about an attempt to destroy the strategic balance, to change the balance of forces in [the United States'] favor not only to dominate, but to have the opportunity to dictate their will to all."[25] Putin continued on this point concerning U.S. missile defense and conventional strike capabilities, U.S. attempts at unilateral domination, imbalances in the global system, U.S. desires for a disarming first strike, U.S. deception concerning the true target of missile defenses, and a reminder of the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty.[26] These Valday conference remarks again served as a visceral display of the treasuring of grievances strategy regarding strategic stability and arms control. One, they distracted attention from Russian actions, whether its own record on arms control compliance or its ag-

24 Ibid.

25 "Putin Meets with Members of the Valday Discussion Club," October 22, 2015. https://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/vladimir-putin-meets-with-members-of-the-valdai-discussion-club-transcript-of-the-final-plenary-sess/. Accessed February 9, 2021.

26 Ibid.

gression against its European neighbors. Two, it built a significant wall of Russian issues that would need to be addressed by any Western negotiator attempting to make concrete progress on resolving issues. Third, it reinforced the Russian narrative of itself as a long-term victim. Finally, it provided little in the way of a concrete proposal for a viable way forward; it placed the onus firmly on the other side to make amends or make an opening gambit.

The best example of this treasuring of grievances narrative can be found in President Putin's March 1, 2018, speech, where Putin's overarching strategic narrative was overlooked by the attention surrounding the so-called Russian novel systems mentioned immediately thereafter in the speech. Like his comments at Valday in the previous years, it was clearly meant for an external audience. It is worth reading and examining in some detail as the clearest recent articulation of Putin's perception of arms control in Russian national security policy and the bilateral relationship:

> Back in 2000, the U.S. announced its withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Russia was categorically against this…
>
> We did our best to dissuade the Americans from withdrawing from the treaty. All in vain. The U.S. pulled out of the treaty in 2002. Even after that we tried to develop constructive dialogue with the Americans. We proposed working together in this area to ease concerns and maintain the atmosphere of trust. At one point, I thought that a compromise was possible, but this was not to be. All our proposals, absolutely all of them, were rejected. And then we said that we would have to improve our modern strike systems to protect our security. In reply, the U.S. said that it is not creating a global BMD system against Russia, which is free to do as it pleases, and that the U.S. will presume that our actions are not spearheaded against the U.S.
>
> The reasons behind this position are obvious. After the collapse of the USSR, Russia, which was known as the Soviet Union or Soviet Russia abroad, lost 23.8 percent of its national territory, 48.5 percent of its population, 41 of the GDP, 39.4 percent of its industrial potential (nearly half of our potential, I would underscore), as well as 44.6 percent of its military capability due to the division of the Soviet Armed Forces among the former Soviet republics. The military equipment of the Russian

army was becoming obsolete, and the Armed Forces were in a sorry state…

Apparently, our partners got the impression that it was impossible in the foreseeable historical perspective for our country to revive its economy, industry, defence industry and Armed Forces to levels supporting the necessary strategic potential. And if that is the case, there is no point in reckoning with Russia's opinion, it is necessary to further pursue ultimate unilateral military advantage in order to dictate the terms in every sphere in the future.

Basically, this position, this logic, judging from the realities of that period, is understandable, and we ourselves are to blame. All these years, the entire 15 years since the withdrawal of the United States from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, we have consistently tried to reengage the American side in serious discussions, in reaching agreements in the sphere of strategic stability.

We managed to accomplish some of these goals. In 2010, Russia and the U.S. signed the New START treaty, containing measures for the further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms. However, in light of the plans to build a global anti-ballistic missile system, which are still being carried out today, all agreements signed within the framework of New START are now gradually being devaluated, because while the number of carriers and weapons is being reduced, one of the parties, namely, the U.S., is permitting constant, uncontrolled growth of the number of anti-ballistic missiles, improving their quality, and creating new missile launching areas. If we do not do something, eventually this will result in the complete devaluation of Russia's nuclear potential. Meaning that all of our missiles could simply be intercepted.

Despite our numerous protests and pleas, the American machine has been set into motion, the conveyer belt is moving forward. There are new missile defence systems installed in Alaska and California; as a result of NATO's expansion to the east, two new missile defence areas were created in Western Europe: one has already been created in Romania, while the deployment of the system in Poland is now almost complete. Their range will keep increasing; new launching areas are to be created in Japan and South Korea. The U.S. global missile

> defence system also includes five cruisers and 30 destroyers, which, as far as we know, have been deployed to regions in close proximity to Russia's borders. I am not exaggerating in the least; and this work proceeds apace.
>
> So, what have we done, apart from protesting and warning? How will Russia respond to this challenge? This is how.[27]

This statement highlights many of the pervasive themes in Russians narratives regarding arms control and strategic stability. First is the overwhelming emphasis on missile defense and the U.S. ABM Treaty withdrawal as the root of all evils in this area of the bilateral relationship. According to the Russian narrative, the United States purposefully does not limit the things that are most destabilizing, therefore the United States must be seeking a unilateral advantage or first strike capacity. This singular focus on missile defense remains puzzling to U.S. interlocutors when taken at face value given the small numbers of interceptors deployed by the United States since the demise of the ABM Treaty, as well as the near continuous efforts made by U.S. policymakers to reach some sort of understanding with the Russians outside of a legally binding treaty on missile defense. But as tool for the treasuring of grievances, missile defense and the U.S. ABM Treaty withdrawal have taken on an outsized importance independent of the facts. Second is the Russian obsession with the perceptions of betrayal, rejection, and weakness over the last twenty years: most arms control treaties are now retroactively framed as political concessions by weak Soviet/Russian leaders to appease the West. The perception is that the United States wants to do things unilaterally, whether by imposing one-sided agreements or by withdrawing from existing arrangements such as the ABM Treaty or the INF Treaty. The United States is also accused of unilaterally interpreting legal obligations under existing treaties such as the New START Treaty to renegotiate key provisions, resting on a longstanding Russian grievance that the United States has a stable of lawyers capable of reinterpreting any treaty provision to achieve a tactical advantage. Finally, there is the emphasis on building new strategic systems and modernizing the Russian defense industrial base as the only demonstrable ways Russia can counter the threat and be taken seriously in

27 "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly," March 1, 2018. http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957. Accessed February 10, 2021.

the international affairs.

As a short aside, it is interesting to note that the Russian treasuring of grievances is the reverse of the critiques so often made about arms control in the United States—that the United States is out-negotiated and outplayed by the Russians when it comes to arms control negotiations. The Russian narrative is one of frustration at the strength and craftiness of its negotiating partners, a testament to the efficacy of U.S. negotiators when they come to the table prepared for a substantive dialogue. Putin's narrative is largely bereft of positive ideas, either on how arms control could evolve over time or a concrete proposal on resolving issues. It hides the lack of forward progress behind the excuse that the other side is inherently untrustworthy. This is not a narrative that stresses masterful Russian arms control negotiators taking advantage of naïve U.S. policymakers as you would gather from U.S. critiques of arms control, but one where the existing regime was imposed—not negotiated, imposed—by the United States to the detriment of Russian national security. Many of the familiar themes floating around in the discussions on this subject in terms of preparing the negotiating battlefield—capabilities as leverage, time as a pressure, who "wants" arms control more, the importance of the showpiece signing ceremony—ignore the emotional nature of how this issue has evolved in Putin's thinking and hence Russia's national security thinking on this subject.

Russia's position has effectively hardened over time and has been coupled with a sustained emphasis on nuclear modernization. As seen in Putin's speeches, Russia does not need or even necessarily want arms control and, more importantly, does not believe that it has a weak hand to play. Seeing themselves as ignored at the negotiating table or the global stage, Russia has built nuclear-capable systems, capabilities that have been acquired at great cost in money, time, and domestic economics. While some view these systems as simple trade chips for a negotiation, these capabilities paradoxically become harder rather than easier to trade the more entrenched these systems become in Russia's political rhetoric, budgets, defense industry, and operational planning. If the prevailing Russian narrative, for example, is that the INF Treaty eliminated a class of systems that were vital to Soviet/Russian military security, it would be extremely difficult to explain why these systems were developed solely to be used as trade chips at the negotiating table.

The Russian political system also lacks time pressures and bureaucratic turnover as occurs in the United States. It has a much longer time

horizon in which to operate, with an attendant longer-term perspective on how to use arms control and nuclear deterrence as tools of national security. With arms control negotiations often being viewed in the United States as a sprint either at the beginning or end of four-year terms, the Russians are not under the same pressures for short-term results, particularly given the requirement to check the boxes on their long-held list of grievances. Putin has been in office for two decades and more than likely will continue to be in office for the foreseeable future; even if he leaves office, his successor would have lived twenty years under this mindset. Putin can afford to wait out an U.S. administration or two to see if the terms of a potential agreement change. Senior Russian bureaucrats do not rotate in and out of government with a change in party. While there might be minor changes in Russian personnel as people move between departments, there are not dramatic shifts in personnel or preferences regarding arms control as in the United States. It is a field that attracts and retains talented Russian diplomats and thinkers, experts in dealing with the United States and broader geopolitics in bilateral and multilateral settings. Finally, arms control in this treasuring of grievances narrative is not depicted in a positive light. It is not viewed as something Russia "wants" but, instead in Moscow's revisionist history, as something Russia endures. While some may view this as propaganda, akin to a customer mocking the condition of the used car on the lot he wants to buy to drive down the price, the passion and repetition of the treasuring of grievances likely reveals the true nature of Russian thinking on this issue. This should serve as a cautionary note to any negotiator who thinks that the next round of negotiations will be without effort or some cost.

This chapter and the preceding one have provided the basic outlines of the origins and the evolution of Putin's thinking on arms control. This thinking, shaped by experiences early in his tenure and emotionally colored by his belief that the United States does not and will not listen to the security concerns of the Russian side, is now firmly entrenched in Russian talking points from Putin's own speeches to those of Russian interlocutors in Track 2 dialogues. This inflexibility is the barrier staring U.S. policymakers in the face across the negotiating table. Russia is not interested in arms control for the sake of diplomacy or in further reductions or more limitations on systems for the sake of risk reduction or international applause. For Putin and his officials, arms control

is another realm of geopolitical competition with the United States. If the United States wants something from Russia security-wise at the negotiating table, Putin has signaled that the opening bid will be a high one. The next chapter discusses the trade chips at the next negotiating table: what Russia desires in arms control negotiations, how these desires differ from that of the United States, and why trades have been problematic with Putin.

Understanding the Misperceptions on Strategic Stability

The hardening of Putin's views over time via the treasuring of grievances explains one of the major reasons why making a deal with him is so difficult. However, it fails to explain why Putin has rejected a series of smaller deals with the United States over the past two decades that would have provided transparency and increased security for Russia. The answer to this challenge lies in the broader Russian and U.S. misunderstandings related to strategic stability, where a prevailing tendency to ignore the harder immediate issues in favor of less immediate but more complex challenges has stymied progress and fostered mistrust. There was a fascinating, and unfortunately largely forgotten, three volume Special Studies Series done by the Congressional Research Series in 1979 (*Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior: Emerging New Context for U.S. Diplomacy)*, 1988 (*Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior, 1979–1988: New Tests for U.S. Diplomacy)*, and 1991 (*Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior, 1988–1990: Gorbachev–Reagan–Bush Meetings at the Summit)*. The purpose of the series was to holistically examine the implications of the Soviet approach to diplomacy and negotiation for U.S. foreign policy, as well as "provide valuable insights to U.S. negotiators in their present and future negotiations as to the motivations, concerns, and reasons for the operating style of their Soviet counterparts."[28]

Given its importance in the overall bilateral relationship, arms control negotiations played a significant part in this study, although it also included examinations of establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, World War II negotiations on Lend Lease, military operations, the post-war political settlement, and trade negotiations. The primary permanent aspect of Soviet diplomacy and negotiations that these studies emphasized was the Russian obsession with security, rooted deep in the national character of Russia. Documenting the experiences of Ambassadors Kennan, Smith, and Beam, the study noted the historical bases:

28 Congressional Research Service, *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior: Emerging New Context for U.S. Diplomacy* (Washington, DC, Library of Congress, 1979), pIII.

> The centuries long Tartar conquest; the reality of Russia, an imperial entity created from other nations and contiguous territories; the vulnerability of the open plains; the deep-rooted xenophobia and feeling of inferiority…nourished a sense of insecurity that could only find satisfaction in the building of large military forces.[29]

This insecurity was heightened by periodic foreign invasions, fears of Western or capitalist encirclement, economic collapse and revolution, and more recently the threat of nuclear war.

Given this underlying insecurity, the conclusions section of these volumes ask the reader to examine whether the Russians will ever feel secure, whether it was ever possible for Russia to achieve security through diplomacy and negotiations, or would Russia be left to solely depend on its domestic military strength for survival. This pervasive sense of mistrust and overwhelming focus on a defined metric of security are no surprise to negotiators who have attempted to work with the Russians on areas of arms control and strategic stability. There has been a significant cross-pollination of ideas on strategic stability between the United States and Russia. It is a mistaken idea to think that the two sides cannot reach agreement on these issues because Americans do not understand what the Russians value most in relation to strategic stability or vice versa, or that a lack of available information or expertise explains all the problems between the United States and Russia on this topic. There is certainly no lack of available information to understand the topics, or for either side to understand how U.S. and Russian history and geography impact their respective thinking. Russian experts read U.S writings, and American scholars read Russian articles; experts interact in various Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues. The challenges are the serious disagreements in the various conclusions drawn by each side about the root cause of problems, which are further exacerbated by the significant political and cultural biases that both sides use to filter the incoming information.

As a simplistic cognitive framework for looking at U.S.–Russian strategic stability, the most easily understandable approach is to look at it as largely quantitatively based, i.e., some form of algebraic equation akin to a correlation of forces analysis. On one side of the equation are

29 Ibid., p517.

Russian forces; on the other are American forces. There are variables for both sides corresponding with all of the major factors affecting the strategic stability balance:

- Some of these variables are *known*—New START for example in the biannual data declaration provides a snapshot of the numbers of ICBMs, submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), heavy bombers, and the deployed warheads on each side, and these are informed throughout the year by using data from inspections and notifications.
- Some of these variables are *estimated*—estimated variables can include things like ICBM reliability rates, missile defense interceptor velocity at burnout speed, and range capabilities—estimates that either remain largely constant over time or can be updated rapidly based on testing or technological breakthroughs.
- Some of these variables are *guesswork*—the impact of cyber or space capabilities on the strategic nuclear balance are often factored in or left out as needed. More often than not these variables are listed as potential "X" factors and listed as major concerns but can never be formally quantified.

These variables—one's own capabilities and the variables increasing or decreasing their reliability on one side, the other side's respective calculation on the other side—form the two sides of the equation to provide a numerical solution that each side is either comfortable with or not. This is the quantitative heart of the strategic stability question for Russia, the predicted retaliatory force, and the comfort level of whether that it is sufficient and reliable enough to deter the United States. Unfortunately, however, no matter how much information one has, this kind of equation is always going to involve objective and subjective components; while it can provide a general impression, there are too many unknowns to provide a one hundred percent satisfactory answer, and one side is always searching for a margin of comfort which, to the other side, may look like a search for unilateral advantage. The variables one knows are constantly changing, as more systems are produced, systems age and grow less reliable, or capabilities improvements are deployed. There are so many variables and so many unknowns that

there will always to be a major element of personal assessment involved in just building the equation much less interpreting the data.

The point where this quantitative U.S.–Russia strategic stability analysis goes astray is in the subjective analysis. This issue arises in one sense when analyzing the results of the objective equation, where analysts' personal thinking as they assemble the equation or the perspective and biases of the policymakers hearing this analysis come more and more into play. Given that this strategic stability balance is an equation that is both vitally important for national security but also full of uncertainties, there is a natural tendency to try to inject more certainty into the process. Those tendencies fall into familiar patterns of either manipulating the data in the equation or creating new capabilities or knowns on your side of the equation to balance out unknowns on the other side of the equation. First, there is a tendency to massage the variables in the equation to support your side's preferred policy outcome. This is in line with the frequent Russian inflation of U.S. missile defense interceptor capabilities to justify increased spending on systems and countermeasures. Second, there is a tendency to create new variables to add to the equation and hopefully redress a perceived imbalance. Here one could list the Russian novel systems or any new Russian dual-capable substrategic range system. Third, there is a tendency to create new variables endowed with game-changing abilities. A few examples are the Cold War strategic stability analyses on balance-altering factors like missile throw weight and civil defense construction, or the current focus on emerging domains like space and cyber. Finally, there is the tendency to couple low-probability, high-impact events together to create a perfect storm scenario. Thus, while a force may be capable in 99.99% of scenarios, it must be built to handle every imaginable contingency or catastrophic technical failures. Time and time again historically in the bilateral relationship, largely subjective opinions have emerged based on quantitative modeling (there is a missile gap, or a bomber gap, or a window of vulnerability) and which crystallize to a point when it becomes the objective fact.

The subjective analysis goes further astray when one side fundamentally mistrusts his negotiating partner. While data about the other side must always questioned, it is the other side's intentions that are most suspect. It is one of the more fundamental challenges related to any negotiation: how can you make lasting deals with a dif-

ficult and possibly untrustworthy negotiating partner? The question about this personal element is how we come to the idea of Putin as a dealmaker. First, the U.S. side must recognize that perceptions of the United States and the strategic balance are historically ingrained into respective cultures and virtually no amount of dialogue can alter these perceptions. This is especially true for President Putin and the current generation of Russian leaders, whose views of the United States and strategic stability were etched in the humiliation of the collapse of the Soviet Union, were exacerbated in the perceived slights of the 1990s, and have hardened over the last twenty years into a list of grievances.

For today's crop of Russian leaders like Putin, the United States is an aggressive military power, supported by a highly unified bloc of client states. Their perception is that the United States is conducting the economic preparations for a new war with Russia, whipping up war hysteria when needed to fund its increased military spending. Aggressive blocs like NATO maintain large armed forces constantly ready for combat on Russia's borders, and NATO has officially adopted a sword and shield strategy combining offensive and defensive capabilities. NATO, aware that its forces are inadequate for waging a large-scale war in Europe, is laying the groundwork for rapid mobilization and deployment of large forces into the theater. Stymied in its attempt to attain nuclear superiority by Russia's own increased nuclear spending, the United States instead relies on treachery, adventurism, and surprise attack with all modern weapons to achieve its military objectives. This includes using systems in outer space to achieve the necessary superiority for a surprise attack. American strategy is based on a surprise attack with all available forces and means, after effectively mobilizing and prepositioning its forces on Russia's borders, while at the same time it builds an integrated missile defense complex to blunt any surviving Russian forces. This is demonstrated in U.S. defense spending which focuses on systems built for this exact purpose, such as strategic strikes aircraft, intercontinental missiles, intermediate-range missiles, carrier task forces, and missile carrying ships. While this rhetoric would be reminiscent of a Valday speech given its familiar themes in Russian rhetoric over the last twenty years, it would be even more surprising to note all of this above comes from V. D. Sokolovskii's 1962 book *Soviet Military Strategy*, specifically the chapter on "War Plans of

the Imperialists and Their Possible Methods for Initiating a New War."[30] To achieve any sort of understanding of the thinking behind Russia's rhetoric and capabilities development, any serious analysis must forego the temptation to believe that Russia's thinking about the United States and its intentions is somehow linked to something singular or recent. Recent activities can certainly exacerbate or reinforce the deep-seated strains of analysis and thinking in Russia, but this is largely because of confirmation bias. It should not be surprising given this thinking that Putin is reticent to make deals with the United States, no matter how favorable they may appear on the surface.

Nor should experts assume that this deep and abiding mistrust of the other side is confined to Russian leaders. The United States also holds a deep suspicion related to the Russian challenges to strategic stability, and this tends to increase the longer President Putin stays in power. The U.S. has the perhaps misguided hope that things would change with a new Russian leader, and Putin's long tenure in the Kremlin gives him a reputation as a man who plays chess while others play checkers. For U.S. leaders, Russia is trying to undermine the political utility and credibility of U.S. nuclear forces and is seeking to create an environment in which other instruments of their grand strategy, including overwhelming regional dominance, can better be brought to bear. Russia believes that the best way to paralyze U.S. strategic capabilities is by assuring that the outcome of any nuclear exchange will be as favorable to Russia as possible. Every new Russian weapons program can be blessed with a panoply of potentialities for coercive leverage, regardless of the actual capabilities of the system.[31] And if, for whatever reason, deterrence was to fail, Russia could resort to the use of nuclear weapons to fight and win a nuclear war. Increasingly, U.S. rhetoric resembles something out of the 1976 "Team B" report:

> Russian leaders are first and foremost offensively rather than defensively minded. They think not in terms of nuclear stability, mutual assured destruction, or strategic sufficiency, but of an effective nuclear warfighting capability. Russia believes that the

30 V. D. Sokolovskii, *Soviet Military Strategy* (Rand Corporation, R-416-PR, April 1963). https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R416.html. Accessed February 10, 2021.

31 Atlantic Council, "Russia's Exotic Nuclear Weapons and Implications for the United States and NATO," March 2020. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/russias-exotic-nuclear-weapons-and-implications-for-the-united-states-and-nato/. Accessed February 10, 2021.

> probability of a general nuclear war can be reduced by building up one's own strategic forces, but that it cannot be altogether eliminated, and that therefore one has to be prepared for such a war if it were unavoidable and be ready to strike first if it appears imminent. There are many factors one can cite—the proliferation and hardening of C3 networks, preparations for civil defense, their military buildup at the expense of the country's standard of living, Russia's cynical approach to arms control while we self-constrain—that support these conclusions.[32]

Again, the lesson here is not to assume that it is recent events, like the 2014 Russian Military Doctrine or invasion of Ukraine or Putin's March 2018 speech, that drive U.S. thinking about President Putin and strategic stability.

Three tendencies have derailed the utility of the simple strategic stability construct as a driver for future arms control spadework. The first is the tendency to avoid negotiations on the difficult issues in the narrow strategic nuclear dimension of strategic stability. Instead, what has happened over time is that the real challenges to further progress are both readily apparent but dismissed as unsolvable. Rather than making progress on the limited and thus more manageable field of nuclear-related strategic stability issues, people in search of a way forward or a way out choose to expand the notion of strategic stability talks to incorporate a broader and more unmanageable set of issues, and then once expanded, dismiss the very concept of strategic stability as something either unwieldy or outdated. In the past, grievances were similarly aggregated in political discussions. But given the expertise in the system and the political pressure to achieve progress, difficult issues would eventually be isolated and discussed in separate negotiating technical tracks.

Given the lack of progress, this no longer appears to be a recipe for negotiating success. The treasuring of grievances as a negotiating tactic has not resulted in meaningful useful progress for the Russian side, yet these grievances have become so entrenched in Russian thinking so as to undermine the potential for creative thought on the problem set. Missile defense remains the biggest issue for the Russians, but

32 Central Intelligence Agency, "Soviet Strategic Objectives: An Alternative View Report of Team B," p2-3. http://www.faqs.org/cia/docs/46/0000278531/SOVIET-STRATEGIC-OBJECTIVES-AN-ALTERNATE-VIEW-%28REPORT-OF-TEAM-%22B.html. Accessed February 10, 2021.

there has been little elaboration on the specifics, and the United States has in turn lost the ability to conceptualize any sort of compromise on the issue. Instead, the focus has been on generalities in terms of format (a demand for something legally binding like the ABM Treaty) and content (a demand for some form of restrictions on numbers, locations, and capabilities). The same is true for the Russians for the issue of conventional strike capabilities or the perceived conventional imbalance in Europe, not to mention the other more poorly scoped issues such as cyber or space dimensions in arms control. The United States in contrast has focused on Russian tactical nuclear weapons as the main concern in the narrow strategic stability construct. The fixation remains, however, on reducing overall numbers, rather than finding a way to address the primary concern of Russia's doctrinal willingness and operational capability to use these weapons first in a conflict.

The second tendency is an overemphasis on so-called "novel" nuclear weapons systems, a tendency to focus on the new and the shiny in the nuclear arena, particularly when it comes to systems one side has that the other does not. On the U.S. side, the focus has been on the wide variety of Russian tactical nuclear systems and more recently the nuclear-armed, nuclear-powered systems mentioned by President Putin in March 2018. On the Russian side, there is a focus on dual-capable aircraft and air-dropped nuclear weapons based in Europe, and any modernized nuclear-capable system entering the U.S. arsenal—in particular the so-called supplemental capabilities of a low-yield warhead on a submarine-launched ballistic missile and a reconstituted nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM) capability. In many cases, these systems are not actually "new" or not well-understood within the strategic stability construct. Most have existed for decades (tactical nuclear weapons), and some are replacements for past or existing capabilities (a new U.S. nuclear-armed SLCM, a new Russian heavy ICBM). Others are legitimately new in design or capability but largely familiar in purpose (evading missile defenses). Often, these new or modernized system are not placed into a longer-term historical perspective; instead, analysts want to focus on the here-and-now and try to place some singular or sinister motive on the purpose behind these systems. These systems mainly fill a desired need for a modernized capability to replace something retiring from the nuclear spending boom of the late Cold War such as a new heavy ICBM, or as a capability meant to

plug a particular perceived weakness like penetrating missile defenses within the strategic stability equation via an underwater nuclear-armed, nuclear-powered torpedo. They are meant to restore deterrence and prevent conflict rather than an attempt to seek coercive or first strike advantage. Because of the focus on nefarious intent, however, these systems take on an outsized importance and overshadow other more pressing issues in the strategic stability agenda.

The final tendency, one which has the most salience, is the increased focus on strategic stability as a multisided equation rather than a bilateral equation between the United States and Russia. The United States is insisting that Russia bring China into any new rounds of strategic arms control talks, and Russia has maintained for decades that the United Kingdom and France as NATO allies should have their forces counted within the U.S. totals. This will be problematic in terms of increasing complexity. Multisided equations are going to be exponentially more complicated than two-sided equations, particularly given the increasing asymmetries in the sizes and compositions of the various countries' nuclear forces and the decisions that will asymmetrically affect some parties at the expense of others. For example, the United States must take steps for the extended deterrence of its allies and partners (e.g., deploying regional missile defense systems to the Asia–Pacific region to counter North Korean missile threats), and Russia and China message that these capabilities are directed at them and impact bilateral or multilateral strategic stability. This is not to say that there is no validity to these arguments, although often present technical realities have to be stretched to future worst-case possibilities to make the point that decisions undermine—either real or perceived—strategic stability with Russia or China. The focus on the concerns of the other does however create a larger challenge of creating nonnegotiable issues out of decisions made on behalf of external interests, where things that did not exist previously suddenly become an unshakeable pillar of strategic stability never to be questioned, removed, or bargained away. The pattern is typical:

- The United States makes a decision to assure its allies and partners against a regional threat.
- Russia and/or China complains this undermines strategic stability.

- The United States vehemently denies that it undermines strategic stability with Russia and/or China.
- Talking points harden over time the more they are repeated.
- Technical talking points become political talking points, making concessions more difficult unless there is overwhelming political pressure from the top to complete an agreement.
- This cycle, driven to address new multilateral dimensions, makes it bureaucratically much more difficult to solve the bilateral or multilateral problems that led to these decisions in the first place.

These factors notwithstanding, some agreement on strategic stability is in fact possible by following three steps. First, recognize the deep historical mistrust that exists and manage expectations accordingly. Like most people do when estimating their cognitive abilities, many interlocutors come into the field overestimating both their own negotiating skills and thus their personal charismatic ability to overcome difficulties faced by scores of their predecessors. Second, understand that the key points of disagreement are already there and well understood; they simply require some attempt at a practical solution. The problem is not, as many have argued, that there is not enough dialogue between U.S. and Russian policymakers or experts, or that the problem somehow needs to be restated or reframed. Paradoxically, dialogues can be harmful if they simply repeat a well-worn pattern of a repetition of grievances and frustrations. While seasoned negotiators recognize the necessary throat-clearing directed in guidance from capitals, people new to the field and unfamiliar with the history conclude that the ritual itself is counterproductive and not worth their time and energy. Third, if one is unable to make progress on the core issues at the heart of the nuclear strategic stability balance, resist the temptation to complicate the problem through multilateral approaches or move into less well-understood areas like space and cyber in a search for a solution. The core areas of U.S.–Russian disagreement are the best understood and thus likely the easiest place to make progress, assuming some degree of political willpower. As seen above, missile defense for the Russians seemingly remains at the heart of the issue. Until this twenty-year wound is healed in some way, practical progress on a future concrete arms control agenda much beyond New START will be disproportionately costly to the United States.

Putin, the Dealmaker?

This brings us to the question of how Putin has performed as a dealmaker in this area. Is Russia safer or more secure as a result of Putin's approach to arms control and strategic stability with the United States over the last two decades?[33] There is no real need to grade on a curve, factoring in the popular mythology that Putin is a master tactician or a master strategist. Looking analytically, Putin has not managed to solve any of the main challenges facing Russian security at the central strategic level using arms control as a tool of national security policy. Despite massive expenditures on nuclear and conventional forces, the list of threats remains largely the same. When one looks at the concrete benefits for Russian security that could have been achieved over the past two decades, his record as a dealmaker in this area over the last two decades (outside of the New START Treaty, signed by then Russian President Medvedev) is a poor one and is worth itemizing. With the exception of the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) and New START, the record of the last twenty years reads as follows:

- Failure to amend, adapt, or reconstruct the ABM Treaty, leading to U.S. withdrawal and unconstrained missile defenses
- Collapse of the START II/III process, having been tied to ABM by the Russian side, leading to an interruption in the strategic reductions process
- "Suspension" of the CFE Treaty and the rejection of U.S. overtures at a replacement, leaving a void in conventional arms control in the European theater at a time when Russia has stated fears on conventional imbalance vis-à-vis NATO
- Lack of engagement and honesty on the Russian INF Treaty violation, forcing the United States to withdraw after five

33 There is of course the question of whether Putin views Russian security, instead of internal bureaucratic dynamics and regime stability, as the ultimate goal of any deal in this area.

years of efforts to return Russia to compliance and with Russia now facing a return to the threat of ground-launched systems with short flight times

- Insistence on the Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, failing to address U.S. demands regarding ground-based anti-satellite weapons and thus failing to capture Russian concerns on U.S. space-based systems
- Rejection of a wide variety of U.S. offers on confidence-building measures on missile defense, resulting in Russia having zero transparency into U.S. missile defense operations on its periphery
- Refusal to engage on President Obama's 2013 offer for further reductions and a treaty limiting nonstrategic nuclear weapons, causing a U.S. continued focus on reducing the size and scope of Russian nonstrategic systems[34]
- Complicating the New START Treaty extension process with years of complaints and demands regarding U.S. conversion procedures allowed in the treaty, souring the debate in the United States on extension and jeopardizing future work on strategic nuclear reductions

This is not to say the U.S. side has been blameless in the fact that little progress has been made on arms control. It is, however, quite clear that while there have been ups and downs in the U.S. approach to arms control over the last two decades, the U.S. side has been far more forthcoming with regards to concrete proposals on a path forward. The constant in the equation remains Putin at the top of the Russian bureaucratic system as the U.S. negotiating partner, and the results within the strategic arms control space have not been positive either for this national security tool or for Russian security more broadly. While this particular arena has eroded in a climate of renewed strategic competition, Putin instead has focused on other areas such as Russia's periphery, the Middle East, and the strategic partnership with China.

34 Such an effort eventually may have been terminated by Russian actions in Ukraine in late 2013, but it was quickly rejected by the Russian side before it could get off the ground as a bilateral discussion.

Several factors are at play here. The first is Putin's well-known predilection for the tactical. Julia Ioffe sagely noted in 2018: "What makes Putin effective, what makes him dangerous, is not strategic brilliance but a tactical flexibility and adaptability—a willingness to experiment, to disrupt, and to take big risks."[35] There are, to be sure, tactical opportunities that present themselves in arms control: when the planets align perfectly with regards to negotiations and personalities to reach an agreement in principle, a formal agreement at the negotiating table, and a legislative consensus to get the formal agreement ratified and entered into force. The early 1970s and the late 1980s were examples of such windows, but they were made possible by years of prior work, where both sides knew broadly what they were trying to achieve and were waiting for a political breakthrough on the major issues or remaining sticking points. But generally arms control is a field that requires a more strategic view, both in terms of duration of its negotiations and its agreements, its implications for longer-term competition between nuclear armed peers, as well as how it complements a more holistic military strategy. As Thomas Schelling and Mort Halperin noted, arms control is at its heart a field of competition: "arms control is essentially a means of supplementing unilateral military strategy by some kind of collaboration with the countries that are potential enemies. The aims of arms control and the aims of a national military strategy should be substantially the same."[36] Putin had an initial gambit to have two agreements linking strategic offense and defense as the two pillars of formal arms control,[37] and since that gambit collapsed, he has not presented any follow-on Russian strategic vision for concrete forward progress in arms control. Rather than taking a long-term strategic view, Putin has tactically rejected a number of concrete U.S. initiatives and proposals that would have improved Russian security in the hopes of more concessions or a better deal.

The second factor is the preference for taking care of domestic interests over trumpeting foreign policy wins. There is a persistent theme in U.S. thinking that Putin could want to take a page from the

35 Julia Ioffe, "What Putin Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, January/February 2018. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/01/putins-game/546548/. Accessed February 10, 2021.

36 Thomas C. Schelling and Morton H. Halperin, *Strategy and Arms Control* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Fine Press, 2014), p141-142.

37 A link which is made explicitly in the preamble of the New START Treaty.

Gorbachev playbook by using foreign policy achievements to distract from domestic problems. While this may be the case in other areas such as Russian adventurism in the near abroad or the Middle East, there has been no sign over the past two decades that Putin places huge prestige value on sitting at the arms control negotiating table or presiding over a formal arms control treaty signing ceremony. He was more than happy to let President Medvedev be in the spotlight for the signing of New START in 2010. As mentioned earlier, the images of Gorbachev signing arms control agreements have become synonymous in modern Russia with signing away the pride and joy of the Russian defense industry, more portraits of weakness and betrayal than ones of achievement and prudence. If Putin's Russia can be viewed as a neo-feudal state, a police or mafia state, or a kleptocracy,[38] then it is far more advantageous for Putin to consolidate his domestic power base by spending money on nuclear weapons and bolstering the defense industry rather than by making deals with the West on the reduction or elimination of these systems, barring some grand bargain that brings in other non-arms control related concessions. Building more warheads and more delivery systems serves a wide variety of purposes. It allows Putin to reward supporters who he has appointed to the boards of the various defense concerns, to curry favor with the Russian military, to maintain the Russian defense industry as a competitive force in the international marketspace, and to guarantee employment to Russian military designers, engineers, and scientists who remain in the various monocities scattered across the state.

The third factor is Putin's favoring of the concrete he can control over the abstract where he is dependent on another party. Putin's rhetoric is full of familiar themes of Russian self-reliance and pursuit of stability and security. This is unsurprising given Russia's historical narrative, which is full of cases of foreign invasions and external meddling that happen when Russia is weak or Russia has placed too much importance on a treaty for its security (e.g., the "Time of Troubles," 1807 Treaty of Tilsit, the German–Soviet nonaggression pact, the various handshake agreements with the West made at the end of the Cold War). Putin has a legal background, and even under the strictest arms

38 Anders Aslund, "Russia's Neo-Feudal Capitalism," *The Japan Times*, May 4, 2017. https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2017/05/04/commentary/world-commentary/russias-neo-feudal-capitalism/. Accessed February 10, 2021.

control verification regimes, there is the understanding that both sides will use its lawyers to carve out the maximum flexibility possible under the agreement.[39] Given the issues with an overdependence on legal means and the fidelity of the other partner, Putin instead time and time again has favored the concrete—the physical buildup of his nuclear capabilities in the form of a comprehensive modernization of Russia's strategic and nonstrategic arsenal. This modernization provides Putin with a concrete and flexible tool he can use for domestic political purposes, demonstrations of Russia's great power status, and shows of foreign policy force.

The final factor is Putin's failure to separate the issues at stake from the relationship. Rather than playing a tactical game of building up small wins to restore trust in the relationship, Putin has shown time and time again a willingness to leave concrete progress (albeit small in many cases) on Russian issues of stated concern on the table and walk away because of larger issues in the overall bilateral relationship. As Fisher and Ury noted: "the human propensity for defensive and reactive behavior is one reason so many negotiations fail when agreement would otherwise make sense."[40] Putin does not focus on the smaller issues. Outside of favoring the extension of the New START Treaty, a position which changed fairly recently following years of Russian complaints about the treaty, he instead demands a grand bargain that would fundamentally change the relationship between the United States and Russia. This bargain would include a recognition of Russia's historical sphere of influence, concessions to Russia in its foreign policy interests in areas like the Middle East, and recognition of Russia and the United States as peers in a multipolar system. This approach puts into question two often stated approaches: first that Putin values being see as an international dealmaker with the United States, and second that a U.S. approach involving wheeling and dealing on minor issues can restore or replace the larger problems in the relationship in the eyes of the Russian negotiating partner. This desire for a grand bargain also conflicts with Putin's predilections for the tactical over the strategic: he desires a huge reversal in international security policy, but one made as a tactical, spur of the moment decision.

39 Jerold Schecter, *Russian Negotiating Behavior: Continuity and Transition* (Washington, DC, U.S. Institute of Peace, 1998), p109.

40 Roger Fisher and William Ury, *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement without Giving In* (New York: Penguin, 2011), p169.

In summation, Putin is a dealmaker, but not necessarily a negotiator. He has the deal he wants in mind, has stated his concerns repeatedly, and is willing to eschew small deals in the hopes of a grand bargain. He favors tactical moves over the strategic, but his ability to make short-term gains with the United States is hampered by his perceptions of the overall problems in the bilateral relationship. Given the lack of progress, he defaults to what he knows and controls—the stabilization of the Russian domestic space, the modernization of its military capacity, and hence the improvement in Russian security. He is not personally invested in or beholden to the broader Soviet and Russian legacy of strategic arms control. In reality, Russian behavior on arms control compliance shows a propensity to try and take advantage in this space when possible, driven by mirror-imaging that this is what the United States is also attempting to do in these agreements.

This is an important observation because it demonstrates that the lenses from the 1980s and 1990s of Soviet/Russian policymakers being eager to make deals with the West are now fundamentally outdated. The result of Putin's lack of dealmaking has been clear—Russia must spend more on defense yet paradoxically is less safe. Russia has a much more modern military arsenal than it did twenty years ago when Putin took office, but Russia's security problems remain unchanged and, in some cases, have gotten worse. Concrete military capabilities have failed to counterbalance the accumulation of two decades' worth of missed opportunities and bad faith. As Putin's approach to dealmaking with the United States is likely set in stone after two decades in power, the question then becomes whether there is hope for progress with this particular negotiating partner.

Implications for U.S. Negotiating Strategy

Many articles on the current state of U.S.–Russian arms control and strategic stability do an excellent job of summarizing recent statements and listing the problems but lack the appropriate emphasis on practical next steps. This is particularly true of next steps that can be effectively designed and implemented within and between two government bureaucracies as large and as complex as the United States and Russia. Many recommendations are unworkable, either because they disregard the broader history of the issue or the entrenched biases of senior leadership and bureaucracies. Others are nonstarters because they ignore the simple fact that any negotiation has two sides—one cannot dictate terms, and the weaker negotiating partner often can have a disproportionate amount of leverage. As explained above, Russia's or Putin's arms control strategy is not hugely complex: they have real security concerns, which are clearly articulated, and they want these addressed or remedied on favorable terms. They are, however, extremely tough negotiating partners with a poor track record of deal-making on arms control over the past two decades, and they have set a high opening bid for what they want in negotiations. They do not provide specific solutions to these problems; they set a hard general line on what they want; they force the U.S. side to make concrete proposals; and they wait to see if they can get a favorable deal. If they do not get a deal they like, they use a listing of grievances to try and shift the blame to the United States. One British diplomat compared negotiating with the Russians to "putting coins into a broken vending machine. You could kick it and shake it, but you could not get it to cough up anything. You could not even get your coin back."[41] Life in general and international diplomacy more specifically is full of tough negotiating partners, whether the challenges are caused by negotiating personalities, cultures, or styles, and the question remains whether there is hope for future progress in such a strained negotiating relationship and bilateral security environment.

41 Schecter, *Russian Negotiating Behavior*, p63.

The key to addressing Russia's arms control strategy lies primarily on a U.S. refocus on preparation, patience, and humility, in short, becoming a better-prepared negotiator for the next round of talks, one capable of addressing the concerns both of the other side of the table as well as the various domestic constituencies in the United States. Putin, should he remain in power, and Putin's bureaucratic system are unlikely to change over the next decade, but despite that, there is a need for progress over the next decade if arms control is to remain a viable national security policymaking tool. Practically speaking, no one should have the hubris to think they can change something as complex and deep-seated as U.S.–Russian strategic stability in one meeting or working group, or that changing the terminology from strategic stability to strategic security or some other definitional formulation solves the underlying problems. No U.S. negotiator should walk into an arms control negotiation with the Russians thinking that an initial U.S. draft of an arms control proposal—no matter how painfully hashed out within the U.S. interagency—is going to be accepted by the other side. U.S. negotiators should not think that they can convince their Russian interlocutors in one meeting that Moscow's deep-seated fears are misguided, the U.S. legal view is the correct one, or a U.S.-drafted deal can be effectively sold as a win–win. Despite Putin's desire for a grand bargain, the preferable approach for the United States should be to remain focused on discrete tasks to stabilize smaller specific portions of the broader U.S.–Russian strategic stability relationship, in the hopes that small pieces can be dealt with in kind or accumulated over time to make a larger, more meaningful whole. Even a major arms control treaty is little more than many pieces assembled into a latticework that binds together and mutually reinforces. From a time perspective, a U.S. negotiator has to be thinking both short term and long term: make progress when you can with the Putin bureaucracy, plan for the longer term (i.e., a post-Putin Russia whenever it does occur) when short-term results are elusive, rebuild subject matter expertise in this area in the executive and legislative branches, and try to prepare so when the barrier weakens the United States can get something concrete and meaningful done to use arms control as a national security instrument to improve U.S. security and stability.

Several practical improvements can be made. Tellingly, these recommendations are not centered on specifics—whether and how missile defense should be covered in an agreement, what should be the num-

ber for the overall warhead ceiling, how do you cover delivery systems, etc.—because these will all determined by military requirements over the course of negotiations. The substantive challenges are well-known and well-understood. They just require the necessary political decisions on trade-offs and risks inherent in any transaction. Instead, the following recommendations deal with improving the internal U.S. process of preparing for a real set of talks, a refresher on a structured negotiation thought process. We are a long way away from the 1970s and 1980s, where bilateral engagements on strategic nuclear issues and specific arms control negotiations were a near-continuous process with a regular cast of characters and a well-defined set of issues on the table.

Given the lack of practice and the atrophy of the knowledge base, there are many easily correctable mistakes that are made in preparing (or in *not* preparing) for structured negotiations. Substantial improvement can be made in addressing Russia's arms control strategy simply by improving the process, developing the personnel, and having a long-term plan of how best to the structure of the dialog. If, as Clausewitz describes the problem, "the talent of the strategist is to identify the decisive point and to concentrate everything on it, removing forces from secondary fronts and ignoring lesser objectives," then we need to do a deep situational analysis to determine the environment, the realities, and where we can make progress independent of the negotiating partner.[42] Here the decisive points are the U.S. mentality on the arms control process and its bandwidth for doing sustained bilateral negotiations over the medium to long term. The following six recommendations are an excellent starting point for thinking about next steps in the negotiating process.

Recommendation 1. Understand the History and Time Dimensions of the Arms Control Negotiations Process

In their book *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers*, Richard Neustadt and Ernest May identified the concept "time streams," which had three basic elements:

42 Willie Peterson, "Von Clausewitz on War: Six Lessons for the Modern Strategist," Columbia Business School, February 12, 2016. https://www8.gsb.columbia.edu/articles/node/1788/von-clausewitz-on-war-six-lessons-for-the-modern-strategist#:~:text=To%20excel%20at%20strategy%2C%20we,fronts%20and%20ignoring%20lesser%20objectives.&text=The%20military%20mantra%20is%2C%20%E2%80%9Cintelligence%20precedes%20operations.%E2%80%9D. Accessed February 11, 2021.

1. The future has no place to come but from the past, and therefore the past has predictive value.
2. Recognition that what matters for the future in the present is departures from the past, i.e., alterations and changes that prospectively or actually divert familiar flows from accustomed channels, thus affecting that predictive value.
3. Continuous comparison is needed, an almost constant oscillation from looking from present to future to past and back, always looking for fruits of such comparison.[43]

Although complete studies have not been done with many of the historical classified materials, arms control negotiations have been documented over the last several decades, and examining this literature provides a readily available guide to the challenges in the process.[44]

First, history provides the perspective that outside of the last years of the Soviet Union there has never in fact been an "easy" time in U.S–Russia/Soviet relations or in bilateral arms control as a subset of the overall relationship. Any discussion involving strategic stability and nuclear weapons between the two countries has always been a challenging endeavor, with domestic and international politics often playing a spoiler role on the best laid plans. Even periods where relations were viewed as better or easier—détente, the power imbalance of the 1990s, the "reset"—did not necessarily translate into rapid progress on arms control due to historical patterns of mistrust, other more pressing focus areas, or outlier events.[45] Strategic arms control has run into challenges and has appeared dead or very close to dead many times, only to achieve significant results only a few years later.

Second, history shows the lengthy time durations involved in a successful arms control process. There is a misperception now that arms control can be done rapidly and easily, even in new domains such as space and cyber where there are myriad definitional and verification

43 Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (Free Press, New York, 1986). See in particular Chapter 14, "Seeing Time as a Stream," p247-270.

44 See for example Strobe Talbott's series *Deadly Gambits*, *The Master of the Game*, and *Endgame*.

45 For an excellent summation of the post Cold War era and Putin's Russia see chapter 4 "The Second New Problem: Relations with Putin's Russia" in Brad Roberts, *The Case for U.S. Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015).

issues. This overlooks the fact that the bilateral arms control world of today involving strategic nuclear forces is based on sixty plus years of experience, with negotiators working in Geneva for sessions stretching over years to develop the basic building blocks of arms control—definitions, inspection procedures, notification formats—while the highest government levels were in constant discussions over the overall framework of the deal. To use an analogy, strategic arms control negotiators in recent decades have had the benefit of being able to remodel or add on to a well-constructed house that others spent decades constructing. The bones of the house were good. The foundation was solid. All that was required was updating the kitchen or bathroom to fit the modern security environment or adding an extension in back to cover new systems. In the bilateral strategic arms control this process has generally been successful: New START was a revision of START, which owed a great deal to the inspection regime outlined in the INF Treaty, which built on the SALT II process, and so on. It is a different matter entirely to be tasked with building a new house from scratch, as has been observed when people have been tasked with developing an arms control regime in new domains or completely rebuilding the conventional arms control regime in Europe.

Third, history provides a guide of the kind of key players and personalities necessary to any successful negotiating process—types like Reagan and Gorbachev, but also Nitze or Warnke. Before ideas are put on paper and ultimatums are issued the other side, there should be a basic understanding of how the key players within the system operate and what will be needed to meet their basic parochial requirements, whether this has to do with the Intelligence Community on verification, the Joint Staff on military sufficiency, or the Congressional dimension on the ratification debate.

Finally, the historical record shows that at certain unexpected points, windows of opportunity emerge that provide breakthroughs after years of stalled progress and stale ideas. Taking advantage of these windows, however, requires years of sustained effort at the negotiating table to develop a concrete proposal with a few remaining sticking points teed up for a political decision or summit diplomacy. It cannot be done simply by public rhetoric and accusations of blame. Again, the idea of time streams is useful for providing a broader context, a longer-term mentality, and a scoping of ambition for the negotiations, but they

are not always easy to achieve when working in government despite being worthy goals to strive for.

Recommendation 2. Understand Your Negotiating Partner

The downturn in the U.S.–Russian bilateral relationship has had a number of ripple effects, namely a sharp reduction in the number of engagements due to the lack of presidential summits, the dismantlement of structured dialogue mechanisms such as the Bilateral Presidential Commission and Russian participation in the G7/8, the drying up of meetings and access for embassy officials in Moscow and Washington, and an overall reduction in working level interactions on substantive issues. Russia in turn mirrored or even one-upped the reductions in retaliation. While the reductions were certainly warranted given Russian actions, this disproportionately impacted U.S. negotiators who, unlike their Russian counterparts, measure their time in office in months or years as opposed to decades. Every engagement now takes on an outsized importance: routine meetings to share concerns on issues related to strategic stability are just one example of an event which should be occurring with regularity but now is buffeted by external events such as Russian aggression in Ukraine or Syria. Every meeting also now takes place in an environment of open stated competition, impacting the "dealmaking mindset" when principals or working level experts do interact. The goal becomes showing strength rather than reaching compromise, and the desire to avoid talking out of turn mostly results in the well-worn recitation of long-standing talking points, accompanied by cables back to capitals that the side held firm. There is little-to-no professional incentive for a negotiator to stray from capital-approved guidance and talking points with a Russian counterpart at the table or to share their informal thoughts during a reception or over a lunch or dinner outside of the working group. These engagements become more about "talking at" than "negotiating with," and as a result, the focus is on delivery rather than active listening or analyzing the position of the other side for nuance or intent.

All these factors have led to a dramatic reduction in the overall foundational knowledge base among most contemporary U.S. policymakers of how the Russians do business at the negotiating table. This problem is compounded within the specialized field of formal arms control negotiations, which requires skills in the ritualistic choreography of speaking

at the table using consecutive translation, developing an appropriate verification regime to fit treaty requirements, exchanging draft treaty texts, analyzing problem areas, using brackets, and conforming agreed text in the two languages. Although this used to be a core competency in both U.S. executive and legislative branches, it now has faded to a few experts participating in remaining fora such as the New START Treaty's Bilateral Consultative Commission (BCC). This is not simply a problem in the executive branch; arms control has faded into obscurity for the services, the combatant commands, the Intelligence Community, and on Capitol Hill.

Fortunately, a great deal can be gained simply by doing some background research on Russia as a negotiating partner. Soviet negotiating culture over the last century was been studied in detail, but since the end of the Cold War, expertise in the subject has tapered off significantly. Schecter argued in the late 1990s that Russian negotiating behavior showed enormous amount of historical continuity with the Soviet past:

> The official whose career was established under communist rule remains psychologically confined by Soviet-era approaches and attitudes, no matter how much the official might wish to adapt. Moreover, the Soviet legacy reflects and reinforces traits that have for centuries characterized a distinctly Russian outlook: mistrust and jealousy of the outside world; ambivalence toward the West reflecting a sense of moral superiority and material inferiority; deep-seated insecurity and—its antidote—willing acceptance of an all-controlling leader; respect for power and certainty of goals; distaste for compromise and readiness to threaten use of force.[46]

Whether this characterization is fair or not depends greatly on the eye of the beholder, but the quote shows the cognitive baggage U.S. negotiators may bring in terms of their view of the other side of the table given the downturn in the bilateral relationship. Another serious challenge is that since Schecter's book was published, there has been little or no scholarship on the development of the Russian negotiator under Putin's regime and the new generation of Russian officials. The longevity of the Putin regime means that even younger generation bureaucrats are operating in a system designed, created, and dominated

46 Schecter, *Russian Negotiating Behavior*, p5.

by those who had their formative experiences in the collapse of the Soviet system and the perceived humiliations of the weakened Russia of the 1990s. Their view is further reinforced by two decades of Russian aggression in places like Georgia, Ukraine, and the Middle East. For those setting off for real negotiations with Russian officials, there are a number of excellent works on Soviet/Russian negotiating behavior, such as Raymond Smith's *Negotiating with the Soviets*,[47] Leon Sloss' more arms control-specific *A Game for High Stakes*[48] on the Soviets, and the more recent United States Institute of Peace's series on both American and foreign negotiating behaviors.[49] These narratives are complemented by the in-depth three volume study on Soviet negotiating behavior mentioned earlier in the paper and provide a number of useful lessons to avoid simple, basic pitfalls that doom people in their first meeting with the Russians, common Russian techniques such as the agreement in principle, and past mistakes like the failure to use a U.S. interpreter being frequently cited by past practitioners.[50] The Russian negotiating partner is not a complete unknown but is one that should be approached with a certain understanding as to the historical framing of the issues, the approach to negotiations, the use of negotiating tactics, and the mindset of the Russian bureaucrat.

These historical documents provide a list of common challenges for any future negotiating team, all of which deserve some thought and understanding prior to setting out for the negotiating table.

- First, there is a need to understand the bureaucratic players and parochial divisions within the Russian negotiating team. How does the Ministry of Foreign Affairs approach the negotiations compared to the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Energy, the Foreign Intelligence Service? What are the

47 Raymond Smith, *Negotiating with the Soviets* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

48 Leon Sloss and M. Scott Davis, eds. *A Game for High Stakes: Lessons Learned in Negotiating with the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1986).

49 Richard Solomon et al., *American Negotiating Behavior: Wheeler-Dealers, Legal Eagles, Bullies, and Preachers* (Washington DC, U.S. Institute of Peace, 2010).

50 Congressional Research Service, *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior: Emerging New Context for U.S. Diplomacy* (Washington, DC, Library of Congress, 1979), Congressional Research Service, *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior, 1979-1988: New Tests for U.S. Diplomacy* (Washington, DC, Library of Congress, 1988), and Congressional Research Service, *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior, 1988-1990: Gorbachev–Reagan–Bush Meetings at the Summit* (Washington, DC, Library of Congress, 1981).

relative interagency power dynamics in the Russian delegation? Are there certain players who overshadow their expected organization roles or delegation titles?

- Second, there is the challenge in finding a U.S. interlocutor known and respected by the Russian side. Anyone can talk at the Russian side at the negotiating table, but it takes someone with a deeper understanding of both the issues and the adversary to understand the ebbs and flows in the negotiations, to know when to conduct business at the table or more informally, to make a scene or crack a joke at the table, and to craft a deal that both sides can live with at the end of the day.
- Third, understanding needs to be paid to traditional Russian negotiating techniques. There is a historic Russian reticence to table realistic, concrete proposals; the Russian side almost always prefers to wait instead for the other side to present proposals, study the proposals, and respond. Russian negotiators tend to refuse compromise solutions, hold out until the capitulation of the other side's position or until outside actions compel dropping longstanding positions at the end of negotiations, and pocket compromises without reciprocating using the agreement in principle technique. Sometimes negotiations require sticking to positions for many meetings; sometimes negotiations require position adjustments. Only a veteran will know when to take these paths.
- Fourth, the U.S. side should understand that the Russians do not have a depth of knowledge on U.S. domestic politics with regards to arms control: in particular the dynamics between the President and Congress, the current climate of the bilateral relationship in the executive and legislative branches, and Republican and Democratic positions on arms control writ large.
- Finally, the U.S. negotiating team must account for the excessive Russian focus on secrecy, which hampers Russia's own interagency process, its compliance record, its consideration of outside proposals, and its own military modernization. Many times, the U.S. interlocutors at the table have a better understanding of the numbers and capabilities of the Russian systems than many of the Russian negotiators at the table.

Understanding these issues does not necessarily make the negotiations easier, or mean acceptance of the other side's positions, but it is critical for both avoiding surprises and scoping the realm of the possible in the negotiations.

Recommendation 3. Identify Your Goals

Although one would think it is obvious that the U.S. should identify its goals at the start of negotiations, given the diminishing knowledge base both on the history of arms control and Russian negotiating culture, it bears stating this explicitly. There is a need for developing a foundational background from the first. One must understand both the history and the negotiating partner to have some level of understanding about the realm of the possible and the positives and negatives of using this tool to address a particular national security problem. As Secretary of State James Baker noted in his remarks before the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco on October 23, 1989, arms control should be viewed as a means to a larger security end:

> Arms control can lend a strong hand in building an enduring peace, but arms control does not proceed in a political vacuum. Let me be clear: we compete militarily because we differ politically. Political disputes are fuel for the fire of arms competition. Only by resolving the political differences can we dampen the arms competition associated with them. To follow Clausewitz, if war is the continuation of politics by violent, military means, arms control is the search for a stable, predictable strategic relationship by peaceful, political means.[51]

"What is the political or security end which we are trying to achieve" and "is arms control the best means to achieve this security end" should be the central two questions regarding the future of arms control negotiations with the Russians under President Putin. Soul searching on these questions has not been required in the field of arms control over the last several decades. The overarching goals have remained constant: restricting forces to enhance stability and lessening the ability of Russia to coerce and threaten U.S. forces abroad and

51 "Address by Secretary of State James A. Baker, III, to the Commonwealth Club, San Francisco, CA, on October 23, 1989," *Fiscal Year 1991 Arms Control Impact Statements,* April 1990 (Washington, DC, U.S Government Printing Office, 1991), p4.

our allies and partners. In early negotiations, the search was for limitations, some sort of cap on the massive growth in numbers, and in the following decades, the goal was reducing numbers, partly for security reasons but partly also for fiscal reasons given the massive overabundance of weapons on both sides. The questions therefore were mainly about nuances within the larger goals of limits and reductions: what in particular should we limit or reduce, to what levels, what is the appropriate level of verification regime to confirm this data, and were the costs of the agreement in terms of both money and reciprocal transparency worth the end result.

There are several overlapping questions related to arms control now, and all remain mostly unanswered. What more do we want from arms control? What is the central goal of arms control? Do we want more reductions of systems already covered by arms control? Do we want more capabilities covered by arms control, more domains covered by arms control, or more players involved in arms control? The debate at this point on the future of arms control has either been (1) on peripheral issues to these key questions (such as, asymmetries in certain numerical categories, mistrust over converted strategic platforms, development of new or novel systems, nonnuclear capabilities that impact strategic stability), or (2) a hodgepodge of wanting to do all four. Negotiators need to answer some of the following questions to set out their goals for the process.

- **Is the goal deeper reductions?** It is a major challenge that, the lower the numbers, the harder arms control will get. Verification and monitoring become more important, cheating takes on a great military significance, other countries' forces become more salient, and every level of reductions becomes more costly to negotiate. If the answer to this question is yes, then the question becomes whether the known trade space in other areas, primarily missile defense on the U.S. side and nonstrategic nuclear warheads on the Russian side, is worth reductions in overall strategic numbers. The U.S. side will also have to determine what constitutes militarily significant levels of cheating—a nebulous concept that often arises during treaty ratification—and will have to devote significant

resources to reconstituting its interagency capabilities to independently verify and monitor an agreement.

- **Is the goal broadening arms control to cover more capabilities?** If the answer is yes, then the numerical caps of a future agreement are largely irrelevant. The significance is the broadening of arms control as a field to encompass more capabilities and systems, with the goal of enhancing transparency and stability. With new systems entering the fold outside of the well-understood dynamics of inspecting ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers, simply getting a baseline understanding becomes major undertaking, and the regime must emphasize exhibitions, data declarations, notifications, inspections, and implementation body meetings—the bookkeeping of any successful arms control regime.
- **Is the goal broadening arms control into new domains like space and cyber?** Again, an ambitious expansion of arms control into new domains would reduce the emphasis on numerical reductions and central limits, as well as the emphasis on verification and monitoring. Instead, the focus would be on increasing stability and transparency in previously unrestricted and opaque domains to establish norms of behavior. Stability will be in the eye of the beholder, and both sides will likely have disparate views of what is stabilizing or destabilizing. Arms control in new domains would entail a search for the certain capabilities that are inherently more or less stabilizing and, as in strategic arms control, will require a decision on whether such systems should be banned, numerically limited, or restricted in how and when they can be used.
- **Is the goal broadening arms control to include more players at the table?** If the primary goal is expanding the number of countries at the arms control table, this immediately suggests reducing the scope and scale of the agreement to well-understood strategic nuclear delivery systems. The basic bureaucratic logistical challenges are immense, a factor well-known to those familiar with multilateral diplomacy: the need to translate the treaty

> text into multiple languages, the size of delegations versus available conference room space, and the decision on consecutive versus simultaneous translation. New players will be reticent to allow the level of intrusive verification the United States and Russia have grown accustomed to over sixty years. Given the major gaps in the strategic nuclear arsenals of the P5, people will also need to learn to live with asymmetries in the agreement, a factor that traditionally causes problems in arms control.

Whichever goal the U.S. side decides is the priority must then be negotiated with the Russian side, which is likely have different respective goals. These goals are readily apparent from Russian statements and provide some clear indications on what is likely feasible from a negotiating statement. Russia does not see deeper reductions as a priority. It has chosen instead to maintain its nuclear arsenal at high levels to compensate for perceived weaknesses in other areas such as U.S. conventional strike, and it has signaled that further reductions will only come at a significant price. Broadening the scope of the negotiations to include more capabilities is a possibility, but one which must take into account what Russia sees as systems of concern. Likewise, expansion into new domains is possible, but Russia has indicated through its proposals that such an agreement would mainly be directed at limited U.S. advantages in these spaces. Finally on broadening participation, Russia has expressed for decades their beliefs that the independent nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France should be included in arms control against the United States side of the ledger.

Another key goal question is agreement format: alternatives each have strengths and weaknesses. A formal arms control agreement requires time to negotiate, concerted bureaucratic effort in terms of money and people, and administration and legislative capital to have it ratified. It is the most difficult to complete successfully, but it is the only mechanism that contains the binding legal provisions and verification mechanisms to execute an agreement over the ups and downs in a bilateral or multilateral relationship. In contrast, a politically binding agreement can be done more rapidly and without Senate ratification, but it may not survive the rapid policy swings in Washington between administrations. Transparency and confidence-building measures,

while appealing on the surface, lack a legal framework for implementation and, as with the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives, may not survive beyond an initial era of good feelings.

Recommendation 4. Avoid Taking Something Off the Table Before You Get to the Table

Anyone familiar with playing fantasy football is aware of some of the key rules for trade negotiations. "Always look to improve your team." "Know the other league owners." "Other owners are looking to improve too." "Time is on your side." But one of the most important trade guidelines is this: "no player is untradeable." The goal of any trade in fantasy football is to improve your team to win a championship. To achieve that goal, everyone on your roster has a perceived value and can be useful in achieving that goal: it simply depends on whether the trade works to benefit your team. This is not a perfect analogy to be sure; the stakes in fantasy football are certainly much lower. But it is a useful analogy in terms of thinking about the value of pieces and when you put them on the table in an offer. Taking what the other side values most off the table before the negotiations even start is not the best way to reach a mutually advantageous agreement, simply because you lose your most valuable piece of leverage to get what you want, and you never hear what the offer for that piece might be. This removal is particularly egregious in a field like arms control where there is much more room for maneuverability on various issues than people initially perceive. Well-worn talking points create the impression of a lack of common ground when practical solutions can frequently be found during the end game of discussions. Oftentimes, one side does not have to give up anything of significance to satisfy the demands of the other side. Sometimes language in the preamble or an annex can be sufficient to meet the concerns or political requirements of the other side. It is the whittling down or wearing down of demands into practical solution that is the real skill of a practiced negotiator.

There should be no illusions about why a stalemate has occurred regarding the next steps in arms control. There are complicating factors to be sure: bringing in more capabilities into an effective verification regime is challenging, adding other countries presents challenges of asymmetries in sizes and compositions, going lower is harder given the expansion in nonnuclear capabilities, and negotiating an agreement in

such a bilateral environment is difficult. In the bilateral strategic arms control context, the next practical step is fairly clear, but there can't be any progress if the two sides refuse to even discuss the things that the other side values most in a future agreement. The next step to moving forward either bilaterally, trilaterally, or multilaterally in arms control is for the United States and Russia is to express a willingness to discuss and perhaps deal on the topics of most interest and thus of most leverage to the other side—nonstrategic nuclear weapons and missile defense, respectively. These topics are not the same, and positions on them are deeply entrenched. On missile defense, for example, there is room for maneuverability and adaptability that allows the United States to maintain a level of missile defense adaptable to emerging regional threats to the homeland and to allies. This would still fall far below a level of missile defense capable of impacting strategic stability with a major nuclear power with a massive, sophisticated strategic arsenal like Russia. Conversely, there is also a huge range of potential acceptable outcomes regarding negotiations on the issue of nonstrategic nuclear weapons that would reduce the dangers from such systems while allowing sufficient numbers for security. A successful outcome on these topics could range from simple transparency, to geographical restrictions, to consolidation to reductions. Again, blanket statements by either side that these subjects will not be discussed, or alternatively the Russian method of placing unacceptable preconditions before the subjects can be discussed, should be seen clearly for what they are: outright refusals to deal with the stated issues at hand.

If the solution is so clear, then why are these issues not being discussed? The problem lies with domestic audiences in each of the two countries. The key to this recommendation is defusing the mistrust of "the secret deal," an overused boogeyman phrase from U.S.–Soviet arms control and, more recently, U.S.–Russian arms control and missile defense transparency discussions, which conjures up an apparition of one side selling out its national security for the sake of a political deal. If these issues are not being discussed because of domestic political sensitivities, then the best way to defuse the problem is through a pledge of increased transparency on the negotiation process. One route is for the rejuvenation of a legislative body such as the Senate Arms Control Observers Group so that legislators from both sides of the aisle and their staffers can take an active advisory role in the nego-

tiations process. If Congress has an opportunity to play a more active role in the proceedings, there is less potential for accusations of secret backroom dealings later on when details of the agreement start to be made public. This would also provide an opportunity to educate a future body of legislators and staffers on how arms control negotiations work in reality.

Another wise move in any future negotiations would be to pledge to make the negotiating record available to the Senate during the treaty ratification process. This has often been a contentious issue during the ratification process, with treaty skeptics demanding the record, the executive branch exercising its prerogative on negotiations and refusing to hand it over, and the skeptics then arguing that this refusal shows secret deals were made. A better approach would be to go into the next formal arms control negotiations making clear that the record—the cables—will be turned over for study as part of the ratification process. This has two useful aspects. At the front end, the negotiators know going in that their record will come under scrutiny, which will force the team to approach the negotiations with a greater emphasis on process and rigor. The negotiator will have to be able to explain clearly why they did what they did when then did at a certain point in the negotiations, what their views were on the available trade space, and why there was a need to deal on particular points of contention. At the back end, this should alleviate potential problems about there being secret deals—the history will be in front of legislators and their staff to study in detail and inform their questions. They will see what the cost of a concession or a trade was at various points in the discussion, the complexities involved in the process, and the painstaking work that goes into crafting a durable agreement. There is the fear that this would make a negotiation subject to politics, but history shows this is true regardless during negotiations and the ratification process. In conclusion, if each side, in the face of domestic opposition, (1) places on the table what it considers to be most valuable in order to achieve some degree of satisfaction on what concerns it most, and (2) follows appropriate steps to improve transparency into the negotiations for concerned domestic parties, then there should be the appropriate level of transparency and scrutiny on the negotiations to make progress on the key sticking points.

Recommendation 5. Come up with a Concrete Proposal that Meets U.S. Security Requirements

There should be no illusions that Russia is going to table a practicable, concrete arms control proposal. The burden will fall squarely on the United States to do so. There are several bases for this statement. The first basis is tactical: for Russia, it is tactically best to wait and see the moderating effects of the U.S. interagency process. The three-volume study on Soviet negotiations as well as the last sixty years of negotiations have shown that from a negotiating culture the Russians do not typically make opening proposals.[52] The Russian bureaucracy is not designed to take first move risks; if an opening proposal is made by the Russian side, it is an extremely one-sided proposal designed to cognitively anchor negotiations on one side of the spectrum as opposed to serving as a concrete starting point. Rather, the Russian side likes to respond to proposals made by the U.S. side, and this practice serves them well in most cases because the first U.S. proposal made is already the result of a compromise within the U.S. interagency system. In effect, it is already a moderated position, and typically comes coupled with the American negotiating style, which tends toward a compromise approach of meeting in the middle. From a Russian perspective, the best negotiating approach is to stick to a hard line at one end of the negotiating spectrum, wait for a centrist U.S. proposal, let time and political pressure build on the U.S. side, and wait for the U.S. position to gradually shift closer to the preferred Russian outcome.

The second basis is structural: the Russian system, while an interagency one, is designed to be responsive rather than forward-leaning. In an authoritarian system, leaning in and taking action often comes with more downsides than upsides. While they wait for a proposal to which they can respond, the Russian negotiating position is to repeat grievances that they demand be addressed, rather than developing specific palatable proposals of how to solve them. As mentioned earlier in the section on Putin as a dealmaker, there have been numerous times over the past twenty years that pursuing arms control—or at least *ap-*

52 Congressional Research Service, *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior: Emerging New Context for U.S. Diplomacy* (Washington, DC, Library of Congress, 1979), Congressional Research Service, *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior, 1979-1988: New Tests for U.S. Diplomacy* (Washington, DC, Library of Congress, 1988), and Congressional Research Service, *Soviet Diplomacy and Negotiating Behavior, 1988-1990: Gorbachev–Reagan–Bush Meetings at the Summit* (Washington, DC, Library of Congress, 1981).

pearing to pursue bilateral arms control by coming to the negotiating table or reaching an interim agreement that could have built toward something larger—would likely have benefited Russian security. Examples included the many missile defense cooperation and transparency proposals that Russia has consistently refused, the failure to even explore the Obama administration's 2013 proposal for further reductions, the various attempts to modernize or amend treaties such as the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, or anything related to nonstrategic nuclear weapons, which would get at one of their key concerns of U.S. weapons forward deployed in Europe. Similarly, Russia has not put in the diplomatic work needed to effectively expand the participants in the formal arms control process such as using its strategic partnership with China to discuss the benefits of arms control. Structurally, the Russian side has preferred to offer the nebulous to the concrete, from the 2018 Foreign Policy Concept signed off by Putin or proposals like the Russian European Security Initiative that are rehashed Soviet ideas of peaceful coexistence and equal security.

The final basis is psychological. As seen earlier, for President Putin and other Russian officials, arms control is not a separate arena that can be dealt with tactically to improve their national security. It is a central part within the broader challenge of the bilateral relationship and multilateral geopolitical competition with the West. To Russian negotiators, given the perceived slights of the past decades, there is a growing Russian litany of issues that must be solved before or during a discussion of a future treaty, including unilateral missile defenses, the deployment of strategic precision-guided conventional weapons, plans to deploy weapons in outer space, the presence of U.S. nonstrategic nuclear weapons in Europe, counting British and French weapons with the U.S. total, Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) ratification, Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations, disparity of numbers of conventional forces in Europe, and so on. This ever-expanding list is even more difficult to tackle concretely because it is emotionally colored by accusations of legal trickery and negotiating in bad faith. In short, a typical Russian interagency player (who is usually a mid-ranking official) would be hard pressed to argue for taking the first step with the American side when faced with all of these layers of opposition, much less get a concrete proposal agreed upon through the Russian interagency and the Kremlin leadership.

How then does a United States that is forced to move first, move best? In most negotiations theory, the challenge of who makes the first move is a well-understood topic, with benefits and downsides to making the first proposal.[53] In this situation however, there is no debate about who should and whether to move first. If the U.S. side wants to pursue further strategic arms control, it will have to make a concrete proposal first, and thus can use this knowledge to its advantage. There are two main benefits of moving first.[54] One, by naming the first number, the negotiator sets the zone of realistic expectations for the deal. Two, there is the "anchor and adjustment" effect cited by social scientists, that the human tendency is to be affected sometimes arbitrarily by "first impression" numbers thrown into our field of vision. With these two advantages in mind, the United States should create a concrete proposal that it wants to use as a cognitive anchor for a potential long-term future negotiation, both with the Russians and in the public domain. It should be used to frame the boundaries of the acceptable in each area, even if the boundaries on a contentious issue like missile defense are very narrow. The proposal should effectively anchor the negotiations in a part of the spectrum the U.S. side wants to deal within, while demonstrating to the public and the expert community that the United States is attempting to make tangible progress on the issues.

The primary difficulty in moving first often has to do with a lack of knowledge about the negotiating partner and its positions—their level of expertise on a subject, their commitment to the long-term relationship, etc.—and thus a desire to avoid stumbling in the first move with an ill-informed proposal that proves costly. In this case however, these challenges are largely nonexistent. The Russian side should be well understood as a negotiating partner, both from a cultural/historical mindset and from the standpoint of the Putin regime. Additionally, it is understood that this is a long-term negotiating relationship; despite the downturn in bilateral relations, as two major international players the United States and Russia will be forced to negotiate on a number of issues, especially those like nuclear weapons where they are in their own league.

53 G. Richard Shell, *Bargaining for Advantage: Negotiation Strategy for Reasonable People* (New York: Penguin, 1999). See in particular "Step 3: Opening and Making Concessions."

54 Shell, p159-160.

In dealing with the Russians on arms control, some are fond of the expression "you can't fight something with nothing." The well-founded logic is that, to effectively counter a narrative or accusation or to set a forward-leaning agenda, you needed something concrete to display your own thinking on the subject to internal and external audiences. Knowing what it wants and knowing its negotiating partner, the United States should be capable of setting the appropriate bounds in an opening move for a discussion across the full spectrum of issues in any future arms control agreement. Such a concrete proposal requires some deep thinking on key issues as to where to place the boundary posts: What is the U.S. list of grievances it wants addressed in a future arms control agreement? What does it want to throw out as trade bait? What are the numerical limits on nuclear warheads? On missile defenses? Are limits on delivery systems required in a warhead specific agreement? Should certain systems be prohibited? How should other states with smaller arsenals be brought into such an agreement? All of these should be answerable questions that will define the parameters for the next deal. Allies and partners can serve as useful sounding boards in answering these kinds of questions, and their support will be critical, not only in adding weight to the proposal in the international arena, but also in helping to diffuse potential domestic criticisms. Only by first setting up a concrete proposal will an active negotiations process be able chip these larger issues down to manageable size as was done in every other previous arms control negotiation.

With the boundaries set, the next question to be answered in the concrete proposal should be the scope: is the deal serving as an adaptation, an extension, or an expansion from the past five decades of strategic arms control culminating with the New START Treaty? Using the house analogy, are we remodeling the kitchen in our current house, adding an extension to our current house, or tearing down our current house and building a new one? There are benefits and risks to each of these approaches. An adaptation, which would start with the New START Treaty as a basis and perhaps update the definitions and inspection regime to account for new strategic delivery vehicles, would be the quickest and easiest approach to reflect the last decade of strategic modernization with roughly 80 to 90 percent continuity. It would, however, leave out the remaining issues on nonstrategic and nondeployed warheads and missile defense. An extension of New START would

keep the definitions, notifications, and inspections on strategic delivery systems and deployed warheads intact, but it would not cover the small handful of emerging systems that do not meet the definitions in the treaty. Designing a new treaty, either because you are departing entirely from a treaty based on delivery systems and deployed warheads to one based on total warhead stockpiles, or because you need a more complex treaty to accommodate multiple parties, would be the hardest and most time consuming, although perhaps the best reflection of the current security environment. The main caution here is time, and negotiators would be wise to look at the timeframes of things like SALT II or the INF Treaty that took almost a decade and did not always result in ratification. CFE would be another cautionary tale: a treaty that could not be successfully adapted to the current security environment and where a paucity of agreement in terms of what should replace it has left Europe lacking in conventional arms control. While there is a major discussion underway about format and scope, what is often lost is the discussion of the why: Why is arms control the best or perhaps the only tool to achieve a particular national security objective?

Recommendation 6. Map Out an Active Negotiating Process

When looking at the tales of the Russians as master negotiators, particularly in arms control, close examination reveals that the Kremlin actually has a poor track record of using arms control as a strategic tool to address security challenges. They have eschewed U.S.-proposed transparency initiatives that would have improved their security or at least increased their confidence in the current security environment. This can be seen in areas like missile defense and in the lapsed Presidential Nuclear Initiatives. They have failed to modernize treaty regimes such as ABM, CFE, and INF that they highlight as pillars of strategic stability. They have been caught red-handed in violation of existing agreements, leading the United States to withdraw from the INF Treaty after years of efforts to return Russia to compliance with an agreement that was largely in their competitive interest to maintain.

Unfortunately, this situation is unlikely to change in the future the longer Putin stays in power, given that Russian/Soviet systems tend to get more rigid as opposed to more flexible over time. Putin has been in power for twenty years. He is set in his ways and in his thinking, and he has surrounded himself by a coterie of people who tell him what he

wants to hear and operate within the system he has created. He has inculcated a new class of Russian bureaucrats who were brought up in his era and share his mindset on geopolitical competition. As a result, the default setting for President Putin will be to sit back, wait for the proposal by the United States of a deal that looks promising, and spend time and money on what he does feel are reliable building blocks of strategic stability—a wide range of new weapons and modern nuclear delivery capabilities. If the United States does not like this default Russian position—and documents such as the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review would seem to indicate that there are deep concerns with these capabilities and their potential use as part of Russia's strategy and doctrine—then an active negotiating process needs to be conceived and executed with respect to the roll out of the proposal, the interagency team, the timeframe, and the tone. Russia is not going to spend itself into bankruptcy through its strategic modernization program, and its mature modernization program means it has a strong hand to play at the negotiating table.

The question of scope and goals should dictate the plan for an active negotiating process. Tabling a concrete proposal is the first step in the negotiations process, in conjunction with a well-thought-out and well-executed rollout plan, a necessary yet often overlooked part of any major foreign policy initiative. A proposal in a vacuum is essentially meaningless without a well-conceived plan of execution that goes well beyond the opening move in the gambit. This plan should involve:

- The tabling of the proposal tied to a high-profile event, whether a high-level bilateral meeting, a major public address, or multilateral arms control engagement, with the goal being to effectively raise the profile of the message.
- A public relations messaging campaign, with appropriate messaging on the proposal tailored to each of the following audiences:
- The leadership of the other side
- The lower-level interagency bureaucratic players on the other side
- U.S. domestic audiences, including Congressional members and staff
- The expert, non-governmental organization (NGO), and think tank community, looking at the full spectrum from strong

advocates of nuclear modernization to those pushing for much lower numbers
- International audiences, both within allied and partner countries as well as the nonaligned movement countries.
- Cables to allies and partners—whose governments should be familiar with the process based on prior consultations—with a full summation of the proposal and its benefits, as well as expected questions and proposed answers for their respective domestic audiences
- A call for a meeting to discuss the proposal in-depth, to walk the other side through the thinking behind the various parts of the proposal, and to answer any questions that arise during the explanation. This should be done over many days to provide time for questions, answers, and informal discussion. There should be no expectation that Russia will formally respond at the table during this session, as responses will have to be coordinated with Moscow.
- The establishment of regularized meetings (e.g., quarterly) to go deeper on the proposal. These meetings must be allowed to continue independent of other issues happening in the bilateral relationship and not become pawns of leverage or retaliation.

Thought must also be given to the composition of the U.S. interagency delegation tasked with the negotiations. This starts with the head of the delegation. There is not a one-size-fits-all model of the effective arms control negotiator, nor does the job require in-depth knowledge of the field of arms control or the systems involved. Titles are useful but serve mainly as notice that a person can go up the chain as required to unstick issues or request new guidance. Negotiating experience with the Russians is a huge benefit but unfortunately is in very limited supply. Mainly it is a matter of a steady temperament, an attention to detail, and a sense of the various bigger pieces at play, as well as the capability to manage an often internally fractious U.S. interagency team working long hours under strain. Next is the selection of the department leads for the various U.S. interagency teams. Here subject matter experts with the ability to get things done within their own organizations is critical, and they must be able to direct their own

staffs of experts to handle discrete tasks. Finally the team must include subject matter experts and legal experts who possess the in-depth technical knowledge on the systems or treaty language and make up the majority of the available bandwidth of the negotiating team. Appropriate attention must be paid here to current expertise as well as building bench depth for the future, with an appropriate mix of arms control veterans leavened with people learning the profession and providing new ideas and mindsets to key challenges.

When proposals are being developed, often very little attention is paid to timeframe. Much of the timeframe depends on the thoroughness of the initial proposal. Are the negotiations beginning with an immediate full-court press with teams who are meeting abroad? Are there a series of expert meetings to clear the air on contentious underlying issues? Is there an initial series of senior-level meetings to flesh out the broad parameters? Will there be an exchange of a proposed draft treaty text? Expectations, both public and private, need to be managed throughout the process, and overestimating the time involved is the safest approach. This is particularly true in a field like arms control negotiations when neither side desperately "needs" a deal but there is space to be found where a deal would be beneficial for both sides. The time dimension required to perform these steps is often dramatically underestimated because people are unfamiliar with the process of drafting the treaty text; negotiating the text; cross-checking to ensure conformity between pieces such as definitions, notifications, and inspection provisions; translating the text; and then conforming the text. At any point in this process, issues can be found that require a return to the negotiating table.

Finally, there should be an emphasis on tone. Will the U.S. side respond with its own treasuring of grievances approach, or take a different approach? Given the limited number of U.S.–Russian engagements on arms control and strategic stability issues caused by the downturn in the bilateral relationship, little forward progress has been made. The few engagements that have occurred have tended to be dueling monologs on well-worn issues. A successful dialogue relies on producing an open and frank dialogue around improving a concrete proposal on a particular manageable issue. This suggests that while there certainly needs to be a senior-level plenary of some sort to oversee the process and deliver the appropriate signaling messages for each side to relay

back their capitals, the vast majority of the work needs to be done at the technical expert level. The technical experts should meet regularly, with the amount of time spent at the table versus in capital depending on progress. Direction and oversight can be provided from capitals if the work is proceeding; if negotiations are stuck, teams should return home to make progress. In this setting, while a technical working group chair may be responsible for guiding the discussion to the appropriate political ends, there should be ample room for back benchers and technical experts to contribute to finding a solution. There also needs to be an appropriate mix of formal meetings and informal discussions to find the real bases of the problem and the potential areas for acceptable compromise. This technical approach should begin to identify common interests that will be assembled into a larger agreement.

Conclusions

Schelling and Halperin described arms control in 1961 as "a promising, but still only dimly perceived, enlargement of the scope of our military strategy."[55] Over the following decades, U.S. and Soviet policymakers explored many of the ways arms control could be used as a viable tool of national security strategy. It became a field with its own camps of passionate believers and nonbelievers, both inside the government as practitioners or outside the government as either advocates or skeptics. In verbal and written debates bordering on theology, arms control was portrayed as either a good to be pursued or an evil to be destroyed. It became a field with its own unique language and terms; the very words and definitions of a treaty are explained in a more understandable accompanying article-by-article analysis. It was a field that forced people from disparate backgrounds in the U.S. government—diplomats, serving military officers, defense and nuclear industry officials, intelligence analysts, engineers, scientists, and legal practitioners—to first, preferably, come to an agreement amongst themselves to reach a U.S. government position and then argue that position with another party across the negotiating table. It was a field with a long and storied history over the last fifty years of successes and failures, some caused by internal decisions and some driven by outside forces beyond its control in U.S. domestic and international politics.

With the passage of time and the lack of progress over the last decade, however, arms control is reverting back to its origins as an arcane and little-perceived field within U.S. national security policy. One of the more salient features of the last roughly twenty years of the bilateral relationship between the United States and Russia—in other words, the Vladimir Putin era in Russia—is how bereft this period is of real accomplishments on strategic arms control compared to the previous decades. The only signature accomplishment is the New START Treaty,[56] which was negotiated and ratified almost a decade ago in the

55 Schelling and Halperin, p1.

56 The treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reductions (SORT), or Moscow Treaty, was signed in 2002, but it is very short and had no

interregnum period of Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev, and it represented a condensation and evolution of the START Treaty more than a fundamentally new treaty. Arms control has of course gone through stretches of relative inactivity before when progress and thus formal negotiations reached a stalemate, but even then, arms control discussions took place regularly, and nuclear issues were a detailed portion of talks at the highest levels of bilateral talks.

The Russia-focused chapters of this paper attempted to provide the necessary foundational analysis on why we now find ourselves at an impasse, namely the mindset of the players on the other side of the negotiating table: how their perceptions of arms control were shaped, how they see arms control as a tool of diplomacy and national security policymaking, and how arms control fits into the broader concept of strategic stability and deterrence. The conclusions to be drawn here are clear. Putin is extremely well versed on concepts like deterrence, strategic stability in both its narrow definition and as a broader correlation of factors, and U.S. and Russian strategic forces. He came into office with an impressive command of the issues, and this command has undoubtedly gotten deeper over time as he has exercised and visited his forces and discussed issues of arms control and strategic stability at length with his advisors and his U.S. counterparts. However, the increased depth of knowledge on these issues over time is a double-edged sword, as his experiences with the United States over the last twenty years have caused his suspicions and assumptions to harden over time into a treasuring of grievances, which makes both negotiations and deal-making more difficult. More distrust was engendered. Greater swings were perceived by the U.S. side regarding the issue of arms control because of changes in personalities and administrations. The Russian side became more likely stick to its demands, preconditions, concessions, and long-lasting legally binding treaties to lock in gains over the long term, barring any Russian ability to exploit some window of opportunism that presents itself. These lessons should shape the scope in thinking about what is in the realm of the possible with arms control moving forward with this negotiating partner.

Although it has become almost a cliché to say so, the United States and Russia now find themselves at an inflection point with regards to

independent verification provisions.

bilateral arms control. Well-worn talking points have taken the place of concrete proposals and substantive negotiations. Without a significant evolution, the status quo approach will lead to a clearly understood result, whether in 2021 or 2026 depending on a New START extension: the end of formal bilateral strategic arms control. The consequences of such an end have been hotly debated. Both countries have lived in a security environment shaped by arms control for the last roughly fifty years via some formal of strategic arms limitation or reduction agreement. As a consequence, it is hard for many on both sides to remember a world before strategic arms control. Arms control is taken for granted as always having existed, with the underlying and increasingly mistaken presumption that it always will exist. Or it is taken for granted as never having been needed, and therefore its demise will mean little. This paper suggests a call for action by the United States at this moment to do some self-assessment, focused on how the U.S. side can best review its performance over the last decade and set a better course to increase the potential for forward progress on arms control with this particular partner.

Self-examination is in order because a long period of inactivity has had real lasting effects on the field, and these effects need to be reversed if the U.S side hopes to make progress in the next decade using this tool of national security policymaking. Arms control experts have moved on to other fields or retired. New personnel have not received on-the-job training working on the negotiating, ratification, implementation, and verification of agreements. Little historical knowledge on the subject remains in the executive and legislative branches of both the United States and Russia. There are few arms control "builders" left in the work who know how to construct a treaty or draft a line of treaty text. In retrospect, the negotiation and ratification of the New START Treaty in 2009 and 2010 represented the end of an era, where the few remaining legislators, staffers, and policymakers remaining from the "golden age of arms control" from the mid-1980s to early 1990s could guide the process and affect the outcome. But most importantly, the debate on the arms control topic has tended to stultify as no forward progress is made, no new negotiations begin, and previous landmark agreements are overtaken by events and are abandoned or forgotten. If arms control is to remain a viable available tool of U.S. national security policy, then proper attention should be paid in how and when to use it,

and how and why it has failed to work in the last decade with Putin's Russia. And so we have an important question before us: how do we rebuild the foundational knowledge necessary for the next generation to understand and implement the arms control tool effectively to advance the national security objectives of the United States and its allies and partners? Or does this become like the Dark Ages, where people sit amidst ruins having forgotten how these kinds of buildings were ever constructed?

This paper attempts to outline some key recommendations on what the U.S. side can do now to improve its negotiating approach and reconstitute its expertise before the next round of arms control discussions. The first set of recommendations can be categorized as better understanding the Russian side, and in particular how Putin and the people raised in Putin's system think about ideas such as arms control, strategic stability, and bilateral negotiations. There is a rich amount of material on the nexus between nuclear arms control and U.S. national security policy dating back to the late 1950s and early 1960s, which provides a readily accessible foundation for those seeking the U.S. debates on the role of arms control in American foreign policy and security strategy.[57] It seems like a fairly important part of the equation—what does the other party across the table think—and yet it is so often overlooked in a U.S. system where reaching agreement internally seems like the largest challenge. Given the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review's statement that "progress in arms control is not an end of itself, and depends on the security environment and the participation of willing partners," it is all the more important that we understand the other side of the negotiating table.[58]

The second set of recommendations can be categorized as better understanding the concept of time, the history of arms control with the Soviet Union and Russia, and the temporal factors in negotiations. Arms control has never been an easy endeavor, and it is complicated by Soviet/Russian negotiating tactics and the view from Moscow that arms control is about strategic competition rather than cooperation. Successful arms control has required sustained effort in terms of thinking, staffing, and resources applied to both how arms control can be

57 For an excellent example of an earlier primer on the subject, see Donald G. Brennan, ed., *Arms Control, Disarmament, and National Security* (George Braziller Inc., New York, 1961).

58 Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review*, February 2018, p73.

used effectively to solve specific national security challenges vis-à-vis a difficult great power competitor. Given the longevity of the Putin regime, the United States has a clearly discernible but very difficult negotiating partner, and this partner is unlikely to change in the near future. In fact, positions are likely to become more firm and entrenched the longer the current Russian regime stays in power. The extension or lack of extension of New START will likely create distorted windows with respect to time: either people will feel comfortable that they have five years to make progress, or they will feel the need to rush to fill the gap before too much time passes. False feelings, whether of relief or of panic, should be resisted given the amount of work that needs to be done to begin to rebuild from the effects of ten years of atrophy in the field on the U.S. side.

The final set of recommendations for the U.S. side relate to process. Arms control is no longer a term with enough positive connotation to stand on its own merits. A treaty subject to ratification must be able to articulate clearly and concisely why arms control is the right tool for achieving specific national security goals, why these same goals would either be unaffordable or unobtainable without bilateral negotiations and agreements, and how such an agreement supports nuclear deterrence. These goals need to be shared with allies and the expert community to obtain their buy in and support for the negotiations. To achieve these goals, a long-term roadmap should be envisioned that stretches beyond the next meeting, and a strong interagency team needs to be assembled to execute such a roadmap. The roadmap needs to be one of active and sustained pressure using new tactics, keeping the Russian side on the defensive and forcing the Russians to react beyond the recitation of well-entrenched positions. Above all else however, the relationship between the executive and legislative branches on arms control needs to be repaired. The day-to-day burden of repairing this relationship will lie most heavily on the arms control professionals working in the interagency to engage and educate their counterparts on the Hill on the history, the value, and the methods of arms control in the broader bilateral relationship with the Russians. The treaty ratification process can be supported by taking steps to encourage member participation in the negotiations and to provide increased transparency into the negotiating record. This will require time and effort but will be integral to any chance of success for a future agreement, no matter how well crafted it may be.

In conclusion, the United States should approach the next step in the arms control process with a full understanding of the other side of the negotiating table. Recognizing that the next arms control process could likely involve the creation of something new, and thus be much more challenging in terms of scope and scale, the best use of time is to do the intellectual spadework here in the United States to prepare for a similar type of negotiation that bureaucratic predecessors faced in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. That work will be supported by gaining a better understanding of the history of the field, focusing on what security ends we are trying to achieve with the arms control tool, developing a plan that takes into account the expected positions and tactics of the other side, and assessing how to play the cards in the U.S. hand to the best effect possible in achieving these ends. The key to future progress needs to be a sustained focus of the U.S. government—dedicated professionals working the issue, a longer-term focus on the problem set, strategic patience with the negotiating partner, and a willingness to broaden and educate others on the subject matter. Only a long-term approach stretching over multiple administrations—straddling both sides of the partisan divide and the executive and legislative branches—will ensure that arms control remains a viable national security instrument. Without such an effort the absence of a strategic arms control framework for the first time in decades is an unappetizing but increasingly likely possibility, a possibility likely to be marked by a lack of data on strategic nuclear forces, worst case analyses of adversary capabilities, mutual accusations of overspending and arms racing, and increasing calls for nuclear disarmament.

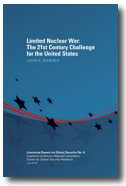
CGSR Publications

Livermore Papers on Global Security

#1 Lewis A. Dunn
Redefining the U.S. Agenda for Nuclear Disarmament
(2016)

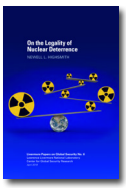
#2 Yukio Satoh
U.S. Extended Deterrence and Japan's Security
(2017)

#3 Dave Johnson
Russia's Conventional Precision Strike Capabilities, Regional Crises, and Nuclear Thresholds
(2018)



#4 John K. Warden
Limited Nuclear War: The 21st Century Challenge for the United States
(2018)

#5 Michael Nacht, Sarah Laderman, and Julie Beeston
Strategic Competition in China-U.S. Relations
(2018)



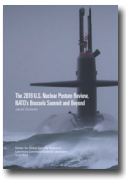
#6 Newell L. Highsmith
On the Legality of Nuclear Deterrence
(2019)

#7 Brad Roberts
On Theories of Victory, Red and Blue
(2020)

(Continued on next page)

#8 Toby Dalton & George Perkovich
Thinking the Other Unthinkable: Disarmament in North Korea and Beyond
(2020)

Occasional Papers



Jacek Durkalec
The 2018 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review, NATO's Brussels Summit and Beyond
(2018)

Zachary S. Davis
Artificial Intelligence on the Battlefield: An Initial Survey of Potential Implications for Deterrence, Stability, and Strategic Surprise
(2019)

Mona Dreicer, Editor
Getting Innovation Right
(2019)

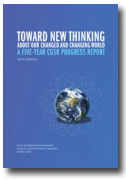
Bruce T. Goodwin
Additive Manufacturing and Nuclear Security: Calibrating Rewards and Risks
(2019)

Benjamin Bahney, Editor
Space Strategy at a Crossroads: Opportunities and Challenges for 21st Century Competition
(2020)

Brad Roberts, Editor
Major Power Rivalry and Nuclear Risk Reduction: Perspectives from Russia, China, and the United States
(2020)

Anna Péczeli and Bruce Goodwin
Technical Issues in the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) Ratification Debate: A 20-Year Retrospective
(2020)

Benjamin Bahney, Editor
Space Strategy at a Crossroads: Opportunities and Challenges for 21st Century Competition
(2020)



Brad Roberts, Editor
Major Power Rivalry and Nuclear Risk Reduction: Perspectives from Russia, China, and the United States
(2020)

Brad Roberts
Taking Stock: U.S.–China Track 1.5 Nuclear Dialogue
(2020)

Amelia Morgan and Anna Péczeli, Editors
Europe's Evolving Deterrence Discourse
(2021)

Publications available for download at cgsr.llnl.gov

"Wise counsel from one of our most astute negotiators. Michael Albertson played a pivotal role in the negotiation of the New START Treaty. In this new Livermore Paper, he has synthesized that experience to provide good advice for those who will work these issues in the future."

Rose Gottemoeller
Ambassador (retired) and former New START negotiator

"Albertson's work on Putin's Russia wisely brings together both past experience and emerging concerns to inform current arms control options. Enduring arms control principles and interests now face significantly changed circumstances. In the context of the technological and geo-political complexities of our age, Mike examines the challenges that arise when dealing with Vladimir Putin—the individual—and Russia—the country. Neither is easy to understand, and neither alone tells the whole story. Using Putin's Russia as a composite overlay on the theory and practice of negotiations, however, Mike illuminates and tests traditional and new ideas in arms control. Every reader will benefit."

Ronald Lehman
Ambassador (retired) and former START I negotiator

"Drawing on historical sources and his own considerable experience supporting U.S.-Russian arms control negotiations, Mike Albertson has produced a first-rate primer on the subject for the post-New START era. In a concise and accessible style too rarely found in works on nuclear and security studies, he lays out the foundations of past and present agreements, offers key insights on what shapes each side's approach, and assesses what today's negotiators can and cannot realistically achieve. The volume's focus on perceptions, misperceptions, and their implications is a welcome departure from the worn-out 'laundry list' approach to negotiations between Moscow and Washington."

Matthew Rojansky
Director, Kennan Institute

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

ISBN: 978-1-952565-10-6