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U.S.-Russian cooperation in nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation

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The United States and Russia, the two largest nuclear powers, have a special obligation to provide leadership in nuclear disarmament and in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. In the past year the two countries made an effort to restart the arms control process by concluding a new treaty that would bring their legal disarmament obligations in line with the realities of their post-cold war relationships. The process of negotiating deeper nuclear reductions in the new environment turned out to be rather difficult, since the approaches that the countries used in the past are not well suited to dealing with issues like conversion of strategic nuclear delivery systems to conventional missions, tactical nuclear weapons, or dismantlement of nuclear warheads. This presentation considers the recent progress in U.S.-Russian arms control process and outlines the key issues at the negotiations. It also considers prospects for further progress in bilateral nuclear disarmament and issues that will be encountered at later stages of the process. The author argues that success of the arms reductions will depend on whether the United States and Russia will be able to build an institutional framework for cooperation on a range of issues - from traditional arms control to securing nuclear materials and from missile defense to strengthening the international nuclear safeguards.