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WEBINAR

US-RUSSIA RELATIONS:
A CONVERSATION WITH RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR ANATOLY ANTONOV

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P R O C E E D I N G S

GENERAL ALLEN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name is John Allen. I'm the president of the Brookings Institution. It's a great pleasure to welcome you all this afternoon to the event entitled, "US-Russia Relations: A Conversation with the Russian Ambassador Anatoly Antonov."

Throughout the 20th Century, the United States and Russia have had a long and a storied relationship, which has at various points balanced elements of cooperation, competition, and even conflict. And despite our differences from World War II to the aftermath of 9/11, the United States and Russia have, indeed, found common cause throughout some of the greatest challenges in our recent history. It's worth stating that America as a nation of immigrants has benefited from Russian blood that runs thickly in the veins of our people. And our country is better, and our people are better for the immigration of Russians to America.

In that sense, even today the U.S. and Russia continue to share converging interests on issues like arms control, non-proliferation, environmental research in the Arctic, climate change, biomedical research, and public health. The latter is especially important today as the world continues to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to afflict over 12 million people worldwide.

Yet, there is no doubt that recent years have strained the U.S. and Russia bilateral relationship. From New START to ongoing situations in Ukraine and Syria, these issues have raised tensions on both sides and for complex reasons. While difficult, I encourage our participants today, as well as other the experts in the field, to not shy away from acknowledging these hard facts. Rather, I argue that acknowledgment, in fact, is the first step in resolving our differences so that we may continue to work on behalf of ensuring the security and the health and the environment of our shared global community.

As an institution dedicated to supporting the public good, Brookings is committed to hosting such essential conversations as the one you'll hear today. For without dialog, we believe there can be no progress. So, it's in that sprit, that today we are delighted to host His Excellency the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the United States Anatoly Antonov.

Ambassador Antonov has a long and distinguished career as a specialist in nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And prior to being named as the

ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Antonov served as the first deputy minister -- first, as deputy minister of the defense and then as deputy minister of foreign affairs. Two very important positions in the Russian Federation.

Joining the Ambassador today is Brookings Nonresident Senior Fellow Dr. Angela Stent, who is the director of the Center for Eurasian, Russian, and Eastern European Studies and a professor of government and foreign service at Georgetown University. She is a former national intelligence officer for Russia and Eurasia on the National Intelligence Council. Doctor, welcome.

And in addition, we are joined by Brookings Senior Fellow Frank Rose. Frank is a former assistant secretary of state for arms control, verification, and compliance, whose portfolio included missile defense, space security, chemical and biological weapons, and conventional arms control.

So, before I turn the floor over to Frank who will be moderating today's event, I'd like to quickly remind everyone that we're very much live today, and on the record and streaming. Our audience members can submit questions to events@brookings.edu, events.brookings@edu, or via Twitter at #USRussia. So, with that, once again, Mr. Ambassador, we're so grateful for your joining us today. And let me turn the floor over to Frank and we look forward to the conversation that you'll be leading today.

MR. ROSE: Thank you very much, General Allen, and welcome to today's event. Let me begin by providing you some information on how today's program will proceed. We'll start by asking Ambassador Antonov to provide about 10 or 15 minutes of opening remarks outlining his views on the current state of the overall U.S.-Russia bilateral relationship. Following the Ambassador's remarks, we'll have a moderated discussion between myself, Dr. Angela Stent, and the ambassador. Towards the end of the event, we'll take a few questions from the audience.

As General Allen mentioned, if you would like to ask a question, viewers can submit their questions by emailing events@brookings.edu or via Twitter using the #USRussia hashtag. On that note, let me turn the floor over to Ambassador Antonov. Ambassador, the floor is yours. Ambassador, you are on mute.

GENERAL ALLEN: You're muted, sir.

MR. ANTONOV: I hope that everything is fine. Again, you'll see that it's a pleasure for me to repeat what I have said just only one sec ago. It's a great honor for me to be with you. You have

characterized my remarks as Russian-American relations. Frank, you said that I have decided to narrow our item for discussion to strategic stability of arms control. But, Frank, it does not mean that I'm not ready to make more wider our discussion, and, of course, I will be very pleased to start such a dialog.

It seems to me that under such circumstances that we face now in Washington, we have a lack of communication between NGO and Russian embassy between the administration and Russian embassy taking into account current political situation in Washington and in the United States of America. So, Frank, again, you said that I will concentrate on strategic stability issues and, of course, I am open to any questions from your side from audience, I am at your disposal.

So, the international community is concerned over the state of international system of arms control. We share this concern. Despite Russia's recent new initiatives, today there is no certainty that we will succeed in improving the situation. In our most straight-forwarded proposal to reaffirm the Reagan-Gorbachev statement that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought has not found support in Washington.

I failed to try to persuade my colleagues within these three years just only to get confirmation from this administration to this very important signal to international community. Lately, we have been witnessing a further degradation of arms control. Just few days ago, the United States withdraw from the Open Skies Treaty and put the agreement on the brink of collapse. We also bear in mind the (inaudible) steps of the current U.S. administration with regard to the INF Treaty, which also ceased to exist.

The Russian proposal to declare a moratorium on INF missiles deployment in regions of the world have not received any positive reaction yet. Special focus is on Europe and the Asia-Pacific Region. The situation around the CTBT is complicated as well. We see that United States does not intend to ratify the treaty at least for now. It's clear that other major countries on which CTBT's entry into force depends watch the U.S. closely and wait for the Administration to make its move.

Today the question before us is whether we will be able to save the arms control system together. With the necessary consent, will we manage to adapt the system to current challenges and threats, or abandon multilateral mechanism that determines strategic stability and predictability? Will we build relations on the basis of equality or give up and submit to the will of one state? Russia's position on

arms control is consistent. We have always advocated for strong, peaceful, and stable international relations. Maintaining strategic stability enhances every country's national security.

I'm sure that like Russia, every state is interested in mutual predictability and military risk reduction. We do not support the idea of creating so-called islands of stability, areas of countries with excess threatening military potentials, especially at the expense of defense capabilities of other states. Over the recent years, we have repeatedly reached out to major countries. First of all, to the United States, with proposals to engage in serious substantial efforts on strengthening strategic stability. Our proposals have never taken the form of ultimatums. Those have always been invitations toward a dialog and to reaching mutually acceptable equitable agreements with which would address concerns of every member of the international community an effective architecture when international arms control can be restored only on the basis of indivisible security and parity.

Our approaches to potential agreements may be different, but I believe that the inspiration to preserve peace is what we share. In this context, the fate of New START is perhaps the key issue for future arms control. No one has ever said that the treaty is perfect. We managed to cover many issues in New START, but there are still problems that require further discussion.

The agreements enshrined in the treaty were the maximum that Russia and the United States could reach at the time it was signed 11 years ago. All these years, neither the United States nor Russia nor the international community criticized New START. Many call it the gold standard of arms control agreements. It's only in the last few month when our American colleagues have suddenly found some aspects of the treaty detrimental to the U.S. national security. We have never made a secret of our desire to save New START, not to secure some sort of advantage, but to prevent Russia-United States relations in the area of strategic security from collapsing.

We need time to work out new agreements that would address the new security threats and challenges emerged in recent years. That is why as early as last December, Russia officially proposed to the United States to extend New START without any preconditions. In doing so, we put aside our concerns, which we repeatedly raised with our American colleagues about certain procedures the United States used to fulfill its treaty obligations. For quite a while we could not secure the consent of the United States to resume a serious dialog. In fact, we succeeded in reestablishing our contacts with all

-- in the, you know, led up to the U.S. presidential elections.

As a result, we are running out of time to extend New START, as it will expire on February the 5th 2021. After difficult consultations with our American colleagues two month ago, Russia announced its readiness to meet Washington halfway on two key issues. In particular, we agreed to a one-year extension of the treaty, while our preference is a five-year term, and to freeze one of the party's nuclear warheads for the mentioned period. Moscow expressed its willingness to formalize this in a form of a politically binding framework agreement and that we stressed that Washington should not put forward any additional conditions.

We assume that in the negotiations that would follow the New START extension, the two sides would have an opportunity to reach agreements on missile defense, ground-based intermediate and short range missile, global strike systems, hypersonic delivery vehicles, future space weapons, and other factors causing serious national security concerns for Russia. However, the administration has not shared our approach and within the framework of agreement, tried to get us to agree on the inclusion of a harsh Cold War era verification regime of the freeze and the development of some definitions of the subject of the future treaties. That is to say, to get ahead of the results of the potential negotiations.

I recall the time 11 years ago when distinguished (inaudible) and our delegations started the negotiations. Back then, the American colleagues talked about the redundancy of the previous START One notification mechanism. They proposed to move away from the Cold War stereotypes. They sought to convince us of the need to streamline notification procedures and we agreed to that. Today the treaty provides the necessary level of transparency and the most important predictability.

The United States and Russia receive information on the current state of each other's strategic nuclear forces. We have carried out hundreds, hundreds of on-site inspections. We have also exchanged tens of thousands of notifications. All this within the framework of the New START notification mechanism. An important result of the limitation of the treaty is that the parties have reached the agreed limits for deployed strategic offensive weapons. The total number of deployed warheads has been cut by one-third. The number of deployed and non-deployed delivery vehicles has reduced by more than half. Thus, the New START has confirmed its key role in strengthening strategic stability and mutual trust.

In addition to serving the United States and Russia national security goals, it signals to

the world that our two countries are serious in their efforts to strengthen global peace and security. Finally, the agreement is a significant contribution of the two great powers to the implementation of the well-known Article VI of the NPT. It's important to emphasize here that our country needs New START as much as the United States does. Russia is a predictable nuclear power. Under no circumstances we are going to engage in arms race that we are openly threatened with. We play responsibly our role of a guarantor with the national security and will do everything necessary to preserve strategic stability.

First of all, to ensure defense of the Russian state even in the absence of the treaty. Today, there are a lot of debates about better formats of potential arms control agreements. There are frequent polls in the United States to involve China. Our priority is to engage the United Kingdom and France in the arms control negotiations. They are members of NATO. NATO is an organization that positions itself as a nuclear alliance. That's why we cannot ignore the nuclear weapons capabilities of (inaudible) terrorists. I would like to stress that we are open to a multilateral dialog. At the same time, we believe that forcing anyone to participate in such discussions is a counter-productive approach. Any negotiation should result in enhanced national security of all countries and lower levels of their weapon arsenals. As to us, we are ready for such work. Thank you very much.

MR. ROSE: Great. Mr. Ambassador, thanks for that overview of the strategic stability set of issues. And let me come back to you on the future of New START. You know, one of the biggest challenges the United States and Russia face with regards to New START is the treaty is scheduled to expire on February 5, 2021. So, that's less than two months. Do you think there's enough time to extend the treaty before then, number one? Number two, are you still having discussions with the Trump administration currently about extending the treaty? Or do you think discussions about extension will have to wait until President-elect Biden takes office on January 20th? So, I'd be interested in your thoughts. Do you think we have time to make it happen?

MR. ANTONOV: Frank, we have time. You'll see that we can get it very quickly. You'll see that if anybody can call me now from State Department of White House, I'm ready to come. I am ready to continue such negotiations. Moreover, we have excellent team in Moscow. I know the majority of them because at least 50% of that team was with me 11 years ago when we started negotiations on this treaty. It's my first -- my answer to your first question.

As to your second question, yes, we are in close contact with Marshall Billingslea, who is a key negotiator from American side. We have exchanged our thoughts, our ideas on this issue. As to me, Frank, you know that I prefer to speak privately. I prefer to speak directly to American negotiators without mass media, and with due respect, without NGO participation. And I am ready to sell NGO the result of our dialog, the results of our potential negotiations. That's why what I can say now that we are still in dialog. We hope that we will continue it for a foreseeable future.

MR. ROSE: Great. And let me follow-up on that question. So, let's assume all the pieces fall into place and we extend the New START Treaty. As I like to say, then the hard work begins, and you talked about that in your opening remarks. Bringing in third parties like Britain, France, and China, but also integrating new technologies like anti-satellite weapons, cyber capabilities, hypersonic capabilities. How do we move to the next step after New START? Does Russia have a preferred format? For example, could we use the P5 Process? Should we have trilateral talks? I'd be interested in your thoughts about next steps.

MR. ANTONOV: Frank, you have raised so many questions, very important questions. I just would like to recall what happened 11 years ago when we started negotiations with a previous administration and what I would like to say that there was a lot of questions regarding new technology, regarding missile defense, regarding strategic offensive arms and non-nuclear configuration, regarding a disbalance in conventional arms, and many, many other issues. And we cannot -- we failed to find an answer to all questions.

And there was decision in the end of that round of negotiation that we would continue discussion with our American colleagues. You'll see that it was my proposal during the final session of our meeting in Geneva. I offered my American friends, let's not leave Geneva for Washington and Moscow. Let's continue discussion because you see our delegation. You know our faces. You know who we are, and we also we have established very good practical pragmatic relations with your team. Let's continue because all issues were -- we failed to cover all of them.

The situation is the same. We have in the beginning to identify what should be the focus of the future negotiations. Why we have proposed American side to extend for five years. We consider that next round of negotiations will be very difficult because we have to take onboard many issues that

you raised. But, Frank, you understand that we have our own concerns, and we also would like them to put on the paper. So, it will be very difficult to identify what kind of issues will be on the top of our agenda. Then we will decide what would we do with the rest that could not be included in our next new New START Treaty. I don't know who to call potential new agreement.

So, it will be very difficult negotiations. It's not possible to deal with this issue online or it's not possible to see each other just only once for a month. It's necessary to work 24 hours per day. You'll see that and our delegation have to be stationed in -- in a third country. I don't know whether it will be Austria or Geneva or other state, but we have to start.

As to format, as to format. You'll see that we are open. We are open. We understand that United States would like to involve China. As to us, you'll see that we understand that at this juncture, the Chinese colleagues are not happy with such invitation, and they are reluctant to support it. Moreover, official representative of Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China has mentioned many times that China is not ready to become a partner for such negotiations.

And by the way, Frank, I will reveal a little bit some substance of our discussions with this administration. I raised a question many times to my colleagues. What do we want from China? Do we want to invite China to get the same ceilings that United States and Russia have now? Or the United States and Russia are ready to reduce a quantity of warheads and nuclear and delivery vehicles to the level that China has now? There was no any answer from my American friends on this issue. So, you see how potential conversations will be complicated. So, that's why -- that's why you'll see that it would be more prudent if we make first step, extend START Treaty, and then sit together and let's identify what we want to put on a potential treaty papers.

MR. ROSE: Great. Well, on that note, we have our colleague, Angela Stent, who is back. I think she had some Internet issues. And as I always like to say, if you really want to understand post-Cold War U.S.-Russian relations, you need to read Dr. Stent's book, "The Limits of Partnership." I highly recommend it. And, Angela, I'll take my commission after the event. So, on that note, Angela, the floor is yours.

MS. STENT: Thank you very much, Frank. Good afternoon, Ambassador Antonov. I apologize. I somehow lost the Internet, but hopefully I'm back now for the rest of the time.

So, I wanted to ask you a broader question about the U.S.-Russian relationship, moving away from the arms control, which is obviously the most important part of it. But as you know, every American administration, new one seems to come into office determined to pursue a reset with Russia. And I wanted to ask you from the Russian point of view, if you believe that it was the right thing to do to pursue a reset, how would you go about doing that? What would your priorities be?

MR. ANTONOV: A very difficult issue. And, frankly, you'll see that I would like to see you, but I'm a little bit upset before our meeting, because my minister counselor has just returned back from State Department. Maybe it's difficult to understand how it is important for us, but the most sensitive issue for us is now visa issue. There is a great problem for us. We cannot extend visa for our doctor. We cannot get a visa for children that are born in Russian diplomat's families. We cannot extend visa for our diplomats who are working here. You'll see that, frankly, I'm very much disappointed. And from on -- based on my assumption, you'll see that, of course, it's rather difficult to think about the future.

As to us, we would like to have pragmatic relations, friendly relations with United States. We are two great powers. We are permanent members of Security Council. We bear a special responsibility for international -- for international stability and peace. That's why you'll see that could I say in English such way, we are doomed for cooperation because the whole world depends upon the relations between United States and Russia, and just only maybe a few guys who are happy to see current shape of Russian-American relations. I understand that it will be very difficult to restart dialog between the United States and Russia.

By the way, we didn't stop this dialog, even under such circumstances. When previous -- when current administration seized Russian properties, expelled a lot of Russian diplomats blaming us for many events that we are not responsible for. We are still in a good mood. We are still in favor to develop our relations. What should I do? And it's not a secret. You'll see that I would like to use all positive elements that we have before -- we had before and we have now, and the core of our relations, would be strategic stability issues. The problem of arms control. The problem of non-proliferation. And you'll see that we are together on this issue. We have to fight together against terrorism anywhere, whether it is in Latin America or in Middle East. Whether it is in Asia or other countries.

We have excellent relations on space issues, and we can continue. You'll see that I see

today progress made by our Chinese friends, and I would like to welcome such achievements. And I am sure that we have excellent prospects with United States to develop such cooperation.

And, of course, I cannot ignore, and I would like to emphasize that we need cooperation to fight COVID-19 pandemic. Just only a few month ago, our scientists signed a memorandum of cooperation. It seems to me that we shouldn't try to launch competition on this issue. We should unite our efforts. You'll see that if we have vaccine that could protect Americans, we are ready to share with you. And today, by the way, we have made a presentation in U.N. on this issue. And we would like to welcome our American friends to work together on these issues.

So, I am not talking about culture. I am not talking about Russian ballet. You'll see that I like it very much and I have seen many times how American audience applauded Russian artists who came from Moscow. And you'll see that I have very old joke, sometimes it's difficult to translate, but I said that it's enough to have a ballet, and maybe we no need any missile. You'll see that just only to see your smile and to continue our cooperation.

MR. ROSE: Angela, you're muted.

MS. STENT: So, certainly, culture is one area where U.S.-Russian relations have always thrived irrespective of a political relationship. I want to ask you about one other area where the United States and Russia have cooperated where we also compete, but it's an area where there's a lot of focus at the moment, and that's the Artic. What do you see going forward as prospects for cooperation there in the Artic?

MR. ANTONOV: It's a really important issue and if you permit me, I will take a few minutes just only to answer to you because I see that Artic is a zone of friendship and cooperation between the United States and Russia. I can say right away that we are engaged in competition in high latitudes. We oppose the focus on the securitization of the region, which substitutes the agenda of sustainable development of the far north and strengthen partnership mechanism. We support the principle of pragmatics in cooperation in the Artic including in bilateral relations.

We know the need for joint active work to address the problems of the Artic. Our country's special attention to the Artic arises from the natural forests. Russia has significant territories in the north and today it produces more than 10% of domestic GDP and more than 20% of exports. From

our perspective, prospects for economic growth in the years ahead are connected with the rich resource base and transport potential of the Arctic. The updated strategy for the development of the Russia Federation Arctic Zone is ensuring national security through to 2035. Just only a few months ago, in October, my president has signed our strategy on this issue.

We put special emphasis on the efforts to maintain a balance between economic development and preservation of the fragile and unique ecosystem of north. We also intend to base the priorities of Russian chairmanship in the Arctic Council in 2021, 2023 on the task of supporting a constructive agenda and harmonize and sustainable development of the north. I already have met with my colleagues from State Department who are responsible for this issue. It was my first discussion with them. And I would like to say that we have a huge agenda for a potential cooperation between the United States and Russia. It's up to us. It's up to Washington to decide whether this issue is right for cooperation or not. You will see that we will be waiting any reaction from your side. Thank you.

MS. STENT: Thank you. And now, I'm going to ask you a question which I know all of our viewers and listeners are very curious to hear the answer to is, and that is when could we expect President Putin to acknowledge that Joe Biden is going to be the next president of the United States?

MR. ANTONOV: You'll see that I can just only smile to this question. I hope that you understand that how I have to be cautious on this issue. First, I am not working in Kremlin. You'll see that I am not in close contact with Mr. Putin. But, of course, I am aware of the position of Russian Federation on this issue. We can see that it's American people decides itself who will run this country and we will recognize any choice that your people makes.

And as I understand that we need to wait some legal procedures in your country when all official results will be announced. And it goes without saying that after this moment or this event, you'll see that everything will be done in according with protocol, state protocol.

MS. STENT: So, maybe we expect December 14th when the Electoral College will announce the results.

MR. ANTONOV: You'll see that I live in the real life today the 2nd of December that's all what I can say on this issue.

MS. STENT: All right, thank you very much. Back to you, Frank.

MR. ROSE: Thanks so much, Angela. Ambassador, can we come back to the strategic stability portfolio and talk about one of the issues that is near and dear to both of our hearts, and that's missile defense. Something that you and I worked on very closely during the Obama administration. Now, in the past, Russia has demanded that the United States provide it legally binding guarantees that U.S. missile defenses would not undermine Russian strategic deterrent. Now, the U.S. has consistently rejected these requests.

Now, I'd be interested in your view, is it possible for the United States and Russia to agree on further nuclear reductions including limitations on non-strategic weapons absent reaching some type of agreement on missile defenses?

MR. ANTONOV: Frank, you have raised two questions. First, missile defense, it's a very complicated issue. It was on the core during our negotiations with American team when we negotiated START Treaty. As you remember, and I hope that everybody is aware, of that nexus between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms was fixed in this treaty. Of course, I know that 90% of America's legal experts and now they can see that this nexus that I have characterized, is not a part of legally binding document that was endorsed by your Senate. But we have different view. I hope that you remember history of the United States. I am sure that you know Mr. McNamara, your former secretary of defense, his famous speech in San Francisco when the first time he has -- and he introduced an idea of nexus between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms.

And at that time, during a few years, we rejected such nexus. But then we were persuaded by American side that there is the reality, this is real life, and we cannot reduce a quantity of missiles and warheads without looking at missile defense. By the way, I remember my negotiations with a former Undersecretary of Defense Jim Miller. I hope that you know this person. You will see that we conducted a few rounds of consultations on missile defense, and we were very close to finding compromise. And to my regret and in 2014 or 2015, you will see that we stopped these negotiations because of events on the territory of the former Soviet Union. So, you'll see that as to us, we are keen to restart such dialog and I am sure if there is a political will in Washington, we can find solution on this issue.

As to non-strategic nuclear weapons, what can I say? You'll see that I shouldn't -- we

shouldn't prejudge what will be on the focus. What will be a subject of a potential agreement between United States and Russian Federation? As to us, you'll see that we would like to concentrate on strategic offensive arms. And we would like -- frankly, you'll see that I don't understand logic of current administration. Why this administration decided to forget about delivery systems? You'll see that it's like a gun and a bullet. You can take old bullets outside of this room and to keep them in stocks, but there will be no damage to your security without gun. So, you'll see that it will be necessary to use special gun to send bullet to direction that you want to do.

For me, it's clear that next treaty should consist of some ceilings, some understandings and arrangements regarding what and regarding delivery systems, delivery systems for these warheads. What kind of warheads? I hope that our negotiator -- negotiating team will decide. I cannot exclude today anything. We can discuss all issues. And, Frank, each side has a right to raise any question of its concern. And it's up to us to come to a conclusion whether there is a base for compromise on one issue or another one or we should to put such issues aside, maybe to wait for a while.

MR. ROSE: Great. Well, thank you so much, Ambassador. We're coming to the last 15 minutes of our event. So, I'd like to take a few questions from the audience. The first question I have deals with U.S.-Russia cooperation on non-proliferation. Specifically, whether the U.S. will seek to rejoin the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran. Be interested in your thoughts whether from Russia's perspective, you would welcome the United States rejoining the JCPOA. And secondly, your thoughts on how the United States and Russia might work together on non-proliferation more generally.

MR. ANTONOV: JCPOA, it goes without saying that we welcome the potential decision of United States to return back to this deal. Moreover, don't forget that this deal was endorsed by U.N. Security Council resolution. We have again a different perception whether there is a legally binding document or it's just only politically binding document. Taking into account resolution of the U.N. Security Council, please I would like you to understand that. So, that's why you'll see that we will be waiting your decision regarding the cooperation in the framework of JCPOA.

So, as to non-proliferation. As to me, Frank, you know that I am in favor of such cooperation. We have excellent record of our cooperation in non-proliferation. Sometimes, you'll see that my colleagues raised one question whether we have identical views on non-proliferation issues or not.

And my answer, maybe it will be very interesting for you to hear it the first time, I consider that our strategic perception is the same. We would like to see non-proliferation treaty as it is. We don't want to permit anybody to destroy this treaty. We can create a lot of arrangements around NPT to increase in how to say, non-proliferation net, security net. And we did a lot of and we know about initiatives introduced by the United States by administration where you work, where we work together with you. So, that's why you'll see that it's again, you'll see that we are open and we are ready to continue such cooperation.

We have such cooperation now, by the way, with the current administration. But as to me, I would like to see more especially our cooperation in the framework of P5. The P5 because this year there was a decision to delay NPT review conference. I hope that next year we could organize it. I don't know what will be -- what kind of situation we will face with COVID-19 pandemic, but I hope that we will sit together and we will work together.

It's a great pleasure for me to work with you in NPT framework. It's a great pleasure to work with you on non-proliferation issues.

MR. ROSE: Great. Well, we just can't get away from arms control. I have another question here about the future of conventional arms control in Europe. As you know, Russia remains a party to the CFE treaty, but has suspended their implementation. The United States has officially withdrawn from the Open Skies Treaty. What from your perspective, is the future of conventional arms control in Europe? What would you do with regards to next steps?

MR. ANTONOV: It's a very interesting question you said there, Frank. I remember those days when my president decided to freeze Russian participation in CFE. But it seems to me that you don't remember that we decided to freeze our participation in former CFE. But we are still in Adapted CFE Treaty. And I remember our message, the message, that I sent to all member countries at the time. I was the director on disarmament, saying that, guys, we are ready to welcome you in Adapted CFE, in Adapted CFE. But as you know, because of Transnistria and problems regarding Georgia, we failed to put into force Adapted CFE Treaty.

On Open Skies Treaty, frankly, I know concerns introduced by United States regarding Russian implementation of this treaty. We did the same. I am little bit surprised, Frank, why nobody from

Western countries decided to be dropped from the treaty. Why they decided not to follow suit on the United States. It means that they are sure that all problems possible to solve in the framework of a special commission that we have in Vienna. And you will see that in the situation they got in Open Skies Treaty is very much complicated. We are very much concerned that some members of NATO countries could convey data received from flags of Open Sky Treaty's plans and to convey them to the United States. And we hope that everybody who is still binded by this document will stick to its obligation under this treaty.

The main problem that we face now it's a mistrust. Mistrust between European countries, Western European countries, and the United States. We have to restore mistrust. We should find ways how to make to get over misunderstanding more narrow. As to us, we have introduced a lot of ideas. A lot of ideas regarding the transparency measure, confidence building measures in the European continent. But our regret, you will see that NATO countries rejected them. I remember 2015 when I worked in Ministry of Defense, those days we sent a special delegation on generals to NATO to introduce some proposal of cooperation. I remember those proposals regarding confidence building measures, but they were rejected.

You remember, I hope, Finnish President initiative regarding the flight of military planes over Baltic Sea. You'll see that as to Russia, we have decided to meet concern of Finnish colleagues. But it was reluctance from NATO countries to switch on transponders on the planes that are flying over Baltic Sea. So, my answer to you is a very simple one. We have not to impose additional restrictions on conventional arms in Europe. We have to think about confidence building measures. We would like to urge you, I mean, the United States, European countries, to look at Russian proposals and at least to try to find anything interesting for you. It's impossible to say that everything that was proposed by Russia is a negative and everything what is offering to Russia is excellent. You'll see that we need to find balance. We need to find balance. We are ready for such discussions in Vienna.

MR. ROSE: Great. Well, we're coming to the end of our time. But I think we have time for one more question. And I'm going to try to end on a positive note here. You know, Ambassador, you've talked about the number of pressing issues of concern in the U.S.-Russian relationship. And I would argue that it will be important to build on early success in that relationship. That said, where would

you suggest that we have bilaterally the best chance of coming to an agreement on which to build? I assume New START would be at the top of your list. But are there other near-term areas where the United States and Russia early on in a new administration could reach a win-win solution and build a good foundation for trust moving forward?

MR. ANTONOV: Frank, I have mentioned some of them today already. Strategic stability, non-proliferation, space cooperation, fight against terrorism. It seems to me that we have, yes, I have to say, we have to fight against terrorism together. To fight against COVID-19 pandemic. You'll see that at least it's five elements that I see now on which we can create a good base or expand maybe current base of cooperation between United States and Russia.

We need to restore channels of communication. You'll see that I'm dreaming. I am dreaming to see minister of foreign affairs of Russian Federation and minister of defense of Russian Federation to come to Washington in order to restore channel 2x2. It's excellent channel to exchange views on various issues. Everybody can raise any issue of interest, but at the same time, we can restart it and we can find a more wider base for a potential cooperation between the United States and Russia.

MR. ROSE: Well, we do have five minutes left. Let me go back to Dr. Stent. Any closing questions or comments you'd like to close with?

MS. STENT: I would actually like to go back to Ambassador Antonov talked about the P5. We know that President Putin had talked about convening the P5. This year it was impossible, obviously, because of COVID. Let's say that there is a possibility next year, maybe next September, to convene such a meeting. What do you think the most important issues there would be on the table?

MR. ANTONOV: Thank you very much for your assistance. It goes without saying that Russian initiatives to convene P5 Summit will be very important. Could you imagine that five leaders of great powers will sit together and let's imagine how many differences they have, but they will restart talking to each other. Not blaming, but trying to find a compromise. As to us, we have introduced a broad agenda of potential dialog -- not dialog, it will -- consultations. Yes, consultations between P5 members. And we can see that we shouldn't focus just only, for example, on arms control. No, our agenda is more wider, and each state has its own right to flag the most sensitive and important issue for this country or another one.

Another issue of potential cooperation, by the way, Frank, in answering to your question, it's cooperation in information technology sphere. You will see that Russia president has introduced the whole program how to restore cooperation or dialog between the United States and Russia on this issue. And, of course, this issue I am sure will be on the table of discussions between our presidents. I can see that everybody is waiting such meeting. It will be very important for our leaders to sit together and to understand what kind of joint problems are embraced us and what should we do together to save this world, or maybe not to save, but to make this world more safer.

MR. ROSE: And on that note, I think we have reached the end of our time. On behalf of the Brookings Institution, let me thank Ambassador Antonov for joining us for this very interesting and insightful discussion. And let me also thank my colleague, Dr. Angela Stent, for joining us today.

Again, thank you so much to the audience and have a nice evening. Goodbye.

MR. ANTONOV: That's very kind. Thank you. It's great honor. Thank you. It's very interesting. Thank you.

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