# U.S. Russian Arms Control: Managing Strategic Stability

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 Nuclear states have benefited from the strategical advantages presented by the presence of their nuclear arsenals since the development of nuclear weapons during WWII. The destructive capabilities of nuclear weapons make the threat of their potential use an effective deterrent to conflict and make the escalation of a given conflict less likely amongst both nuclear[[1]](#footnote-1) and non-nuclear states. As a matter of fact, nuclear deterrence has played a key role in preventing war by making the risk of war far too great. However, issues regarding nonproliferation and disarmament are at the center of understanding and maintaining strategic stability among nuclear states.

 The United States and Russia combined hold 90 percent of the world’s nuclear arsenals, and their complicated and generally obstructive relationship should be a cause for concern as it pertains to maintaining global stability. Even though in the past three decades or so the United States and Russia have made strides toward nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation through their development of multiple productive and legally binding nuclear agreements, there is an emerging threat to strategic stability as these agreements come to an end. As broader tensions have begun to arise between the United States and Russia, the role that nuclear weapons play in their strategic relations has become more pressing.

 Both the United States and Russia have showcased their decreased commitment to disarmament and nonproliferation to the global community through their rapidly collapsing arms control agreements, clearly visible growing distrust, and their inability to collaboratively work to improve their bilateral relationship, and so on. Unfortunately, these elements of their declining relationship have broader implications for global security and nuclear risk being that the disappearance of these foundational treaties is sure to inspire further proliferation on a global scale, trigger shifts in the global security environment, and potentially threaten the entire system of control over nuclear weapons.

 These two states’ refusal to settle on further nuclear reductions directly jeopardize global prospect for disarmament by increasing the risk for further proliferation. This, in turn, has substantial impacts on other global actors, particularly, the United States’ European allies, whose stability and security have been increased by the existence of these treaties, and China, whose developing nuclear capabilities remain relatively unchecked. Furthermore, the development of new nuclear weapons with more destructive capabilities amplifies the overall threat to the global community.

 This paper will focus on two nuclear arms control agreements between the United States and Russia, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the New START Treaty, and how their status relates to the two states’ wavering commitment to arms control. By examining the development of these treaties, the direct (The United States and Russia) and indirect Parties involved in each treaty, and the current state of each treaty, this paper provides insight into the motivations behind the treaties and the treaties’ contributions to strategic and regional stability.

Furthermore, this paper will evaluate the significant costs of failed nuclear arms control treaties between these two states and how they contribute to the rapid decline in the U.S.-Russia bilateral relationship. The withdrawal from nuclear disarmament treaties like the INF Treaty compromise bilateral cooperative efforts and degrade trust between these two global powers and how these issues pertain to other members of the broader international community.

 Generally, it will be concluded that the dwindling bilateral relationship between the United States and Russia is, most importantly, a direct result of growing mistrust, and competing international agendas. These factors, in turn, contribute to the nonproliferation challenges present in their relationship and impede the two states’ ability to work collaboratively to find possible areas for cooperation. As a result, there are long-term, detrimental effects on not only the United States and Russia’s joint commitment to nonproliferation and disarmament, but also on aspects of the global positions and stability of indirect global actors, like NATO members and China.

### The Main Argument

How has the declining bilateral relationship between the United States and Russia impacted the prospects for future arms control cooperation between the two countries and how have existing arms control treaties between these two countries contributed to shifts in strategic and regional stability within the international system? An analysis of the history of the INF Treaty and the START-New START Treaties shed light upon this question.

With respect to the INF Treaty, its role as the first treaty to reduce nuclear arsenals rather than apply limits on them marked an overarching shift in disarmament efforts. In addition, the overall impact that the Treaty had on the United States’ European allies regarding their own security interests and their perceived threat from Russia’s nuclear developments highlighted the United States’ own national interests regarding security and stability in Europe. Put plainly, the INF Treaty acted as a basis for maintaining security and stability in Europe and became a foundational aspect of collaborative nuclear disarmament efforts.

Conversely, the United States’ withdrawal from the INF Treaty marked the reversal of the reduction of nuclear weapons in Europe and reestablished the Russian threat to Europe. The United States’ decision to withdraw highlighted even broader implications for the United States’ commitment to Europe and its security interests. The extensive development processes for both the INF Treaty and the New START Treaty, accusations of Party noncompliance on both sides, shifting motives, etc. illustrate how a lack of mutual trust amongst the two parties compromised foundational aspects of the treaties and emphasize the necessity for further global and bilateral restrictions on the development and deployment of nuclear weapons.

Equally important, issues relating to the New START Treaty and its status as one of the few remaining nuclear arms agreements between the United States and Russia raise concerns about the role other global powers play in balancing strategic stability. For instance, China’s nuclear arsenals and developments were a point of contention in renegotiation talks for the extension of the New START Treaty. One of the United States’ major concerns was the fact that’s China’s rapidly improving nuclear capabilities run the risk of surpassing the United States’ nuclear capabilities, especially with the United States’ commitment to upholding its obligations to Treaty obligations.

Overall, the disappearance of nuclear arms control agreements places the global community in an environment in which there exists fewer concerns about controls on missile technology, missile deployment systems, and an increase potential for yet another competition between global powers. These factors are further complicated by the expansion of unrestricted nuclear arsenals that belong to emerging global powers like China. Thereby, directly introducing an even greater security threat to the United States and its allies.

# The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

# Background

The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty was a Cold War-era nuclear arms control treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union that was signed by the United States President, Ronald Reagan, and the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, in Washington, D.C. on December 8, 1987. Under the INF Treaty[[2]](#footnote-2), the United States and Russia agreed to stop creating missiles capable of being launched from land and travel between 500-5,500 miles. The Treaty also required the "destruction of the Parties' ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles..., their launchers and associated support structures and support equipment within three years after the Treaty enters into force."[[3]](#footnote-3) The treaty did not apply to sea launched missiles nor air launched missiles and required extensive on-site verification inspections.

Notably, the INF treaty was “the first of its kind”, and it succeeded in eliminating “an entire class of nuclear weapons and marked the first time the two superpowers agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals.”[[4]](#footnote-4) The development of this treaty set the stage for a shift in the position of nuclear weapons in the international community and landmarked the beginning of nuclear weapons reduction efforts by proving that “diplomatic discussions can result in smaller arsenals and steps closer to nuclear disarmament.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Furthermore, this treaty signified the beginning of the thawing of U.S.-Soviet relations during the Cold War.

The development of the INF Treaty was initiated by a shift in U.S.-Soviet nuclear parity[[6]](#footnote-6). As the Soviet Union began to develop more high-speed intermediate-range missiles, the SS-20 (Saber), Soviet advancement in nuclear weapons posed a security threat to Europe and directly threatened U.S. national interests.[[7]](#footnote-7) Not only did the development of these missiles grant the Soviet Union a strategic advantage over the United States, but it also posed an immediate security threat to Western Europe.

What made the SS-20 especially threatening was its mobility, accuracy, and ability to be concealed and rapidly redeployed.[[8]](#footnote-8) The SS-20’s systems allowed for these missiles to reach their targets in a matter of minutes with little to no warning, which provided the Soviet Union an incredible strategic advantage. Furthermore, "[i]t carried three independently targetable warheads, as distinguished from the single warheads carried by its predecessors,"[[9]](#footnote-9) and its range allowed for it to reach a wide variety of targets across the globe. The previous Soviet systems proposed a limited threat to Western Europe, but the capabilities of SS-20 proved to be a powerful offensive weapon with no international restrictions.

## Basis for negotiations

The United States’ relationship with Europe throughout the Cold War played a vital role in prioritizing the threat that the Soviet Union's newly developed nuclear systems posed to the international community. As Europe’s most influential and powerful ally and with many vital interests in the region, the United States had a responsibility to act accordingly to this new, apparent threat. Additionally, the diplomatic efforts and extensive amount of time it took to come to the bilateral agreement proved that movement toward nuclear disarmament was possible in the future.

More specifically, the United States' NATO alliances provided an additional layer of pressure[[10]](#footnote-10) to address and contain Soviet capabilities. The interdependence between the United States and its NATO allies at the time meant that an attack on Western Europe would most likely result in a response from the United States and its Western allies[[11]](#footnote-11). Ultimately, this treaty provided security and stability in Europe by altering the international security environment by eliminating a key regional threat and establishing new norms against highly capable and destructive missiles.

That said, the deployment of Soviet Union intermediate-range SS-20 missiles prompted the development of diplomatic options to address this threat because Western Europe's nuclear systems could neither appropriately respond to the capabilities of these new weapons nor directly address this threat on its own[[12]](#footnote-12). The United States’ alignment with NATO and its members, who clearly perceived Western Europe's disadvantage, prompted the United States to develop a response that would serve the United States’ own national interests (maintaining hegemony and nuclear parity) and act on behalf of Western Europe’s security interests on the global scale.

These concerns led to a stream of open negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union, which took place between 1981-1987, that were aimed toward eliminating the use of these newly developed intermediate-range nuclear weapons and creating further restrictions on Soviet nuclear range by establishing a sufficient verification regime that would address these new and any potential strategic developments.

## Negotiations

Prior to U.S.-Soviet negotiations, however, the United States and its NATO allies designed a strategic "bargaining chip" approach to utilize throughout the INF Treaty negotiations. President Jimmy Carter suggested a policy in 1979 known as the dual track decision. As described by Strobe Talbott,

The U.S. would offset the Soviet missiles by deploying a new generation of its own ‘Euromissiles’—the Tomahawk cruise missiles and Pershing II ballistic missiles—while at the same time making a good-faith effort to negotiate with the U.S.S.R. a compromise that would scale back the missiles on both sides.[[13]](#footnote-13)

By doing so, the United States was able to use the deployment of these weapon systems as leverage in the arms control negotiations.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The negotiations were rooted in the concept of reciprocation, meaning that the United States advocated for the same restrictions and rights to be implemented on both sides. This concept was initially reflected in President Reagan’s "zero-zero" proposal in 1981[[15]](#footnote-15), which marked the resumption of negotiations following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. This proposal, also known as the “Zero Option”, superseded President Carter's dual track decision. President Reagan’s dismissal of the dual track proposal was done in favor of a simple compromise proposed by the Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle. Gottemoelen explains, "The United States would cancel its Tomahawk ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) and Pershing II deployments if the Soviet Union would dismantle its SS-20, SS-4 and SS-5 intermediate-range missiles."[[16]](#footnote-16)

When this proposal was brought to the Soviets in February of 1982, it was angrily dismissed by the Soviets because it would require them to get rid of their already developed and deployed missiles for systems that the United States had not yet built.[[17]](#footnote-17) Although the ultimate goal of the treaty was to eliminate all nuclear weapons from Europe, NATO members were initially unsatisfied with the suggested removal of its strategic defenses, especially given the fact that the Soviet Union’s conventional military capabilities outweighed that of Western Europe’s.[[18]](#footnote-18)

After the Soviets walked out of negotiations in 1983, Reagan accepted Undersecretary of State Richard Burt's proposed "interim solution", which determined that "the United States would deploy some missiles in Europe, with the goal of negotiating them all away in the future."[[19]](#footnote-19) No INF Treaty negotiations took place between the Soviet Union and the United States during 1984, but the United States did continue with its plan to deploy missiles throughout Europe. Negotiations resumed in early 1985 following the creation of a bilateral forum[[20]](#footnote-20) called the Nuclear and Space Talks (NST)[[21]](#footnote-21).

After several discussions between delegates of each of the negotiations, the Soviet Union announced its readiness to resume formal talks regarding the INF Treaty. President Reagan and General Gorbachev sat down to discuss the Treaty in Reykjavik, Iceland in late 1986 and "agreed to equal global ceilings of systems capable of carrying 100 INF missile warheads, none of which would be deployed in Europe. The Soviet Union also proposed a freeze on shorter-range missile deployments and agreed in principle to intrusive on-site verification."[[22]](#footnote-22)

On December 8, 1987, following the Soviet Union's official announcement to collaborate with the United States on INF negotiations, the INF Treaty was signed. By the treaty's deadline, June 1, 1991, collectively the two countries "destroyed a total of 2,692 short- and intermediate-range missiles: 1,846 Soviet missiles and 846 American missiles. It marked the first elimination of an entire category of weapons capable of carrying nuclear warheads."[[23]](#footnote-23)

The conclusion of negotiations and the destruction of the short and intermediate range missiles emphasized key aspects of international dynamics and responsibilities at the time. The emergence of INF concerns illustrated the United States' role in Western Europe as a reliant and invested ally with much to gain from putting a halt to Soviet technological and strategic advancements. The Soviet Union, for the most part, benefiting from the denuclearization of Western Europe, which, in turn, decreased the growing potential for continued NATO expansion, at least for a short while.

The implementation of the INF Treaty had a tremendous effect on the size of nuclear warhead stockpiles between the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia (see fig. 1)[[24]](#footnote-24).

The rapid reduction in the two countries’ nuclear arsenals and the enforcement of limitations not only served to enhance the mutual security of the intended actors, but it also contributed to international stability. By establishing a platform for transparency and equality, the Soviet Union and the United States took part in a joint commitment to disarmament. This significantly decreased the potential for nuclear conflict by prohibiting the use of destabilizing and destructive nuclear weapons and decreased the potential for a new nuclear arms race, like, if not worse than, what was seen in during the Cold War.

## **United States Withdrawal from the INF Treaty**

There was much skepticism revolving around each state's ability to uphold its commitments to the obligations of the INF Treaty, and, in recent years, the United States has accused Russia of violating the Treaty by testing and deploying cruise missile systems. Concerns regarding Russian compliance to the treaty were addressed publicly for the first time in May of 2013 when U.S. officials approached Russian officials with their worries of Russian INF noncompliance; however, these concerns were dismissed by the Russians.[[25]](#footnote-25) In 2007, though, Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed the potential for Russia’s withdrawal from the treaty following the United States’ withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Later, in July of 2014 and under the Obama administration, the United States publicly found Russia in violation of the INF Treaty.[[27]](#footnote-27) From then, up until December 2018, the United States continued to address Russian INF noncompliance and deemed their repeated violations as a longstanding noncompliance issue.

As the United States continued to inform NATO members of Russia's breaches of the INF Treaty, it moved along with plans to formally withdraw from the treaty. NATO's attempt to preserve the INF Treaty by calling on Russia to comply with all the Treaty obligations proved unsuccessful. On February 2, 2019, Secretary of State Micheal Pompeo announced, on behalf of the Trump administration, the United States decision to suspend its obligations under the INF treaty.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Shortly thereafter, Russia announced its suspension of the INF Treaty and denied all claims of Russian noncompliance. Six months later, on August 2, 2019, the United States withdrew from the INF Treaty and claimed Russia was responsible for the demise of the Treaty due to its repeated violations under the treaty. NATO supported The United States in its decision to withdraw from the Treaty, but NATO did not dismiss the apparent threat posed to Western Europe in the making of this decision.

Not only did the collapse of the INF Treaty jeopardize European security, but it also initiated the renewal of instability in the region, which threatened its long-standing peace. From a military standpoint, with no verifiable limits placed on Russia’s highly capable deployment systems, Russia is free to use its arsenal to intimidate its European neighbors.[[29]](#footnote-29) This is a part of an even greater issue that exists within the U.S.-Russia stability framework.

Furthermore, the collapse of the INF Treaty made the last remaining nuclear arms control agreement the New START Treaty, which was set to expire less than two years later. This intensified discussions on limiting nuclear arms and created a multitude of possibilities for future, unmanaged and destructive conflict.

### Different Perspectives

For the United States, the decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty was one that was long overdue. Even before 2013, there was speculation that Russia was developing cruise missiles, and the Trump administration determined that it was in the United States' best interest to relax its commitment to the Treaty considering Russia's proven inability to adhere to the Treaty limits and obligations. According to Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper, "Russia's material breach erodes the foundation of effective arms control and the security of the United States and our allies and partners."[[30]](#footnote-30) Upon the United States' announcement to withdraw from the INF Treaty, it made clear its intent to pursue the development of ground-launched conventional missiles.

 Furthermore, Trump highlighted China's development of nuclear weapons and the lack of established limits on its nuclear arsenal. President Trump stated that China’s unrestricted nuclear advancements and Russia's continued development and deployment of missiles that violate the Treaty limits places the United States at a disadvantage given that it continues to adhere to the agreement.[[31]](#footnote-31) Some of these concerns were warranted given the results of a 2019 report published for Congress that states, "China has some 2,000 ballistic and cruise missiles in its inventory, and 95% of these would violate the INF treaty if Beijing were a signatory."[[32]](#footnote-32)

Despite the stark differences in the sizes of the United States' and Russian arsenals compared to that of China, it's fair to say that China's nuclear capabilities may could potentially pose a threat to U.S. security. China’s nuclear capabilities are growing, so the threat to U.S. influence in Asia and national interests is real. However, the Trump administration’s push for the inclusion of China in the INF Treaty discussions did more to exacerbate the already pressing problem. In truth, the United States has long seen China’s emergence as a world power as a threat to the U.S. position in the world order, so any evidence of China’s increased strategic ability was bound to provoke action from the United States.

 On the other hand, Russia claims that it has not violated treaty limits and has maintained its position since some of the United States' initial claims. Russia has also claimed that the United States has done very little to address and solve these issues diplomatically. Russian diplomats have made efforts to demonstrate Russia's compliance to the treaty by offering to display its missile system, but the United States rejected their offer due to controlled access to Russia's missile system.[[33]](#footnote-33)

The United States made it very clear that it would only be satisfied with the destruction of Russian missile system, which was out of the question for Russia, bringing the discussions in favor of compromise to an end. Furthermore, in addition to Russia's denial of the United States accusations, Russia, according to Reif, "accused the United States of violating the treaty, most notably by deploying missile defense interceptor platforms in eastern Europe that Russia claims could be used for offensive purposes."[[34]](#footnote-34)

 By contrast, China has criticized the Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the INF Treaty and finds the United States primarily responsible for the collapse of the Treaty. On August 2, 2019, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said, “[w]ithdrawing from the INF Treaty is another negative move of the U.S. that ignores its international commitment and pursues unilateralism. Its real intention is to make the treaty no longer binding on itself so that it can unilaterally seek military and strategic edge.”[[35]](#footnote-35)

Both China and Russia make it clear that the collapse of the INF treaty would provide the United States with the opportunity to freely explore nuclear arms development. China and Russia acknowledged the potential damage the collapse of the INF Treaty could do to the international community and stability of arms in the international arena. However, Russia maintains that it will mimic all advancements developed by the United States in order to ensure its own security interests, despite the costs. This confrontational rhetoric alludes to the potential for a new nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union that can only result in catastrophic consequences.

 Differently, NATO made its alignment with the United States’ decision to withdraw clear in its statement made on August 2, 2019. In NATO's statement of support, it stated that, “Russia today remains in violation of the INF Treaty, despite years of U.S. and allied engagement, including a final opportunity over six months to honor its Treaty obligations," the statement reads, "[a]s a result, the United States decision to withdraw from the treaty, a decision fully supported by NATO allies, is now taking effect.[[36]](#footnote-36)

 NATO's support of the U.S. decision was no surprise given its involvement in the efforts to preserve the viability of the Treaty and its special relationship with the United States. However, NATO's position in this conflict does call into question how well NATO members are evaluating their own national security given the dwindling number of nuclear arms control agreements and NATO's initial fear of Russia's capabilities as a nuclear power. Overall, the collapse of the INF Treaty weakens European security by increasing the probability of nuclear escalation between NATO and Russia during times of conflict.[[37]](#footnote-37) Some European countries and even some non-governmental organizations denounced the collapse of the INF Treaty.[[38]](#footnote-38)

 Some argued that the INF Treaty did more to enhance NATO's reliance on the United States when as it pertains to deterring a viable threat from the Soviet Union. This argument is supported by critical views of the selected nuclear weapons included in the Treaty and whether the absence of these weapons or rather the constraints on the deployment and development of these weapons do enough to decrease the threat of Soviet/Russian aggression in Western Europe.[[39]](#footnote-39)

 Correspondingly, some of them believed shortcomings of the treaty, in which, "include the technical means available to the United States to ensure verification and ultimately compliance, the limits of on-site inspection, and the possible conversion of SS-20 missile operating bases."[[40]](#footnote-40) With that, it makes sense to consider Western Europe's reaction to the imminent collapse of the treaty. NATO members encouraged Russia to reassure the United States of its commitment to the Treaty limits, worked to reestablish trust between the two countries, and finally sided with the United States and its decision to withdraw from the treaty, despite the renewed threat to Western Europe.

Ultimately, the breakdown of the INF Treaty places the United States in a tough situation. Not only did the United States initiate the collapse of the agreement with its decision to withdraw instead of devising a more diplomatic approach to addressing its concerns, but the United States also put its NATO allies and the entire international community at risk by removing yet another vital arms control agreement. The end of the INF Treaty has already become controversial among U.S. European allies and others who value the Treaty[[41]](#footnote-41), but thankfully the extension of the New START Treaty can prevent the possibility of a renewed, unrestricted nuclear arms race.

Furthermore, the INF Treaty established the foundation for future arms control treaties, but its collapse contributed to the growing distrust between the United States and Russia. Furthermore, its collapse presented new obstacles to further steps toward disarmament by complicating renegotiations for past arms control agreements and extension processes. Overall, there is an inherent risk in the disappearance of these vital arms control agreements, which were put in place to level the playing field after the risk of an enhanced arms race became clear.

# The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START)

"As I’ve said, this is a national security imperative for the United States. We need to ratify New START to put in place on-the-ground inspections of Russian nuclear arsenals, to reduce our deployed weapons and launchers, and to build on our cooperation with Russia -- which has helped us put pressure on Iran and helped us to equip our mission in Afghanistan."[[42]](#footnote-42)

*-Barack Obama, NATO Summit 2010*

## Introduction

Strategic nuclear weapons[[43]](#footnote-43) play a large role in a nation's military capabilities, and their delivery systems allow these warheads to quickly reach long-distance targets and carry out destructive strikes. With the United States and the Russian Federation being the two nations whose combined nuclear arsenals make up 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons, negotiations proposing limits on these kinds of weapons are crucial to national and international security.

 As of today, the New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) is the last remaining nuclear arms control agreement between the United States and Russia. The New START Treaty was signed in Prague by U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Medvedev on April 8, 2010 and implemented on February 5, 2011. Its verification measures were based on the 1991 START I[[44]](#footnote-44) Treaty, which was established and signed by the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War[[45]](#footnote-45) and expired in December of 2009, and the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT).[[46]](#footnote-46) Leading up to the expiration of START I, U.S. and Russian officials recognized the necessity for the implementation of a new arms control treaty and began negotiations that set the basic parameters for and established limitations on the treaty.

## New START Framework

The New START Treaty is an agreement for nuclear arms reduction between the United States and Russia that establishes central limits on deployed intercontinental-range strategic warheads and imposes verification measures that provide transparency between the two Parties. Moreover, the Treaty's primary focus was to reduce strategic offensive arms, not to apply limits on missile defense. This distinction was a point of tension during the negotiations between the two Parties, as the Russians advocated for linkages to missile defense constraints in the Treaty. The Russian delegation team advocated for some language about missile defense in the treaty, and, to satisfy the Russians' concerns, the delegation teams settled upon a statement in the Treaty's preamble that acknowledged the interrelationship between offensive missiles and missile defense:

Recognizing the existence of the interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms, that this interrelationship will become more important as strategic nuclear arms are reduced, and that current strategic defensive arms do not undermine the viability and effectiveness of the strategic offensive arms of the Parties[[47]](#footnote-47)

The development of the New START Treaty was driven by U.S. and Russian delegations and contributors. Negotiations between the two Parties were extensive, and, on the U.S. side, these negotiations were led by U.S. Secretary, Ellen Tauscher, and U.S. State Department Assistant Secretary, Rose Gottemoeller, who were supported by U.S. inspectors that were familiar with the successes and faults of previous arms reduction treaties between the United States and Russia.

Their collaboration and knowledge acquired from past arms control and nonproliferation treaties played an integral role in the development of more efficient approaches for the New START Treaty that would operate better than those provided in the START Treaty's verification regime. Furthermore, there was an additional focus on removing nonessential aspects of the START Treaty and the 2002 Moscow Treaty from the New START Treaty framework and obligations.[[48]](#footnote-48) The U.S. negotiating team placed a strong emphasis on establishing an effective verification regime for the New Start Treaty that ensured predictability and further reductions in arms. As a result, they succeeded in establishing a new verification regime specifically tailored to the New START Treaty obligations.[[49]](#footnote-49)

The Treaty is comprised of three tiers: The Treaty text, the Protocol to the Treaty, and the Technical Annexes.[[50]](#footnote-50) The Treaty text and the Protocol[[51]](#footnote-51) outline "the basic rights and obligations of the Treaty,"[[52]](#footnote-52) whereas the Technical Annexes of the Protocol includes an Annex on Inspection Activities, Annex on Notifications, and Annex on Telemetric Information.[[53]](#footnote-53) The three central limits that are outlined in Article II of the Treaty text are as follows:

1. Each Party shall reduce and limit its ICBMs and ICBM launchers, SLBMs and SLBM launchers, heavy bombers, ICBM warheads, SLBM warheads, and heavy bomber nuclear armaments, so that seven years after entry into force of this Treaty and thereafter, the aggregate numbers, as counted in accordance with Article I11 of this Treaty, do not exceed:

(a) 700, for deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs, and deployed heavy bombers;

(b) 1550, for warheads on deployed ICBMs, warheads on deployed SLBMs, and nuclear warheads counted for deployed heavy bombers;

(c) 800, for deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, deployed and non-deployed

SLBM launchers, and deployed and non-deployed heavy bombers.

2. Each Party shall have the right to determine for itself the composition and structure of its strategic offensive arms.[[54]](#footnote-54)

 Although the New START Treaty does not limit the number of nondeployed[[55]](#footnote-55) nuclear warheads, it does require that these missiles be stored in a facility with appropriate infrastructure to house them and that the location be made known to the opposite Party of the Treaty.[[56]](#footnote-56) Additionally, because delivery vehicles and launchers that are separate will be out of the Party's accountability, this system allows for more flexibility. Moreover, this allows for transparent monitoring between the two Parties and ensures that there will be no attempts at stockpiling hidden missiles. Furthermore, there are no “constraints on the testing, development, or deployment of current or planned U.S. missile defense programs or U.S. long-range conventional strike capabilities.”[[57]](#footnote-57)

### New START Treaty Verification Measures

The verification measures of the New START Treaty were designed to guarantee that each party can verify the other's compliance with the requirements of the treaty. All of the strategic offensive arms and facilities covered by the Treaty (Type 1 and Type 2 short-notice on-site inspections, location restriction on specific items identified in the Treaty, exhibitions, and other transparency measures) contribute to the facilitation of the verification regime.[[58]](#footnote-58) The verification measures ensure that there is a legally binding commitment to transparency that grants each party the right to inspect the other's force structure by allowing visibility into forces. Additionally, this verification regime was intended to be effective and efficient by reducing the implementation costs and potential disruptions to facility operations resulting from constant, inefficient and time-consuming inspections.[[59]](#footnote-59)

 Under the START Treaty, far more on-site inspections were conducted on sites along the U.S. coasts, and these frequent inspections interrupted the operational tempo of the bases because they required bases to shut down of base operations. The START Treaty allowed for 28 total on-site inspections divided into 4 different types (Data update, suspect site inspection, re-entry vehicle inspections, formerly declared facilities inspections); whereas the New START Treaty is only composed of two types of inspections (Type 1 and Type 2) and allow for only 18 total inspections annually.[[60]](#footnote-60) Uniquely, "each Type One inspection includes both a data-update and a reentry vehicle inspection. Thus, this one inspection gathers information that would have required two separate START I inspections to collect."[[61]](#footnote-61) Because the New START treaty combines inspection tasks under one single inspection, it reduces inspection activity, which, in turn, reduces base disruptions and acts as a more effective way to inspect arsenals by creating less opportunity for base shutdowns.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Furthermore, the inspections were made more efficient under the New START Treaty due to the reduction in inspected facilities. Under the START Treaty, U.S. inspectors were responsible for checking almost 70 different Russian facilities, more than half of which were in former Soviet territories.[[63]](#footnote-63) As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and adjustments made to the inspection framework of the START Treaty, under the New START Treaty, U.S. inspectors are only responsible for inspecting 35 Russian facilities.

In the spirit of transparency, both Parties agreed to allow for the exchange of telemetric information between one another. This commitment was outlined in Article VIII[[64]](#footnote-64) as a statement regarding the vital concept of the transparency present throughout the New START Treaty. It states:

In those cases, in which one of the Parties determines that its actions may lead to ambiguous situations, that Party shall take measures to ensure the viability and effectiveness of this Treaty and to enhance confidence, openness, and predictability concerning the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms. Such measures may include, among other things, providing information in advance on activities of that Party associated with deployment or increased readiness of strategic offensive arms, to preclude the possibility of misinterpretation of its actions by the other Party.[[65]](#footnote-65)

 These transmittable provisions promote predictability within the New START Treaty framework, but telemetric information was unnecessary given that, unlike the START Treaty, the New START Treaty isn't reliant on the exchange of telemetric information because it counts warheads and there are no limits on new missile types.[[66]](#footnote-66) Nevertheless, the Parties agreed to allow for the exchange of telemetric information up to 5 annual launches for which it will exchange information.[[67]](#footnote-67)

## Ratification Process

The ratification process for the New START Treaty was extensive and taxing. No other arms control agreement has had as much pushback throughout its ratification process. That said, the Obama administration developed numerous responses to the Senate apprehension. The Senate's hesitation to approve the Treaty was mostly due to Republican Senate members’ concerns regarding "Russian opposition to the deployment of U.S. missile defenses, Russian concerns about U.S. long-range conventional strike weapons, and U.S. concerns about Russian tactical nuclear weapons (TNW)."[[68]](#footnote-68)

 Senate members who initially opposed the ratification of the New START Treaty primarily sought to ensure that funding for the modernization and maintenance of the U.S. nuclear arsenal would not be jeopardized by the inaction of the New START Treaty. The Obama administration addressed this concern by promising to invest nearly $180 billion in nuclear delivery systems and nuclear modernization efforts in the upcoming couple of years.[[69]](#footnote-69) This budget was later increased by the Obama administration after Republican leaders in The Senate determined the proposed budget was insufficient. The administration announced its intention to request $600 million more than the initial budget submitted for 2012.[[70]](#footnote-70)

 Furthermore, Republican Senate members were unsatisfied with the preamble that addressed the interrelationship between offensive missiles and missile defense because they believed that such language would interfere with the United States’ ability to deploy and develop missile defenses.[[71]](#footnote-71) President Obama responded by writing to Senate to reassure its members of his abiding commitment to missile defense.[[72]](#footnote-72)

 Lastly, Senate made clear its discontent with the inclusion of long-range conventional strike weapons in the treaty limits and the lack of restrictions on tactical nuclear weapons (TNW).[[73]](#footnote-73) President Obama responded by agreeing to address these concerns in the renegotiations.

 The U.S. ratification of the New START Treaty was concluded on December 22, 2010 following nearly eight months of debates and proposed treaty adjustments. President Obama’s efforts to ensure the ratification of the Treaty were driven by disarmament goals and his commitment to advancing the United States’ relationship with Russia by addressing central security concerns and securing progress in a pivotal aspect of U.S.-Russian relations.

 Directly following U.S. Senate’s ratification of the Treaty, the Russian Federal Assembly was tasked with completing its own ratification process, which required that the entire legislative body (the State Duma and Federation Council) approve the treaty according to a majority vote.[[74]](#footnote-74) Following three rounds of voting and additions made to the ratification document, the Federal Assembly settled on its ratification, thereby completing the bilateral ratification process and establishing a joint commitment to disarmament.

## Extension of the New START Treaty

As the last remaining arms control agreement between the United States and Russia, there are many potential threats to U.S. national security regarding the expiration of the New START Treaty. The end to limiting the size of the two countries' arsenals would allow each country free nuclear range and create instability within the U.S.-Russia nuclear dynamic. The absence of legally binding commitments to transparency would motivate distrust and potentially increase strategic competition between these two countries. More importantly, each side would lose key insight into one another's strategic force activities, and this, in turn, would create even more uncertainty between the two countries. Furthermore, the lack of management for new technologies that can be more destabilizing can lead to one side having a clear superiority in strategic nuclear warheads or missiles.[[75]](#footnote-75)

However, for at least a short while, these potential challenges have been subdued due to the collaboration between the Biden administration and the Russian government. As the New START Treaty's 10-year duration began to approach its expiration on February 5, 2021, the Biden administration announced its plans to seek the extension of the treaty. Both U.S. and Russian representatives, including U.S. President Biden and Russian President Putin, vigorously worked to settle on the five-year extension[[76]](#footnote-76) of the treaty.[[77]](#footnote-77) Their successful collaboration was, in fact, guided by the central truth that the extension of the New START Treaty was in both countries’ national interest.

Furthermore, according to the United States quoted in the Washington Post, “New START is manifestly in the national security interest of the United States and makes even more sense when the relationship with Russia is adversarial."[[78]](#footnote-78) Ultimately, the extension was essential to providing both security and relief to both actors and the greater international community.

### Motivating factors for the New START Treaty Expansion

There were several factors that influenced both the United States and Russia’s decision to extend the New START Treaty, but the most central factor, by far, was the state of strategic stability between these two countries. The constraints outlined in the New START Treaty reduce the potential for the initiation of a first nuclear strike from either of the party by providing transparency regarding each Party’s nuclear arsenals.[[79]](#footnote-79) This, in turn, would reduce the perceived threat of an attack. This clarity is essential given the lack of successful nuclear diplomatic relations between the United States and Russia throughout the 21st century and the resulting growing distrust amongst them.

 There were domestic political conditions in the U.S. that were considered when making this decision, as well.[[80]](#footnote-80) Many elected officials were skeptical that Russia would respect the conditions of the Treaty for long, given its history of Treaty violations in the past.[[81]](#footnote-81) That is, they were concerned that the United States would be placed in the same position it was when it was forced to withdraw from the INF Treaty.

 Furthermore, the state of the already difficult U.S.-Russia bilateral relationship directly influenced the decision for both Parties.[[82]](#footnote-82) On the one hand, extending the New START Treaty meant the reestablishment of a joint commitment to “improving strategic relations between the two countries,” which “seemed unconvincing, especially under the Trump administration.”[[83]](#footnote-83) Even further, the potential for cooperation reflected the “Cold War thought and practice that in times of limited official relations and tensions, arms control can be an element of dialogue and mutual understanding.”[[84]](#footnote-84)

 Differently, nonproliferation considerations played a less significant role than it probably should, especially when acknowledging that the New START Treaty was and still is the last nuclear arms control treaty between the two states. The end of this treaty would have signaled to the international community the end of the two states’ commitment to disarmament,[[85]](#footnote-85) and mark the beginning of the resumption of a period of unlimited nuclear bounds, like that of the state of uncertainty and unrestricted that existed in the beginning of the Cold War.

### United States Position on the Extension

As the expiration date for the New START Treaty grew closer, the Trump administration attempted to pursue the extension of the New START Treaty in the last months of Donald Trump's presidency. However, it failed in doing so due to Trump's fixation with trying to incorporate China into the treaty.[[86]](#footnote-86) During the discussions regarding the extension of the treaty, former President Trump insisted that China be involved with the agreement even though China was not involved in the initial signing of the agreement. The Trump administration's reasoning behind the need to include China in these negotiations was a direct response to China's modernizing nuclear arsenal.[[87]](#footnote-87) As China modernizes its strategic nuclear forces and the United States remains constrained by Treaty obligations and verifiable limits, the United States’ ability to deter China in potential future conflict is weakened.[[88]](#footnote-88)

According to Trump administration officials, the absence of China in the New START Treaty extension plans acted against U.S. national security interests, even though China's arsenal is much smaller than that of the United States' arsenal and Russia's arsenal. China's position in the treaty extension was a focus of discussion during negotiations with the Trump administration.[[89]](#footnote-89) Members in the nonproliferation community and the U.S. government, like Senator Dianne Feinstein, criticized Donald Trump for not prioritizing the more pressing U.S.-Russia commitment to the treaty.[[90]](#footnote-90)

Even further, some critics argue that the extension of the New START Treaty would do more to deter China and its proliferation agenda by decreasing the possibility of a new arms race between the United States and Russia, which would surely require extensive funds and drain force funding.[[91]](#footnote-91) The Trump administrations obsession with involving China in the extension of the treaty successfully impeded the administration’s ability to recognize the multiple ways in which the extension of this Treaty would serve U.S. interests.[[92]](#footnote-92) Furthermore, the Trump administration’s refusal to provide further context as to what the extension of the New START Treaty would look like in the case of a trilateral commitment between the U.S., Russia, and China made the proposal all the more unreasonable.

Another central aspect of the discussions regarding the extension of the treaty was Russia's evolving nuclear arsenals and how its new weaponry would or would not fall within the treaty guidelines.[[93]](#footnote-93) There were different views regarding how to go about the extension negotiations. Many believed that the extension of the New START Treaty was a vital way to hold onto the transparency. Some security experts recognized the benefits that the treaty provides and proposed new ways to incorporate a trilateral arms agreement between the U.S, Russia, and China. Differently, others sought to forego the extension of the Treaty altogether because it would relieve the U.S. of its obligations to limit its nuclear strategic capabilities.[[94]](#footnote-94)

Differently, Congress and the Biden administration found it imperative to maintain the legally binding, verifiable limits on Russian strategic nuclear weapons that were put in place by the New START Treaty.[[95]](#footnote-95) The extension of the Treaty was categorized as one of the Biden administration’s top priorities because the Treaty plays an important role in U.S.-Russian strategic stability and directly supports U.S. national security interests. Not to mention, The Biden administration’s decision to move forward with the extension process illustrates a commitment to shifting U.S.-Russia relations in a more positive direction by establishing a renewed condition for mutual trust between the two countries.

The extension of the New START Treaty not only allowed for the continuation of U.S. and Russia information collection and soothed concerns about the eruption of nuclear instability, but also provided both countries with time to develop new agreements that further serve their national interests. As stated perfectly by the Russian Foreign Ministry, "Considering the special responsibilities that Russia and the U.S. carry as the world’s largest nuclear nations, the decision taken is important as it guarantees a necessary level of predictability and transparency in this area, while strictly maintaining a balance of interests."[[96]](#footnote-96) Overall, the extension of the New START Treaty acts as a reestablished joint commitment to disarmament and actively signals to the international community that U.S.-Russian cooperation on a key issue in international relations is a top priority for both countries.[[97]](#footnote-97)

# Potential Ways Forward

The INF Treaty and the New START Treaty represent the overall position of the United States and Russia regarding their attitudes and prioritization of nuclear arms control within the international community. Understandably, if the motivations for and the objectives of nonproliferation and disarmament agreements between these two countries do not directly align with or serve the national interests of either country, the agreement will not stand. The state of the U.S.-Russia relationship at the time of and throughout the duration of given agreements play an enormous the two states’ commitment to Treaty goals and obligations.

As seen in the INF Treaty and the New START Treaty, following the creation and implementation of the treaties, the United States and Russia displayed their joint commitment to upholding the responsibilities and obligations to the Treaties for a short period of time. However, as the two countries political and international agendas shifted, so did their commitments. Arguably, the inconsistent and repositioning areas of trust within the U.S.-Russia bilateral relationship largely contributed to their inability to fully commit to the treaty. If there was a more grounded establishment of trust, unfiltered by a long history of competition and conflict, then the creating and maintaining these treaties and others like them would be less taxing and time consuming.

In truth, The United States’ withdrawal from the INF Treaty did not serve U.S. national interests. It created an environment with even fewer restrictions on highly destructive weapons, to which Russia no longer was required to even act as if it was complying with the agreed developmental and deployment limits. It also stripped the U.S. and Russia of an important level of transparency that did more to encourage clear and open communication between the two countries.

The extension of the New START Treaty, however, did serve the United States’ national interest. As the last remaining bilateral nuclear agreement between the United States and Russia, it signaled and mutual understanding that there is a need for international restrictions on nuclear weapons. Unconstrained nuclear developments, especially developments amongst the two countries with the largest nuclear arsenals in the international community, would signal the beginning to a new nuclear arms race with several global actors. By reestablishing their commitment to the New START Treaty, the United States and Russia illustrated the importance of nuclear stability.

To maintain this momentum, the United States and Russia need to take several steps to solidify their commitment not only to maintaining their nuclear parity but also their global nuclear peace. This begins with finding common ground and areas for potential cooperation within their own bilateral relationship. The United States and Russia should work closely to reestablish trust and transparency between them. These two aspects are the most crucial within their relationship. Mistrust and uncertainty are the greatest inhabitants to a positive and mutually beneficial relationship between these two states. This transition may have to begin with the United States because, truthfully, it holds majority of the driving influence and it is the state with the most leveraging power. Until they work on this, collaborative movements toward disarmament will be difficult to establish and maintain

Next, nuclear risk reduction should be a top priority, beginning with the United States and Russia, and quickly extending to the broader international community. With the United States and Russia on the same page regarding the threat that nuclear weapons pose to the general global community and peace, they would serve as an example for the international community and lead the world in a direction of total disarmament. The U.S. and Russia should establish new nuclear arms reduction objectives because these two states are critical when it comes to broader global disarmament goals.

There also needs to be a collective understanding that a multilateral nuclear arms race is the last thing the international community needs. Though China’s military modernization presents a growing threat to the United States’ national interest, the U.S. should establish itself as a leading global disarmament advocate, despite this threat. That said, for now, the United States should stray away from its persistent pursuit to include China in treaty renegotiation talks. Instead, the U.S. should focus on finding potential areas of collaboration with China and later seek to establish bilateral or multilateral agreements with China.

In conclusion, these steps will drive the U.S., Russia, and global community closer to complete disarmament, which is desperately needed for the protection of the international community. These efforts must begin with collaboration, transparency, and a genuine commitment to progress in the international community.

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6. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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32. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
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43. Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) are missiles that have a range exceeding 3,500 miles. Intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) are missiles that have a range between 600 and 3,500 miles. Submarine-launched ballistic missiles are IRBMs or ICBMs launched from submarines. Cruise missiles are shorter-range missiles that can be launched from aircraft, ships, or submarines, and strategic bombers are all delivery systems that carry thermonuclear warheads. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. START I was the first treaty that ensured the reduction of U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear weapons and it established transparency amongst the two countries by mandating inspections and immediate. It acted as the foundation for future bilateral reduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. “Treaty between The United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START) | Treaties & Regimes | NTI.” Nuclear Threat Initiative (NGI), February 25, 2021. www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/treaty-between-the-united-states-of-america-and-the-russian-federation-on-measures-for-the-further-reduction-and-limitation-of-strategic-offensive-arms. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. According to the Arms Control Association, the 2002 Strategic Offensive reductions Treaty, otherwise known as the Moscow Treaty, was signed by U.S. President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin and mandated that the United States and Russia reduce their deployed strategic nuclear weapons to 1,700-2,200 warheads each. The Treaty was implemented on June 3, 2003, and lapsed on February 5, 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. U.S. State Department, "TREATY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ON MEASURES FOR THE FURTHER REDUCTION AND LIMITATION OF STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE ARMS", The New START Treaty, April 8, 2010. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/140035.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Kingston Reif, “New START at a Glance | Arms Control Association,” https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/NewSTART. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. “Treaty between The United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START) | Treaties & Regimes | NTI.” Nuclear Threat Initiative (NGI). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. The Protocol to the Treaty is organized into ten parts. The text of the Treaty, its Protocol, annexes, and article-by-article analysis can be found at http://www.state.gov/t/avc/newstart/c44126.htm. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. "TREATY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ON MEASURES FOR THE FURTHER REDUCTION AND LIMITATION OF STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE ARMS", The New START Treaty, April 8, 2010. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/140035.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Under the regulations of the Treaty, when the launcher has been separated from its delivery vehicle, it is considered a nondeployed system. Thus, it is not countable under the Treaty. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Amy F. Woolf, "The New START Treaty: Central Limits and Key Provisions," Version, 79, Congressional Research Service (CRS), February 3, 2021.<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R41219.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
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