



ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATION ACADEMY

The Impact of Long-Range Missile Deployments on Regional Security Dynamics and Strategic Stability

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May 2025

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Policy Memo

TO: The United States Department of State and Delegations to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

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DATE: May, 2025

SUBJECT: The Impact of Long-Range Missile Deployments on Regional Security Dynamics and Strategic Stability

The security dynamics in the European theater have called into question the existing balance of power between Russia and NATO members, principally the ability of the United States to reassure its European allies. These dynamics have reinvigorated conversation surrounding extended deterrence, conventional force augmentations necessary to reconstitute strategic stability, proliferation of nuclear weapons and their delivery platforms, as well as great power politics. As a result, we are witnessing the U.S. and NATO attempting to react in real time to the overall degradation of the security environment in Europe. While many actions have lent themselves to broader strategic discussions such as about the impact of the re-introduction of previously constrained Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty missile platforms to Europe, it is clear the goal of the U.S. is to address the insecurity of its European partners while re-balancing the regional power dynamic vis-a-vis Russia.

This objective can drive a suite of decisions that have deep implications for European security and, therefore, the U.S. and Russia. Such moves could stimulate arms-racing, or they could create opportunities for negotiations through mutual vulnerability. Understanding the exact effect of these moves on European security can help us better understand future decision-making criteria and the prospect of arms control. Therefore, it is essential to examine the incentive structure, foreign policy objectives, and the potential trade space for the U.S., NATO, and Russia.

This policy memo will attempt to tackle these elements, providing a better understanding of the bargaining position of each party. Early sections of this brief will discuss the changing balance of power in Europe and the impacts to each party's perceived interests, while later sections will examine the trade space between Russia and the United States. Trade-space discussions will also include an analysis of the impact of U.S., NATO and Russian foreign policy objectives and their impact on the European security architecture. Finally, this memo will conclude by providing a list of policy recommendations to facilitate potential negotiations between the U.S., NATO and Russia.

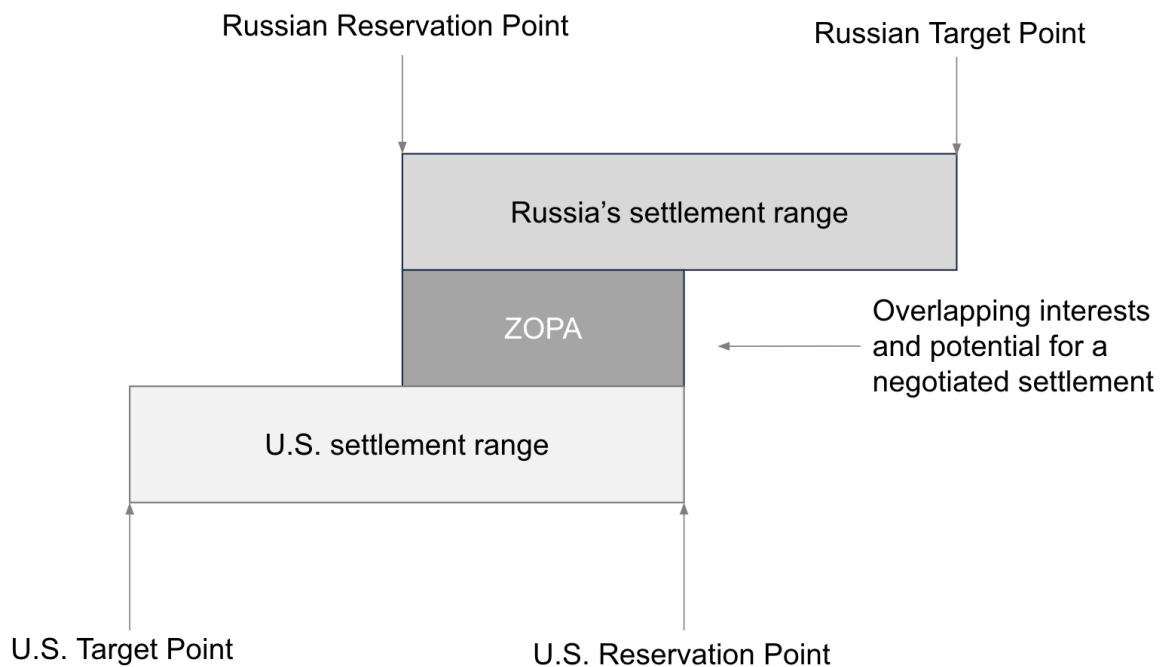
¹ This memo was written as a requirement of the 2024-2025 Arms Control Negotiation Academy program. Views expressed in the memo are the opinions of the authors and do not reflect the views of their employers.

Analysis of the interests and positions of negotiating parties

Evaluating the Potentials with the Harvard Negotiation Method

This paper will utilize the Harvard Negotiation Method as the basis for conversations of Russian and American negotiating dynamics. As such, the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) will be defined as the most advantageous alternative negotiators can expect if they fail to reach agreement [1]. Each sides' Reservation Point will be defined as the minimum acceptable terms for a negotiated agreement, and the Target Point will be identified as the desired terms for a party in a negotiated agreement. If the value of the deal proposed to negotiators is higher or lower than the reservation value, the negotiators will be taking / rejecting the offer. The Zone of Possible Agreement (ZOPA) will refer to the range of common two or more parties can find during negotiations, and is captured below in Figure 1 [2].

Figure 1: A Visualization of the Theoretical ZOPA between the U.S. and Russia



Contextualizing European Security Dynamics

There are multiple items at play that have shaped the current European security environment. First, it must be noted that the U.S. and Europe have consistently engaged in restraint over the years to avoid unintentional escalation with Russia. The U.S. consolidated its nuclear weapons in Europe with the deployment of the B61-12, rather than pursue theater range systems that could bolster NATO's defense. In a similar spirit, several European nations refused to either sanction or ostracize Russia following both the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and annexation of Crimea in 2014. These short-term unilateral measures while helping to manage escalation and tensions with Russia have, over the long-term, created a perceived imbalance between both

sides. Such imbalance is perceived as permitting Russia to believe it can pursue its geopolitical interests through military force as demonstrated by the armed conflict in Ukraine. This historical relationship now has European nations seeking for mechanisms to rebalance the military balance of power on the continent. Worth noting as well, is the fact that the security environment of the 1980s was based solely on bipolar competition. China's rise has added an extra layer of complexity to these dynamics, meaning that the U.S. must now also consider a conventional military peer in a new region of the world with an entirely different set of ally assurance concerns. Combining these developments with American ally concerns regarding mutual defense obligations and the potential for opportunistic aggression, it is clear that any U.S.-Russia interactions moving forward are going to be multi-faceted.

Given these realities, it is unsurprising that the U.S. and NATO have begun to try to improve its bargaining position by developing or deploying weapons it would otherwise not have pursued, thus stimulating arms competition instead of abating it [3]. For the U.S. and its NATO allies, conventional force augmentations, to include long-range missile deployments, have been identified as a mechanism to respond to the changing security environment in Europe, as these moves not only assure allies but also provide for more flexible military response options. Russia, on the other hand, perceives this augmentation of Europe's military capabilities as inversely correlated with its security interests. Neutralizing the Russian advantage in intermediate and long-range delivery platforms could increase the perceived vulnerability of the Russian state and, potentially, force Russia to rely even more heavily on nuclear saber rattling. This posturing by the U.S. and its allies therefore creates a dynamic that either pushes Russia further into its escalation to de-escalate doctrine, stabilizes the security dynamic through mutual vulnerability by denying Russia a perceived military advantage, or, even potentially, creates the dynamics necessary to develop a basis of cooperation.

Therefore, the evolving military presence in Europe can be seen as reshaping the balance of power on the continent and potentially laying the groundwork for effective arms control conversations between the U.S., NATO, and the Russian Federation. The two-year window for deployment of long-range fires capabilities in Germany, which was announced by the U.S. in 2024, creates both a window of opportunity for negotiations before the arrival of systems to Europe, or after should Russia require strong signaling of American and European resolve to improve their military position vis-a-vis Russia [4]. Even though the ongoing war in Ukraine is not conducive to smooth and easy dialogue, intergovernmental communication remains crucial for avoiding conflict expansion and restoring peace. The ability of American President Ronald Reagan and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to negotiate the INF Treaty in 1989, despite the ongoing Soviet war in Afghanistan, is a testament to this reality.

United States' Interests and Negotiating Positions

Since Trump's election, U.S. foreign policy appears to be a continuation of his first term's position of peace through strength. This means shaping the security environment so the U.S. maintains an advantageous national security position relative to its adversaries, principally

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Russia and China. While it is unclear how the Trump administration will prioritize NATO within its broader foreign policy portfolio, it is clear that new capability deployments and altered force structures will be utilized to deter opportunistic aggression. With the elimination of the INF treaty, as well as the suspension of New START, there are limited guardrails constraining U.S. decision makers from further augmenting conventional and nuclear force postures in Europe. This is likely to drive a number of changes in theater forcers, which may include the continued deployment of previously constrained INF missiles around the world, including Europe. On the one hand, these augmentations serve as a political reassurance that the U.S. is actively supporting Europe's defense architecture. On the other hand, the deployment of long-range missiles acts as a deterrent, improving both U.S. military response options and making Russia more vulnerable to a decapitating first strike.

Considering the stance of the U.S. and NATO with respect to Europe's security architecture, the **target point** of the U.S. is the guaranteed security of Europe, including the Baltics and Eastern Europe, by minimizing Russia's incentives to commence a conventional conflict with NATO. This would be accomplished, in part, by the introduction of confidence building measures to limit Russia's ability to leverage its non-strategic systems to intimidate its neighbors.

With limited influence over Russia's broader national interests, however, the U.S. would likely favor a **reservation point** that would freeze the war in Ukraine and push for a negotiated agreement without any security guarantees for NATO nor limitations on Russia's military forces. This relies heavily on Ukrainian consent for any such agreement, but would halt an active conflict, eliminate the chance for further escalation, and allow all sides to regroup to assess the new security environment.

The **BATNA** for the U.S. is the augmentation of regional force capabilities, including the continued proliferation of advanced long-range delivery platforms, and incentivizing European production of domestic long-range fire capabilities.

Russian Interests and Negotiating Positions

Russia views itself as an indispensable actor in the international arena, leveraging its status as a member of the United Nations' Security Council and expansive nuclear arsenal. Its Nuclear Doctrine advocates a multipolar security order that demands respect for national sovereignty and preemptive measures to safeguard it. Russia's foreign policy interests also lie in the establishment of a multipolar world order. This includes decreasing U.S. economic and military influence on European nation states. Weakening the U.S. influence over the European states and post-Soviet space, allows Russia to spread its influence in the economic and military sphere. Therefore, the deployment of conventional as well as nuclear-capable weapons at the Russian and the Belarussian borders signal the willingness to counter any threats that undermine these efforts.

In this context, Ukraine becomes a focal point: Russia insists on its permanent neutrality and demilitarization, aiming to prevent the influx of Western advanced weaponry and the potential expansion of NATO or E.U. influence. Moscow interprets Western actions, including NATO's missile deployments and aid to Ukraine, as deliberate strategies to weaken its power and has

consequently revised its nuclear posture and suspended treaty commitments such as the INF Treaty.

From a Russian negotiation perspective, any measures taken by the U.S. or NATO states to undermine Russian efforts to gain geopolitical and economic influence should be faced with reciprocal countermeasures. This applies to military and weapon deployments as well. Russia's withdrawal from its unilateral missile moratorium can be seen as mirroring U.S. and NATO policies that include the deployment of new weapons systems.

Considering this Russian policy of reciprocation, Russia's **target point** is the establishment of itself as a vital economic and geopolitical actor on the European continent, under the protectorate of its nuclear umbrella. Russia's **reservation point** is Western guarantees that NATO will not expand further East, i.e. considering the inclusion of Ukraine into NATO. Such a conversation is likely to include a clear demarcation of its borders.

Correspondingly, Russia's **BATNA** would be the continued expansion of their military technologies, such as IRBM, ICBM and hypersonic missile systems and cyber warfare, as well as a sustained effort to maintain nuclear escalation dominance which Russia has always viewed as a political tool to leverage the negotiations with the U.S. and NATO.

The Zone of Potential Agreement (ZOPA) for U.S., NATO, and Russia

Given the current situation, the ZOPA between the U.S. and Russia can be only very narrowly defined. The inclusion of NATO interests and concerns, further shrinks the potential negotiation parameters for the U.S. While the U.S. and NATO seek to secure European defense by deploying long-range missiles, Russia perceives this as a threat towards its national security. Since Russia follows a mirroring policy, its tactics involve production and stationing of long- and medium-range nuclear capable missiles such as the Oreshnik and Satan2 in Kaliningrad and Belarus. This tit-for-tat deployment does not necessarily need to lead to a nuclear exchange, but exacerbates the already grave security situation in Europe. Since many experts suggest that continuous development of advanced conventional and non-conventional weapons technologies by major military powers will contribute to the increasing role of the nuclear weapons in the Russian defence posture [5], talks focusing on the limitations of the advanced military capability could also be considered. Thus, the ZOPA for the U.S. and Russia could include limitations on long-range missiles, security guarantees for third-parties, confidence building measures through monitoring and verification of military assets, and, finally, establishment of geopolitical demarcation lines, in particular, with regard to Ukraine, which would limit each side's strategic spheres of influence within the European continent.

Policy Recommendations

The current geopolitical environment has eroded arms control frameworks and heightened nuclear risks, as seen in the suspension of treaties like New START and INF. Advanced conventional and precision weapons now blur traditional deterrence lines, while the conflict in Ukraine further undermines strategic stability. Addressing these challenges requires shifting dialogue toward the strategic effects of emerging military technologies and initiating trust-building talks among key nuclear powers, including the United States, Russia.

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Restoring stability hinges on renewed treaty commitments, enhanced transparency, and confidence-building measures that counteract rapid weapon reactivation and evolving military doctrines.

Recommendations to improve the potential for negotiations between the U.S. and Russia include:

- 1) Initiate a direct dialogue channel centered on assessing the strategic effects of both conventional and nuclear capabilities, aiming to redefine the terms of mutual security;
- 2) Commence strategic dialogue on the clear division of the spheres of influence within the European context, including Ukraine, which long-term security guarantees and sovereign borders will play a key role in formation of the future European security architecture;
- 3) Establish robust confidence-building measures through enhanced transparency and regular exchange of military data, which will help rebuild trust;
- 4) Develop a modernized arms control framework that accounts for new military technologies and addresses the risks associated with the rapid reactivation of decommissioned weapons;
- 5) Recommit to treaty obligations by reopening negotiations on agreements like New START, while exploring new legal instruments that reflect contemporary strategic challenges;
- 6) Encourage joint academic and policy research initiatives to devise comprehensive strategies for mitigating nuclear risks and adapting to evolving military doctrines.

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Austin Wright is a Deputy Director and Policy Advisor, Deputy Administrator's Action Group for the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) Office of Defense Programs. In his role, Austin leverages his substantial international experience and technical knowledge to coordinate all activities across weapons activities and alignment of strategic messaging, as well as advise leadership and provide recommendations on nuclear security policies proposed by the National Security Council. Previously, Austin supported the Nuclear Weapons Council, coordinated strategic messaging for the newly announced B61-13 gravity bomb, and aided in the development of the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review. Austin earned his MA in International Security from the Institut d'études politiques de Paris (SciencesPo), and his MSc in International Political Economy from the London School of Economics in 2019. His work on nuclear issues has been highlighted in Foreign Policy Magazine, as well as the E.U. Nonproliferation and Disarmament Consortium and the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Originally from Michigan, Austin now resides in the Washington, D.C. area.

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