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# New Start: What Would Reagan Do?

*The late president would never have supported a treaty undermining U.S. missile defenses.*

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By ED MEESE AND RICHARD PERLE

President Obama has taken to the airwaves to pump up support for the New Start Treaty with Russia by arguing that Ronald Reagan would have endorsed it. Both of us had the high honor of knowing our 40th president. We worked for Ronald Reagan, and we're sure that's not the case.

There are many reasons why this treaty falls short of those negotiated by President Reagan. For one thing, its verification regime is inadequate. For another, it gives the Kremlin an unwarranted influence over the structure of our nuclear deterrent. Most important, it will almost certainly reduce our freedom to deploy vital defenses against ballistic missiles.

Moreover, the administration is asking a lame-duck Senate, dominated by a party that was rebuked at the polls by the electorate, to vote for this major arms-control treaty, in contravention of the settled traditions of our country—a tactic Reagan surely would have deplored.

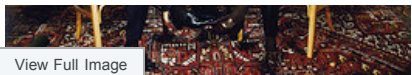
Never in U.S. history has a lame-duck Congress voted on a strategic nuclear arms-control treaty with the Soviet Union or Russia. That is why a group of 10 newly elected Republican senators sent a joint letter to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid demanding that they be allowed to perform their constitutionally mandated task of advice and consent on this treaty.

The main reason Reagan would have objected to this treaty is that it may well undermine his dream that our country might one day be shielded by a missile defense system from nuclear attack. On this issue, Presidents Obama and Reagan are diametrically opposed. Reagan was adamant that no arms-control agreement be allowed to encumber the pursuit of advanced ballistic missile defense technology. One of us (Mr. Perle) was present in Iceland when he turned down an otherwise desirable treaty with the Soviet Union precisely because it would have impeded work on his Strategic Defense Initiative.



The administration claims that the treaty has no effect on any American missile-defense program. Surely it knows better. Paragraph nine of the preamble establishes a bias against missile defense. It accepts our "current" defenses while implying that future U.S. defensive systems might undermine the

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Former Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev, left, and President Ronald Reagan, right, in 1986.

"viability and effectiveness" of Russia's strategic nuclear force.

With this unfortunate paragraph, New Start returns to the old Cold War "balance of terror" and assumes that attempts to defend the U.S. and its allies with missile defenses

against strategic attack are threatening to Russia and thus destabilizing.

Limiting missile defenses to preserve U.S. vulnerability to Russian strategic nuclear strikes (as defined by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, President Dmitry Medvedev or their successors) will result in less effective defenses against any and all countries, including Iran and North Korea.

Additionally, paragraph three of Article V prohibits conversion of offensive strategic missile launchers to launchers of defensive interceptors. Article XII and Part Six of the Protocol create an implementing body, called the Bilateral Consultative Commission, and gives it a broad mandate which could permit it to impose additional restrictions on the U.S. missile defense program. Article IX, Part Seven of the Protocol, as well as the Annex on Telemetric Information to the Protocol, could require the U.S. to share sensitive telemetric information from missile defense tests.

The treaty also places limits on strategic target missiles and their launchers used in missile defense tests.

The Senate should deliberate carefully on these restrictions and their implications for long-term comprehensive missile defense before rushing to a vote. These issues were not adequately addressed during committee hearings on the treaty. And the full extent of their effects can be understood only after a serious examination of the withheld negotiating record. What are they hiding?

The crux of Mr. Obama's "Reagan Argument"—invoked no fewer than five times in his weekly address to the nation—is that New Start is rooted in Reagan's famous dictum "Trust, but verify," an old Russian proverb. But New Start has a very weak verification regime, one that establishes a dangerous precedent and lowers our standards for verification.

To cite a couple of problems, under New Start, there is no on-site monitoring of mobile missile production facilities. This procedure was deemed necessary under the original Start treaty to help keep track of new mobile missiles entering the Russian force. There are also fewer on-site inspections, and Russia may declare certain locations to be maintenance areas, which are not subject to warhead inspection.

Secondly, New Start's verification provisions would provide little or no help in detecting illegal activity at locations the Russians did not declare, are off-limits to U.S. inspectors, or are hidden from U.S. satellites. Inspectors would inspect only declared sites, a precedent that could be invoked by others—Iran, for example—and must be regarded as unacceptable.

President Reagan knew that in arms control the U.S. should play to win, and negotiate from a position of strength. With all the concessions the U.S. made to the Russians to secure this flawed agreement, the invocation of Reagan's memory on its behalf is at once an ironic acknowledgment that in these matters Ronald Reagan is the gold standard, and a brazen act of misappropriation.

Mr. Meese was attorney general and a member of the National Security Council, and Mr. Perle was assistant secretary of defense in the Reagan administration.

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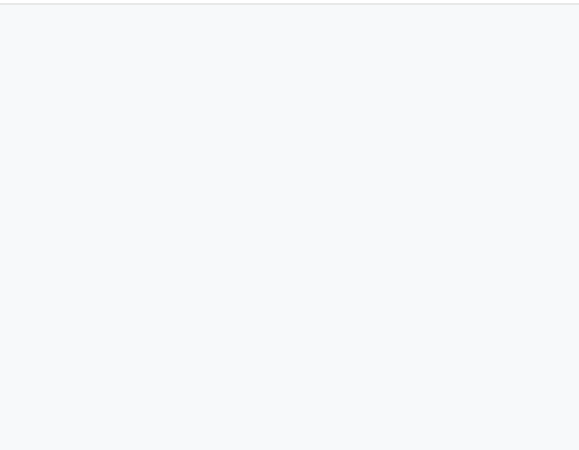
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