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Reducing the Nuclear Threat: A 5-Point Plan

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Anita Friedt:
Hello. My name is Anita Friedt, and it is a great pleasure to welcome you today to our discussion. And it is a great pleasure for me to moderate the discussion on a topic that could not be more important or timely: revamping nuclear arms control.

The extension of the New START treaty is now widely endorsed as a necessary first step to continue predictability and stability in strategic offensive forces during an increasingly growing period of tensions between the United States and Russia. But colleagues will remember that when the New START treaty was signed, the United States viewed it as a first step toward further reductions in limitations. Just the first step.

Unfortunately, during the past decade, we have witnessed heightened security concerns as a result of a buildup of nuclear and conventional weapons, and the development of emerging weapons technologies making further reductions and or limitations more challenging than ever.

The current focus is unfortunately on ultimatums, inflammatory rhetoric, misperceptions and misperceptions, which has led to increased tension among the nuclear states, fears of greater nuclear risk among many non-nuclear signatories to the non-proliferation treaty, and generally leading to further divisions in the international scene.

Today's reality is an increasingly challenging security situation and a climate that is simply not conducive to disarmament. So how do we escape this vicious circle and return to a more productive road? We need to change the dynamic by

introducing realistic initiatives and to focus on gaining the necessary political will to reestablish productive, bilateral and multilateral diplomatic channels.

From my perspective, James Acton, Thomas MacDonald and Pranay Vaddi's five-point plan is the kind of thoughtful, realistic initiative which can energize US-Russian strategic dialogue, productively engaged dialogue with China, as well as address nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty concerns.

So I very much look forward to our discussion today. I look forward to a very lively question and answer session. But first, without any further delay, let me introduce our speakers. For the first session, we have James Acton and Kristin Ven Bruusgaard, who will provide commentary on the report. Let me give you brief bios on both of them.

James Acton, whom I think everyone knows, holds Jessica T. Mathew's chair, and is co-director of the nuclear policy program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Kristin Ven Bruusgaard is a postdoctoral fellow and assistant professor in the political science department at the University of Oslo, where she is part of the Oslo nuclear project. Her research focuses on nuclear and conventional military strategy, nuclear deterrence and crisis dynamics with an emphasis on Russian and European security.

For the question and answer session, we'll be joined by Pranay Vaddi and TD MacDonald. Pranay Vaddi is a fellow in the nuclear policy program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. His current research is focused on developing future US nuclear posture and arms control proposals and Congress's role in arms control policy. He is a lawyer by training and a fellow US department of state veteran, just as I am.

TD MacDonald is also a fellow in the nuclear policy program at the Carnegie Endowment of International Peace. His current research focuses on verification of nuclear arms control and non-proliferation agreements with a focus on

revitalizing the arms control establishment and finding novel approaches to arms control challenges. Join me in welcoming everyone. And first, so let me turn the floor over to James Acton to make opening remarks about the report. So over to you, James.

James Acton:
Anita, thank you very much and thank you for agreeing to chat today. And also thanks to Kristin for agreeing to provide commentary. As Anita mentioned, this work is co-written with my colleagues, Pranay Vaddi and TD MacDonald. And our goal here is to identify arms control measures that can mitigate real and pressing security threats. In particular, the risk of escalation in a conflict and arms racing during peace time.

So early this year, Pranay and I published our concept for what the next strategic arms control treaty should look like, the follow on to New START. And we talk about there, how to constrain strategic nuclear forces. So nuclear weapons that can reach one another's Homeland, the US and Russia, and some non-nuclear strategic weapons. But there's a series of capabilities that are of concern to Russia or a concern to the United States that realistically can't be managed through a treaty.

And the goal of the current report is to identify practical confidence and transparency building measures that can address those issues, issues like missile defense and non-strategic nuclear weapons and China's nuclear arsenal. And I cannot emphasize enough that what we're talking about in this report is complimentary to a treaty. It is not an alternative to another treaty. It compliments a treaty by managing issues that can't be legally limited in a treaty. And this is consistent with the original idea of arms control. Schelling and Halperin, when they came up and wrote the first definitive work on arms control, talked about how it was any form of military cooperation between potential adversaries. It's a very broad concept. It doesn't just mean treaty-based limits, though treaty-based limits absolutely have their place.

Now, some of this report deals with China. We're going to do another event on China next year. So today I want to focus on three measures between the US and Russia. So, the first one is US and Russian transparency about nuclear armed sea-launched cruise missiles, non-nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles, and non-nuclear sea-launched hypersonic boost glide missiles. So that's sea-launched cruise missiles with, and without nuclear warheads, and sea-launched boost glide missiles without nuclear warheads.

The sea-launched boost glide missiles haven't yet been deployed, but the US is working on them. There's no publicly available evidence that Russia is, but I wouldn't be surprised. Both Russia and the US have non-nuclear sea-launched cruise missiles, and Russia has nuclear armed sea-launched cruise missiles. The US is working on them.

These capabilities are mutually threatening to one another. The US worries about things like command and control in the United States, which would be vulnerable to Russian cruise missiles. Russia worries about the survivability of its nuclear forces. One could already see arms race dynamics emerging between the US and Russia in these capabilities.

And these risks are exacerbated because of opacity, because of the danger that worst-case thinking over estimates of each other's capabilities in turn affect each country's own planning. And critically, because these particular missiles are carried on attack submarines or on surface ships, it's very, very hard. And by that, I really mean impossible to limit those in the framework of a strategic arms control treaty. Nuclear armed sea-launched boost glide missiles, we think, have to be limited in an arms control treaty, which is why I'm not going to talk about them today.

And so our idea here, which is actually built off an idea that was created originally with the START I treaty in 1991 is transparency declarations, that the US and Russia would give one another biannual declarations of their holdings of these types of weapons and annual declarations of their plans of how many of these weapons they intend to deploy.

Now, I'm not going to barrage people with details today. In the paper, one of the things we aim to do is to explain how these measures would work in practice. So there's actually pretty detailed ideas there and definitions of all these terms. But for now, I'll just kind of leave this by saying, this is about declarations, both of current capabilities and the five-year deployment plans.

Our second idea, which is our kind of first steps on non-strategic nuclear weapons, is for reciprocal US and Russian inspections of empty, actual or suspected warhead storage facilities. And by empty, I mean doesn't have nuclear warheads.

So, the idea is that in each country, there are facilities that one another worries might have nuclear warheads there, but we don't know whether there are nuclear warheads there. And that one could inspect those where there aren't any nuclear warheads to verify the absence of those warheads.

And this proposal is really motivated by a couple of ideas. Firstly, that ambiguity around the locations of tactical nuclear weapons, non-strategic nuclear weapons, increases risk. If there are not in fact non-strategic nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad, I have no idea whether there are, which is the problem. If there are no non-strategic nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad, but NATO thinks there are non-strategic nuclear weapons in Kaliningrad, then that exacerbates tensions between the two sides.

And so, from that perspective, transparency could help ease tensions. We also think that these kind of inspections of empty storage facilities would help develop the verification mechanics necessary for some more comprehensive control regime in the future.

Now, again, you can find pages of details about how these inspections would work in practice. All I want to say for now is basically the idea would be that NATO would go to the Russians and go, we're worried about these sites, we'd like to have a look. Russia would give NATO its own corresponding list, which could

cover anywhere in the continental United States and all European NATO members. And you would see if you could agree on sites for inspection on the basis of strict reciprocity.

And we kind of imagine here, maybe you do two to five pairs of sites. We think it's important to do more than one site because you want to learn lessons from these inspections. You want to improve your verification protocol based on the experience of conducting inspections. But we're not proposing here some comprehensive measure where you would essentially aim to prove the absence of nuclear weapons everywhere except declared sites. So this will be more than just a one-off, but this wouldn't be comprehensive.

The third idea that I want to flag today is really to try and address Russian concerns about ballistic missile defense, by creating a comprehensive confidence building system for the Aegis Ashore systems in Europe. These are the standard missile-3 interceptors and launchers that are currently, will be located in Poland and Romania.

And Russia has various concerns about these systems, I should say, but there's two in particular that we're trying to address through this measure. The first is that US interceptors could catch Russian ICBMs, just intercept those ICBMs, and hence defend the continental United States.

And secondly, that these launchers, these standard missile-3, these Aegis Ashore launches could be used to load offensive missiles. This fear comes because these launches, they're sea-based variants, on Aegis ships can launch offensiveness missiles, but the State Department has said the land-based versions of these launches can't launch offensive missiles, they're physically incapable of doing so, but without giving much detail about why that's the case.

And I think it's in NATO's interest to try to address Russian concerns, not least because of the fear of preemption in a crisis. I mean, if Russia believes that these interceptors can catch it's ICBMs, or these launches can launch offensive missiles, it has incentive to attack them in a crisis. So we kind of have a two-part plan here.

The first part is to allow Russia to measure using its own equipment, the burnout speed of all current and future types of interceptors deployed in Europe.

Now, the Obama administration floated a scaled down version of this proposal, which the Russians dismissed. We hope that there might be more Russian interest in our variant, because it's more comprehensive. This is not just about one type of interceptor, it's about every type of interceptor currently deployed or that will be deployed in Europe. And from a verification perspective, this is pretty straightforward. Russia ought to be able to use its missile instrumentation ship, place it in international waters and measure the speed of the interceptor.

The second part of our proposal is to reaffirm to Russia the defensive nature of these installations and to make two concrete commitments. Firstly, that the United States will not load these launches with offensive missiles. And secondly, that it will not modify these launches so they become capable of launching offensive missiles.

There's quite a long discussion in the paper about how Russia could verify this. There's not enough information available for us to get a concrete verification approach, but we sketch out various possibilities depending on technical details that we don't know about the nature of these Aegis Ashore systems. But for now, I just want to say that this idea would have to be verifiable, and we sketch out alternative approaches, but with confidence that at least one would work.

So, let me end it there just with two final thoughts. The first thing to say is clearly reciprocity is going to be fundamental. We hope this idea for sea-launched cruise missiles and sea-launched-boost-glide missiles would be win-win for each side. The Aegis Ashore proposal, the non-strategic nuclear weapon each one of those individually is clearly not win-win. One of those is very much to focus on US concerns, one of them is very much focused on Russian concerns. And the idea here would be to do them as part of a package.

And secondly, this is a working paper. In a year from now, we intend to republish these ideas with ideas for longer term proposals. And so we very much welcome

feedback from governments, from non-governmental organizations, from the US, Russia, from China, from non-nuclear weapon states, from others. We will take this feedback into account. We will modify these proposals based on this feedback. And so, part of the purpose of doing today wasn't just for me to transmit information, but for me to listen as well. And from that perspective, I very much look forward to comments and questions. Anita, back to you.

Anita Friedt:
Okay. Thank you very much, James. I appreciate that. Okay. Now, over to you Kristin, for your comments on the report.

Kristin Ven Bruusgaard:
Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you James for this invitation and opportunity to take part in this exciting discussion. I want to really commend James, Pranay, and Thomas for doing a marvelous job on this and this report, which is both timely and concrete in terms of suggestions for the way ahead in the arms control domain.

And so, this report is exceedingly interesting reading and, I think, and it has a lot going for it. In particular, that it's both ambitious in terms of its concrete and detailed steps that you suggest, including your detailed steps for verification, which I found really interesting reading. And at the same time, it's not too ambitious in terms of taking stock of what may actually be possible to achieve among the great powers today given the state of affairs in the dialogue between the United States and Russia and the United States and China.

And I think this report also does a really good job of acknowledging the necessity of giving and taking on each side to some extent, and the necessity of recognizing that reducing the risk of conflict and the risk of escalation is also a significant and critically important way of enhanced security that the great powers need to take stock of.

I have a couple of questions and comments that I thought I'd highlight to sort of jumpstart the discussion, and they pertain to two topics that I am particularly

fond of. They pertain to first, western biases and whether we can overcome them even when we try. So, I think, as I mentioned, James, Pranay, and Thomas have done a really great job of trying to address the key concerns of each side. But I think I would argue, and as you'll hear, that perhaps even more can be done to skew this proposal in the direction of preserving and encompassing the key Russian concerns and Russian interests. And it seems to me as if that may also be the case with regard to the Chinese case, but I'm not covering that case in this debate.

And then there's this question of asymmetry that you also touched on in generic terms in the report. But I think that we can sort of unpack the asymmetrical nature of these relations in a bit more detail. So as they pertain to the capabilities that you're talking about, the types of weapons systems and how important they are to each of the actors. So the utility of these different capabilities may be somewhat different to Russia and the United States respectively. In part, because they have an asymmetrical array of other available capabilities.

And then there are also the asymmetries in terms of the national technical means that are available to both sides for testing the other side's capabilities, and in the intelligence gaps that exist on both sides, depending on the capabilities that we talk about, which means, in turn, that increased insight and transparency may have asymmetric value to the two sides.

So, I wanted to highlight some of these specifics as they pertain to basically the three major suggestions that you have for the US-Russian dyad. So first on the data exchange with regard to SLCMs and SLBGMs, I'm sure you can pronounce that abbreviation much quicker than me. Nuclear and non-nuclear, which sounds like a great idea and I mean, a concrete way ahead in addressing key areas of concern that pertain to both sides. And also, a great way, I think, of tending to future capabilities that may or may not be in the pipeline just yet, but which both sides are likely to be very concerned about and interested in taking stock over.

And I also want to emphasize that my comments come with this disclaimer regarding my incomplete technical knowledge regarding sort of all the detailed

inventory on both sides, but I still have some questions. So first I'd be interested, I think, in even more detail. Spelling out of how precisely greater insights into the overall distributed numbers, as you suggest, would enhance stability in crisis. So you suggest that it would, but you don't really spell out the dynamics by which it would. So how does actually knowing a number reduce uncertainty, particularly if that number is large or larger than you originally thought?

I have a number of questions regarding the utility of these capabilities to each side, which would in turn affect incentives for exchanging the data on numbers very differently. So one could envisage at least, the significant asymmetry numbers with regard to conventional SLCMs. My question would be would the Russian side be concerned about exchanging hard data that could manifest the quantitative lag in conventional precision munitions? Would they be concerned about that? Would they be interested in it?

There may be an asymmetry in the utility of nuclear armed SLCMs, would the Russians again, be interested in revealing the number of nuclear arms SLCMs in the exchange for similar data from the United States? Because there is likely asymmetry there as well. There is an asymmetry, I think, in the intelligence value of such insight. I would certainly think that the greatest intel advantage of such an exchange would be in favor of the US, who would have bigger questions about the larger numbers of the Russian inventory than vice versa.

And then if you think about the intelligence value of additional information on conventional capabilities versus additional information on nuclear capabilities, although sort of equally tradable, or is there an asymmetry there as well? And then finally, I think that there's an asymmetry to think about with regard to the utility of dual capable missiles, which we know have a particular role in Russian concepts, and that the Russians have been paying particular attention to and also to develop. So what does that mean in terms of exchanging data and verifying that type of data in this particular instance?

So, the report, I think, perhaps pitches this exchange as one that would benefit each side equally a little bit ... It takes it a little bit too far because ... Or at least, I

think you can make an argument about how it would we benefit each side equally, but you could also make an argument about how there are significant asymmetries in how these capabilities and insights into them have different value.

Of course, as you guys argue, this would have to be a package that would be considered jointly and combined, but I still think that there are some of these asymmetries that you could unpack a bit more.

And then the second big lump of measures that you suggest with regard to their mutual inspections of empty or actual suspected nuclear warhead sites, which is a measure designed to alleviate US/western concerns, as you also describe explicitly. Specifically, western concerns by Russia non-strategic nuclear weapons and their numbers, their locations, and this Russian concept of centralized storage.

And the author, yourself, you also suggest that this may be going a tad too far for the Russians, as the next suggestion may be going a tad too far for the US, which brings us again back to this asymmetry. So my question would be what would the value of additional information or the possibility to inspect empty nuclear warhead sites, what would the value of that be for the Russians versus the value of that for the United States?

I would, again, presume that the intelligence challenge, it is for Russia to determine NATO nuclear sites in Europe, for example, as compared to the intelligent challenge it is to determine Russian nuclear sites, and whether they are empty or not, that there is a significant asymmetry there.

In addition, I would presume that the value of the category of empty sites is quite different from the two sides perspective. There are probably very few candidates as suspected by Russia. What empty sites would there be to inspect in Europe and in the United States as well? On the other hand, from the US side, there are probably a large number of candidates, including full sites as suspected by the US, that they'd be interested in challenging as allegedly empty. So what would

this asymmetry of the sort of shopping list that each side would bring to the table due to the verification of such sites over time? And I think there's an interesting time aspect to that as well, in terms of the opportunities that the US would have to sort of systematically go after a really long list of Russian sites versus the opportunities that the Russians would have, or the number of sites basically that the Russians would be interested in. So, I think that there is some interesting aspects of asymmetry there as well.

And then finally, with regard to the package regarding Aegis Ashore, a package that's designed to alleviate Russian concerns. Again, I think this report and the suggestions are a great starting point for the discussion with much more concrete suggestions than what we've seen so far. And it's designed to alleviate the Russian concern about their ability to carry out a retaliatory strike with ICBMs, and the concern about the offensive potential of these sites.

But then additionally, I think there is a third concern for Russia that isn't really addressed in the report, which is the potential of these capabilities for interjecting the first Russian nuclear strike, a limited nuclear strike in Europe. So I think that, for example, a demonstration strike during a major conventional conflict. So I think that sort of the combined air and missile defense capabilities of the US and of NATO in Europe poses a problem for a lot of the Russian concepts that we know they discuss about with regard to escalation management, which means that it's not necessarily the case that just demonstrating the defensive potential of the European Phased Adaptive Approach will be sufficient to satisfy the Russians. And it's not necessarily the case that that will be sufficient to trade away their advantage, if you want, in the non-strategic nuclear weapons domain.

So, these are some of the questions I had upon reading this report. I think that these asymmetries could be expanded somewhat, but I think that this provides a really great starting point for a detailed discussion of the measures that are necessary to address the key concerns on both sides to enhance the confidence between them and to reduce the likelihood of conflict. Thank you.

Anita Friedt:
All right. Thank you very much, Kristin. Well, that's a lot of questions, but excellent questions and certainly questions that are no doubt on the mind of many, and especially our Russian colleagues here. Before we move to the discussion between James and Kristin, let me remind all of the viewers to please submit questions via the YouTube chat or by tweeting @carnegienpp. So @carnegienpp, or the YouTube chat.

So, I mentioned, Kristin certainly has thrown out many excellent questions here, which we will hopefully tackle some of them in our conversation now, which will take about 10 minutes. But I hope others will pose equally challenging questions to the authors. So let me kick this off here by talking about an issue that's always of great ... Or has been of great concern to me, and that plays into these asymmetries, the discussions between and questions, especially that Kristin raised. And that's the issue of confidentiality.

One of the things that I have noticed during my long career in arms control, is that well, nuclear security issues in arms control treaty implementation have always been protected to some extent from the downturn in bilateral relations, by confidentiality. By the treaty states, that discussions of implementation are confidential.

Unfortunately, in recent years, that has kind of gone out the door. And I'm not sure exactly when it started, but I think Russia's violation of INF began, I think, was the biggest debate we've had on this. But my question is what are your views on transparency vis-a-vis preserving confidentiality? That would be especially important as we talk about political declarations or confidence building measures, because what the paper envisages here is not a treaty yet, but something more informal. But how do we tackle that tricky subject? Because there's going to be great interest on the part of outsize observers to know exactly what the Russians and the US are doing, but how do we handle the issue of confidentiality, which I think is very important to maintain an open discussion between the two countries? Who would like to take a first crack at that? Okay. Can I go to you James, please? Thank you.

James Acton:
Yeah, sure. Thanks, Anita. So I mean, it's a great question. And I think one can distinguish between public transparency and private transparency. So transparency, data that is exchanged just between the parties and doesn't go any further, and data that is exchanged between the parties and made public. And New START has both of those, right? I mean, New START has each state's number of weapons on the three basic limits is made public, but the details of all of the different site-specific information is not made public.

And I believe each side is ... I mean, I could be wrong, but I believe each side has protected the other's data on that as required by the treaty. So my answer is that a lot of the data exchanges that we envision, I think would have to be confidential between the parties. I mean, the data exchange about SLCMs, the sea-launched-boost-glide missiles, I think the US and Russia wouldn't be willing to make any of that data public, and they would have to agree in the terms of the exchange to keep it confidential. If you inspect warhead storage facilities and they're empty, I suspect each side would be happy for that to be announced publicly, but my fundamental answer is all of these issues would have to be subject to negotiation, would have to be specified.

Just because it's non-binding doesn't mean there's not going to be a text there specifying precisely what's going to happen and when it's going to happen and what the rules are going to be. And the details of confidentiality would have to be written into that. As I say, I think as a general principle for better or for worse, I think that if you're exchanging sensitive data about military systems, the two sides are going to insist on keeping it confidential. I think you're still muted, Anita.

Anita Friedt:
Thank you. Operator error. Kristin, do you have any comments you'd like to add? Okay. And then let me see. Perhaps ...

James Acton:
Anita, I think you're muted again.

Anita Friedt:
I am. Sorry about that. Maybe a question for Kristin here. As the paper points out, divisive domestic politics, particularly in the United States, but also internationally are obstacles to productive engagement and moving forward. How can the incoming US administration address domestic opposition? And then similarly, what can international players, what can NATO members for example, do to help relay some of the concerns or perhaps add a productive element to some of the domestic issues that also plays into the current problems with COVID and obviously defense spending questions?

Kristin Ven Bruusgaard:
Did you want me to-

Anita Friedt:
Yeah. Go ahead and ... Yeah.

Kristin Ven Bruusgaard:
Yeah. I wanted to make sure that the other authors as well have an opportunity to get engaged at their leisure. So let me talk about the international community first, seeing as I am in Europe, I think that at least from a number of European states' perspective, domestic support for increased or strengthened arms control measures is really sort of a no-brainer. I mean, there is extensive domestic support in most European states for ... Well, the United States and Russia finding back to additional arms control measures, and even sort of stronger arms control agreements between the great powers as well as between emerging powers.

So, I think that the question of domestic opposition is one that pertains largely to the United States. And I am not the most expert person to address how to overcome those obstacles, I think, participating in this conversation, but it's certainly an issue that European observers are watching very closely and paying close attention to now that most observers are anticipating a significant shift with

the incoming US administration not withstanding these domestic obstacles that will remain even given that shift.

Anita Friedt:
Okay, thank you. And just to note that our two other speakers, TD and Pranay will be joining us for the question and answer session, which will begin in a few minutes. James, would you like to take a crack at that one, or maybe also address some of Kristin's? Certainly, you can take a crack at the US domestic opposition in Congress perhaps, but also perhaps address some of Kristin's questions regarding the asymmetries, particularly with respect to, for example, the inspection of empty sites or canisters in Kaliningrad, et cetera.

James Acton:
So yeah. Let me give Kristin some responses to her excellent questions. So part of the thing about transparency, it's hard to assess the value and the measure until you've actually exchanged the data. I mean, I think that's obviously you want the data exchange because you don't know the data, but it's hard to assess the real value until you've actually done the exchange of the data. And I think a number of the assumptions that Kristin outlined, they may or may not be correct. We just don't know.

So, it's clearly the case that our measure related to non-strategic nuclear weapons favors the US. Now, the measure related to ballistic missile defense clearly favors Russia, right? I can't imagine how you deal with either of those issues in a way that by themselves, feel mutually beneficial. The key thing is going to be to combine them together.

I would say though, on non-strategic nuclear weapons, that I've heard Russians express concern that non-strategic nuclear weapons are located in Europe outside of the six sites that are widely reported to hold them. Are those concerns serious or are they talking points? I don't know. But I think part of the value of this measure is that if they are serious, it provides a way of dealing with those concerns.

And I think obviously Kristin is right that the list of sites that the US is concerned about is probably going to be longer than the list of sites that Russia is concerned about, but any sites are going to have to be done on the basis of strict reciprocity. So, there's not going to be seven inspections by the US of Russian sights, but only two by Russia of the US sites. It's going to be two a piece or three apiece.

So, I think it's the number of sites that are inspected that matters there rather than the number of sites of concern. And in terms of some of these, the sea-launched cruise missiles and the sea-launched-boost-glide missiles, I'd say this. Based on publicly available information, the US appears to have a lead in the development of boost-glide weapons, particularly sea-launched weapons.

So, I think Russia benefits from learning about US plans for its sea-launched-boost-glide weapons. I think Russia has nuclear arms SLCMs that the US doesn't. So the US benefits more from that side of the exchange. It's obviously not clear to me who benefits most from data exchanges about non-nuclear sea-launched-cruise-missiles. I mean, Russia has a lot of those and it's building more, whereas the US probably has more at the moment, but it's force is likely to be more static at least over the medium term.

So again, the idea here is that the package as a whole would provide each side with benefit. Obviously, it's very hard to devise proposals that are exactly equally beneficial to each side. But I think on the proposal for these advanced defensive weapons, I do hope there is something for each side there.

Anita Friedt:
Okay, good. I think with this, we've got a fair number of questions coming in here. So I think this may be a good time to transition. And thank you both Kristin and James, but this may be a great time to transition to the public questions and answers.

And let me ask Pranay Vaddi and TD MacDonald to join us at this point to answer those questions. And then please keep your questions coming in. We will go as long as we can. I mean, obviously you have to finish here on time, but we've

got some good questions here. So first, let me see here. We have a question from Alan Ware, and his question to James Acton is, "Former Secretary of Defense, William Perry, has suggested the US eliminate their land-based ICBMs. What do you think about this proposal?"

James Acton:
Can I bring Pranay into this? Because Pranay has also been thinking, I know, about this question in terms of a separate Carnegie piece on our modern nuclear posture review, which hasn't come out yet. So I don't want to put Pranay in a difficult situation, saying something that hasn't been public yet. But I'm sure he can finesse his answer.

Pranay Vaddi:
I guess I'll try it. Well, thank you. And thank you to Anita and Kristin for participating in our panel. It's really nice to see you both. On ICBM elimination, without spoiling a report to come here in the coming weeks on a model nuclear posture review for the next US administration, we're sort of working with the idea that the mission for the US ICBM may be diminishing as time moves on. And so, what are some creative ways to utilize it and bilateral arms control proposals in order to minimize the role of the ICBM moving forward, but also have it be in the trade space for arms productions with Russia?

I don't see a ton of appetite in the United States to unilaterally eliminate the ICBM. And as the US does possess a large number of ICBMs, it seems more acceptable to try to use it in arms production, as opposed to unilaterally eliminate it, with the potential being there that we don't have the Russians reduce anything. I think that's sort of my tease for a more detailed proposal and a forthcoming report, but it takes into account the sort of deterrence reality with Russia, the arms control reality with Russia, and then obviously, the domestic political reality here in the United States.

Anita Friedt:
Okay. Thank you. No, that's good with this one. Look forward to the forthcoming report. So, the next question is from Pavel Podveg, and he asks, "Why would

Russia be interested in US declaration of nuclear submarine launched cruise missiles? We know that this number is zero and likely to stay zero for quite some time. Nuclear submarine launched cruise missiles plans notwithstanding." Who would like to take a crack at that one?

James Acton:
Let me just give a very quick answer to Pavel's good question. I mean, the answer is Russia would benefit very little from that particular part of the declaration. I mean, certainly the case that the US would declare zero now and for the foreseeable future, unless and until it gets this online. But the declaration is a package, right? The way we've designed it, there's actually three different kinds of weapons with two range categories in each. So Russia's interest in this bilateral proposal will be other parts of the declaration. US non-nuclear cruise missiles and US non-nuclear sea-launched-boost-glide missiles.

Again, it comes back to this part, not every single part of the declaration is useful to both countries. The idea is to come up with a data exchange where the whole thing is useful to each country on balance.

Anita Friedt:
Okay, thank you. Next. Let me see. Well, we have two questions here, interesting, on doctrine. The first from PNND, "The five proposals you make in the report all appear to be addressed to weapons control and verification, but aren't doctrinal issues just as important? For example, like first use policies." And then secondly, we have another one, "Is it possible to hold a dialogue among US, Russia, China, and other allies on clarifying and possible verification measures of their doctrines and postures? Especially, if China's no-first use remains." Let me see. Who can turn to? James, would you like to go with that one?

James Acton:
Well, I was just going to suggest that you go to Pranay on that one.

Anita Friedt:
Okay.

James Acton:
And then, I don't know if TD wants to add anything on the issue of verifying doctrine or not.

Anita Friedt:
That's right-

James Acton:
But why don't you go to my colleagues?

Anita Friedt:
Okay, great. Pranay, please.

Pranay Vaddi:
Sure. I guess as an overview, we would imagine that any of these proposals, were they had to be actually taken on by Washington, Moscow or Beijing, and attempted to be negotiated, it would be in the context of a broader strategic dialogue. We would assume these are going to be done in parallel as opposed to as a big sort of get together, trilateral dialogue. But however the governments decide to pursue these proposals, we assume that a discussion of nuclear doctrine, some transparency into each country's intentions towards the others would all be a part of that.

Now, as far as are we sort of wrapping our arms around the entirety of the nuclear doctrine of the United States towards Russia or China and sort of vice versa? Our purpose here is to come up with some targeted proposals that look at what we view as either irritants in the arms control relationships or particular deterrence challenges that have not been addressed at this point by arms control, but have been kind of on the menu for a long time.

Do they encompass the entirety of sort of doctrinal differences among the three countries? No. But I think they get the ball rolling on the most important questions that need to be answered. Maybe TD has a little bit more to add.

TD MacDonald:
Yeah. So briefly in terms of being able to verify doctrine. And I'm specifically looking at this as verifying doctrine through something like national technical means and looking at the technical capabilities. So, with China's no first use, you might not be able to get inside their head, but you might be able to see if the technologies that they're deploying, or the way in which they deployed their arsenal is consistent with a no first use doctrine. So, in that example, if they continue to keep their warheads not mated to the delivery system during peacetime. So, verifying doctrine can be challenging directly, but in a broader sense, the access to more information can help sort of validate that what they are deploying is consistent with what they're stating.

Anita Friedt:
Okay, good. Thank you. Thank you, all. Okay. Now, we have a historical question relating to a CTR experience, cooperative threat reduction experience. This is from William Moon. He asks, "On reciprocal inspections of nuclear weapon storage sites, have you considered that Russia allowed visits to their storage sites under the CTR nuclear security program between 2003 and 2012? Could we build on that?" I think that's a good one. How about ... I don't know. Let's see. Pranay, James.

Pranay Vaddi:
I'm happy to start, James.

Anita Friedt:
Sure.

Pranay Vaddi:
Look, I think our proposals didn't sort of appear in a vacuum. We consulted some historical examples where possible, and the CTR example is a great one. If there's an opportunity and as we move towards a final report to pull more of those examples of course, we will. Obviously, it's a slightly different objective in mind

from CTR to today. And in part, this sort of interim proposal is designed to get the attack on nuclear weapons arms control conversation moving.

We don't intend transparency into empty storage facilities to be the sort of end of the conversation. We're hoping for it to be the beginning and move towards more ambitious proposals that are on the table that can resolve some essential numerical limitations and verification of those limits as well. Maybe I'll stop there and let James chime in too.

Anita Friedt:
James, would you like to add or ...

James Acton:
No. I mean, Pranay said kind of the key point that I was going to make, which is that the purpose of the CTR inspections was somewhat different from the purpose of our inspections, right? It was the CTR inspection seems to ensure that the money that the US had helped and the technical support the US had given Russia to enhance security around its facilities had been used in that approved way. That's somewhat different from the context of an arms control inspection, though in a general sense, demonstrates the access to sensitive facilities can be possible.

Anita Friedt:
Okay, let me see. Thank you. Okay. Here's one on the non-nuclear weapons states, which I think deserves attention. "Do you think expanding future arms control discussions to all nuclear weapons states rather than just focusing on the big three would be viable and potentially motivate other countries like China to engage?" So this is the question of like India, Pakistan, et cetera. Who would like to take a crack at that? Kristin, maybe. I don't want to put you on the spot, but ...

Kristin Ven Bruusgaard:
I can have a crack at it, and then hope that someone else will follow up. I mean, in the US-Russia dialogue, there are certainly calls on both sides to expand the number of countries to be included in the dialogue. So on the US side, there are

repeated calls for including China. On the Russian side, there are repeated calls for including France and the United Kingdom in any future multilateral arms control agreements.

And I think that ... And not being an expert on the Chinese strategic deliberations, I would presume that they would also be interested in potential limitations on the arsenals of their regional contenders as well, in addition to any potential limitation that will be placed on their own arsenal as well, as limitations on the other great powers.

So, I think that it's certainly an avenue that's worth exploring in terms of incentivizing additional countries to engage in arms control talks and deliberations, but I guess for the time being, many observers are paying most close attention to the United States and Russia given their incredibly large arsenals, compared to all other nuclear weapon states.

Anita Friedt:
Okay. With this, I've got my 10-minute warning here, actually, which is now nine minutes. So we need to come to a close. Well, let's see if I can sneak this one in quickly, and then we'll move to closing comments and we have to end. I believe this is Hans Kristensen, "In proposals about warhead storage site verification a decade ago, the ideas ran into deeply ingrained opposition from the intelligence community, even at bases that we're not active anymore. How do you imagine the two sides can overcome such opposition?" How about, James?

James Acton:
What I was going to say, does TD want to take this one?

Anita Friedt:
TD. Oh, please.

TD MacDonald:
Sure. Yeah, so it is a challenging issue. One of the sort of benefits of looking at former warheads storage facilities, is that it should lessen some of the security

concerns around it. The main things that you'd be worried about causing issues would be things like security measures around say, warhead storage vaults.

At a former facility, there shouldn't be any warheads there. So it sort of eliminates that part. And part of the value of our proposal is that it sort of offers a venue where the stakes are relatively low for the two countries to be able to develop a process that they would be comfortable having at an active storage facility in the future in a cooperative manner.

Anita Friedt:
Okay. So with this, we have about ... Let's see, seven minutes left. So let's go to closing questions. Obviously, we could go on for quite some time and I'm happy to do so, but maybe we should schedule another session. First, I'll go in reverse order here. Let me see, TD, would you have any closing remarks? And then Pranay, and then over to Kristin and James. TD, over to you?

TD MacDonald:
Sure. Yeah, so just generally speaking, I think we spend a lot of our time on this proposal, sort of working out ways where verification could be used to try to address these issues in a way that is going to be acceptable for both, but a lot of it is going to come down to the two sides working together to figure out how they could do it in a way that's mutually acceptable. So I think that's sort of one of the main virtues of these nearer term proposals, I would say.

Anita Friedt:
All right. Thank you. Pranay, over you.

Pranay Vaddi:
Sure. Well, thank you again to Anita and Kristin for participating in the panel. And it was a really valuable discussion to have with you all on an important report. I'll just comment briefly on the domestic politics and I'll leave all of the fun of the report back to James.

I think we've seen in the current administration for the past year or so a pretty consistent demand signal among the administration supporters to include non-strategic nuclear weapons in arms control moving forward, and tried to bring China into the arms control process.

Now, the current administration's attempt, which was well-intentioned, ran out of time. I think the conditions that were set were a little bit too extreme, but they expanded the conversation. And we're looking at a series of proposals that we think are feasible for continuing on this course. How can we bring China into US arms control policy, and how can we continue what has been a fruitful relationship with Russia in arms control to include some of these other systems?

As James mentioned at the outset, we had this previous report focused on strategic arms control with Russia. These five proposals sort of fill out what we think is a pretty ambitious US arms control agenda moving forward. And hopefully, people find ideas here that they like and are willing to try to implement. And I think Capitol Hill should at least take note that we're trying here on non-strategic nuclear weapons and bringing China in. So to the extent that any of these ideas require bipartisan political support moving forward, there should be something in here for everyone. Thanks.

Anita Friedt:
Okay. Thank you. Kristin, just some brief concluding remarks.

Kristin Ven Bruusgaard:
Yeah. I'll just come back to some of the responses that James had regarding the asymmetries. I mean, I totally buy that the total package that you are putting forward in this report, and that's the reason I said I think it's a really commendable attempt at trying to encompass some of these sort of key concerns that aren't being expressed on, on both sides. I think this type of proposal that you've put forward is basically exactly what will be needed in order to overcome some of the obstacles that we've been running up against for such a long time.

My only question that I would raise was of these asymmetries and whether this attempt is going far enough in pushing both sides, including Washington DC, I would say on the Aegis Ashore question as compared to how long this suggestion goes in pushing Moscow on the strategic nuclear weapons question.

But as you say, James, I think the whole point of this is to put a number of proposals on the table as a starting point for a negotiation that will also serve to identify additional red lines in terms of what can be done and what cannot be done. And I think that this is a really, really good starting point for placing those demarcations, and also identifying the areas possible to make progress.

Anita Friedt:
Thank you, Kristin. And finally to you, James, please.

James Acton:
Well, thank you, Anita, and thank you, Kristin. And thank you to my colleagues, TD and Pranay. Three brief points. I was on Twitter, I noticed that Justin Anderson had asked an interesting question, which is, "How do we decide what should be in a treaty and what shouldn't be in a treaty?"

And my answer is like our basic philosophy was everything we could plausibly put into the treaty, we put into the treaty. Right? We weren't deliberately holding stuff back just for the sake of it. These non-binding confidence building and transparency measures come into issues that for technical or political reasons, we just don't think you can limit by treaty.

As I say, systems based on SSNs, attack submarines, neither side is going to agree to those being inspected. That's a technical example. And the Senate is not going to agree to limit on missile defense, unfortunately. So that's an example of where it's politically infeasible.

When I started, one of the kinds of long running critiques that I've had of this work is people were saying, "Yeah, but the Russians aren't really interested in doing stuff without treaties." And there were rumors in the last in the last few

weeks that maybe Russian interest in that was increasing. And I finally found out the reason for that. Some people may have seen that the Russian journalists from Kommersant, Elena Chernenko, wrote an article that came out just a couple of hours ago, about how peace, in which she says that Russia has given the US some discussion documents that do explicitly say that there are both treaty and non-treaty-based approaches.

So, I hope we're pushing at an open door there. And then finally, in terms of this issue of asymmetries, I make two points. I think none of these measures are going to go as far as ... For each side, they'll go too far. And for the other side, they won't go far enough. I think that even in terms of the Aegis Ashore proposal, some of the stuff in here would actually be really painful for the US and its allies.

I mean, inspections of Russians on Romanian or Polish soil is going to be painful. And again, in many ways, it's actually more politically difficult than inspections on US soil. But I just end with a note of agreement with Kristin, that a lot of this is about a starting point for negotiations. I mean, no proposal that an NGO ever puts forward is adopted kind of wholesale by governments. But our metric of success for this is could I imagine government saying, "There is an idea here we could work on together on an official track one level." And that's the kind of concrete change that we hope to catalyze through this work.

Anita Friedt:
All right. Thank you very much, James. And thank you to all of the panelists and speakers. And thank you, audience, for your very thought-provoking questions. There were many more, so I hope we will have a future opportunity for discussions and more questions and answers. But again, most of all, thanks to the wonderful authors for this thought-provoking, very realistic set of proposals that will lead us into the future. So thank you. And with this, the program concludes. Thank you.