

Strengthening U.S. Nuclear Security in Relation to Russia

The Committee for U.S.-Russia Relations at the Henry Clay College Student Congress
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Outdated treaties and nuclear weapons systems threaten the stability of U.S.-Russian nuclear relations. The United States should strengthen its relations with NATO, update nuclear treaties with Russia and other states, modernize its nuclear forces, and invest in diplomatic resources. This approach, with its reliance on multilateral treaty frameworks and modernization of nuclear technologies, increases the potency of the U.S. deterrent forces and the strength of U.S. nuclear security.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Background:

Uncertainty about the United States' commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) threatens the stability of U.S.-Russian nuclear relations. NATO promotes the security of its members through collective military and political protection and helps the U.S. deter Russian military expansion and nuclear aggression.¹ Currently, the United States provides more than half of NATO's funding. Although NATO allies contribute valuable defense and intelligence resources, few countries currently meet their commitment of contributing two percent of their GDP to defense spending.² European NATO forces have not sufficiently modernized their military capabilities, and have relied on U.S. support for protection against Russian encroachment.³

Russian incursions into Eastern Europe threaten the United States' strategic position in the region. Expanding NATO membership to Georgia and Ukraine places the U.S. in a precarious position due to the United States' commitment to NATO members under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Therefore, the United States should reaffirm its defense of Eastern Europe through the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), which provides U.S. funding for security forces in Eastern Europe.⁴

Recommendations:

- Reaffirm the United States' commitment to providing support to NATO
- Encourage all NATO member states to provide the required 2% of their GDP
- Discourage the immediate admission of Georgia and Ukraine to NATO
- Allocate the full funding request for the EDI in FY2020⁵
- Enact legislation to prevent U.S. withdrawal from NATO via unilateral executive action

Treaties: Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

Background:

The United States and the Soviet Union signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty on 8 December 1987.⁶ In 2014, the United States asserted that Russia violated the INF Treaty by developing the 9M729 missile system. As of 2019, NATO supports the United States' claim.⁷ President Trump suspended U.S. compliance with the INF Treaty on 2 February 2019, and indicated that the United States be fully withdrawn from the treaty by August 2019.⁸

The Special Verification Commission (SVC) was established by the treaty as a forum for discussing and resolving compliance issues, but has been criticized for ineffectively preventing violation of the terms of the treaty.

Recommendation:

- Remain in the INF Treaty for the duration of renegotiations of the revised treaty
- Update the treaty to include:
 - Modernize the language of the 1987 INF Treaty to bring Russia out of non-compliance and allow for the modernization of both states' arsenals
 - Task an independent third party, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), with inspections of nuclear arsenals of both states
 - Prevent nuclear material theft by adding new requirements for the protection of nuclear arsenals
 - Include provisions for the proper disposal of nuclear waste and retired nuclear weapons

Treaties: New START

Background:

New START, or the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, is a bilateral nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and Russia signed in 2010.⁹ This treaty limits the two nations to no more than 800 deployed and un-deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, heavy bombers equipped to carry nuclear armaments, and other qualifications.¹⁰ New START does not limit current or planned U.S. missile defense programs.¹¹

With New START's expiration date approaching in 2021, the treaty should be extended until 2026 to allow for further debate and the eventual renegotiation and extension of the New START treaty. The treaty's weapons caps are important for the avoidance of costly, dangerous arms races and for the feasibility of a future agreement with China and other nuclear powers.

Recommendation:

- Extend New START to 2026, past the first expiration date of 2021. The 2026 date is accompanied with the expectation of renegotiation to prevent expiration.

Treaties: China

Background:

China's declared policy is to maintain a minimal nuclear arsenal as a form of deterrence. China has repeatedly said that they would never enter into an arms race with another state.¹² However, the recent build-up of the Chinese nuclear arsenal contradicts these statements. In 2004, China had the smallest nuclear arsenal of the Non-Proliferation Treaty-declared nuclear weapon states. However, China has rapidly expanded the size of its nuclear arsenal beyond the minimum size required for deterrence, which threatens U.S. nuclear security. China's rapid expansion of its arsenal is reminiscent of an arms race, or at least an attempt to catch up to the United States and Russia and become the third great nuclear power in the world.¹³

Recognizing the growth of the Chinese nuclear arsenal over the past decade, diplomatic talks among three of the world's leading powers - China, Russia, and the United States - on nuclear security are crucial.

Recommendation:

- Hold a summit between the United States, Russia, and China to discuss the future of arms control in the coming years

Modernization of U.S. Nuclear Forces

Background:

As Russia expands its nuclear capabilities, the United States needs to remain competitive by modernizing its nuclear technology. The INF Treaty no longer accommodates the U.S. and Russia's modern technological development of nuclear weapons. Russia's modernization program is currently valued at \$670 billion dollars.¹⁴ This number is concerning when compared to the United States' current modernization program budget of \$400 billion USD. In addition, over half of National Nuclear Security Administration's infrastructure is now over 40 years old.¹⁵ Modernization of U.S. nuclear technology would allow for the U.S. to remain competitive with Russia and deter movements that act contrary to American interests in the region.

Recommendations¹⁶:

- Increase the budget of the three legs of the nuclear triad modernization program by \$24 billion in FY2020¹⁷
- Bolster the modernization program through the development of long range nuclear delivery systems and weapons (replacement of intercontinental ballistic missiles, replacement of nuclear-powered, ballistic missile-carrying submarines, developing B61-12 bombs, developing submarine-launched cruise missiles, and modernizing ICBM launch facilities)
- Increase funding by \$19 billion USD for Department of Energy nuclear laboratories and Department of Defense command, control, and early warning systems in FY2020

Department of State

Background:

Increasing the Department of State's Diplomatic Programs budget would support U.S. national security by improving the resources available to U.S. diplomats.¹⁸ As other NATO members increase their defense funding to two percent of GDP, the United States can reduce its funding there, potentially providing more funds for diplomatic initiatives.

This will allow for the expansion of programs that promote diplomacy and diversity.¹⁹ The Global Engagement Center's Countering State Disinformation program, which enhances the capacity for resistance to misinformation, should have their funds increased particularly in China and Russia. In regards to the UN, the Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities fund are imperative for assisting our fellow nations in peacekeeping missions. The committee supports the continued funding that was allocated in the Department of State's FY 2019 request.²⁰

The consideration of domestic programs is the future of our diplomatic relationships with our allied nations, and is also an important point of action for this committee. An informed general public benefits the U.S.-Russian relationship more than any military response potentially could.

Recommendation:

- Increase the Department of State Funding for Diplomatic Programs to encourage future civilian relationships between nations²¹

Conclusion

Deterrence has been an effective method to prevent the exchange of nuclear attacks between the United States and Russia since the first usage of a nuclear weapon. The pillars which support deterrence: NATO, the modernization of nuclear weapons, and prudent diplomatic negotiations are in need of refurbishing. By reaffirming the U.S.'s commitment to NATO and improving paradigms around advanced weapons systems, as well as investing in diplomatic training and personnel, the United States will protect its interests abroad and national security.

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- ¹ Douglas Lute and Nicholas Burns, *NATO at Seventy: An Alliance in Crisis*, publication, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 1.
- ² Hans Binnendijk and Magnus Nordenman, *NATO's Value to the United States: By the Numbers*, issue brief, Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, Atlantic Council (2018), 1.
- ³ Michael Kofman, "A New Direction in U.S.-Russia Relations?: America's Challenges & Opportunities in Dealing with Russia," ed. Paul J. Saunders, *Center for the National Interest*, 2017, 20.
- ⁴ *European Defense Initiative*, report, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) February 2018, Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 (2018).
- ⁵ FY2019 requested \$6.4 billion, received 5.9 billion
- Daniel DePetris, "The European Deterrence (Reassurance) Initiative Sends the Wrong Message," *Defense News*, March 22, 2019, accessed May 15, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.co>.
- ⁶ "The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty at a Glance | Arms Control Association," *Facts Sheets & Briefs*, February 2019, accessed May 17, 2019, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/INFtreaty>.
- ⁷ "Russian Compliance with the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty: Background and Issues for Congress," *Congressional Research Service*, February 8, 2019, 6.
- ⁸ White House, "President Donald J. Trump to Withdraw the United States from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty," news release, February 1, 2019, White House, accessed May 17, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-withdraw-united-states-intermediate-range-nuclear-forces-inf-treaty/>.
- ⁹ United States of America. Congressional Research Service. *The New START Treaty: Central Limits and Key Provisions*. By Amy F. Woolf. 2019. 1-41. Accessed May 17, 2019. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R41219.pdf>.
- ¹⁰ Intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and Submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM)
- Ibid.*
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² Melissa Hanham, "China's Happy to Sit Out the Nuclear Arms Race," *Foreign Policy*, January 30, 2017, accessed May 17, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/30/chinas-happy-to-sit-out-the-nuclear-arms-race/>.
- ¹³ Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "Nuclear Weapons," *Federation Of American Scientists*, May 6, 2019, accessed May 17, 2019, https://fas.org/category/nuclear_weapons/.
- ¹⁴ Kofman,, 12.
- ¹⁵ United States, Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review February 2018* (2018).
- ¹⁶ United States of America, Congressional Budget Office, *Projected Costs of U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2019 to 2028*(2019).
- ¹⁷ United States of America, Office of Management and Budget, *Budget of the U.S. Government 2019* (2018).
- ¹⁸ We suggest the increase from the current \$9.17 billion dollars allocated for this fund stated by FY 2019-enacted, to \$10 billion in FY 2020
- ¹⁹ These programs include items such as the Charles B. Rangel International Affairs and Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship programs, both of which help promote diversity among foreign affairs officers and give more opportunities to graduate students
- ²⁰ United States. Department of State. *Congressional Research Service*.<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R45168.pdf>.
- ²¹ Raise amounts from \$9.17 in FY2019 to \$10 billion for FY2020.
- United States, Congressional Research Office, *Department of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs: FY 2019 Budget and Appropriations* (2019).