

THE BIDEN-PUTIN GENEVA SUMMIT: ARMS AND DRUMS CONTROL?

On February 3rd, 2021, Russia and the United States exchanged diplomatic notes of an agreement extending the New START Treaty (Russia calls it START-3) for the next five years. The Treaty was signed by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and US President Barack Obama in April 2010 and entered into force on February 5, 2011. The Treaty itself, in Article XIV, provides for the possibility of a one-time extension for a period "not exceeding five years" following joint consideration and agreement. It should be noted that until the end of the US presidential election and the Biden administration came to power, the prospects for extending the Treaty looked more than dubious. Throughout most of 2020, the Trump administration linked its consent to the extension on such terms that even optimists came to the sad conclusion that Russia and the United States would be left without the last agreement in the field of strategic nuclear arms control for an indefinite period of time in the future. Now, at least for the next five years, the parties will have a high degree of predictability in the development of their strategic nuclear arsenals, with a real opportunity to verify that their commitments under the current Treaty are being fulfilled.

The extension of the New START raised new questions for politicians and experts in the two countries. The main one is whether this achievement should be regarded as the beginning of a new period in Russia-US relations in the field of arms control, or whether it should be regarded as the end of the process and no new agreements in this area should be expected. There are opposing views on this issue. Without claiming to cover all the nuances of the problem, we will try to assess what approaches might underlie future nuclear arms control agreements and how acceptable they might be to each of the participants.

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Arguments against the extension of the New START in the US

The extension of the New START has drawn a line under the debate about the extent to which the United States was interested in maintaining the agreement. However, the fact itself does not mean that the arguments of the New START opponents have completely lost their force and ceased to have an impact on US security policy. On the contrary, the Biden administration may have to take into account the sentiments of part of the political and military establishment in the near future when elaborating its position on further steps in the nuclear arms control area, taking into account that the new US administration made it clear from the very beginning that arms control would be among its priorities. Both President Biden and Secretary of State A. Blinken have stated this [Blinken 2021].

It should be noted that while in Russia the extension of the New START was generally received positively both in official and expert circles, in the United States doubts were expressed as to whether it was worth agreeing to its unconditional extension without any additional demands. On 3 February 2021, the US Department of State published a document in which the arguments of those opposed to the extension of the Treaty were referred to as "myths" [The New START...2021]. Among the list of such "myths" which were cited and "debunked" by the State Department, there are clearly far-fetched and incomprehensible opinions, such as that the New START is allegedly a Cold War relict and does not correspond to the current strategic situation. In addition, the State Department argues with the argument of the treaty's opponents that the extension of the treaty allows China to continue building up its nuclear arsenal while allowing Russia to retain superiority in non-strategic nuclear weapons. It is not difficult to see that such "myths" have nothing to do with the New START Treaty itself or with the fact of its extension. It is therefore not difficult for the US diplomatic establishment to debunk them.

Nevertheless, a number of arguments of the Treaty opponents demanded from the State Department fairly reasonable objections and even a partial acknowledgement of their validity. One of these serious objections was the reproach to the American leadership for not making full use of the Russian Federation's agreement to freeze all of the parties' nuclear arsenals "in exchange" for a one-year extension of the New START. As it is known, such a consent was expressed in a Russian Foreign Ministry document published on October 20th 2020 [Foreign Ministry Statement...2020]. Russia made it quite clear that on its part it was a political commitment that should not be accompanied by any additional requirements. Despite Moscow's position, the US side interpreted it as Russia's willingness in principle to conclude a separate agreement to "freeze" the number of all nuclear warheads of the parties. This agreement, according to the United States, should have included the provision of the relevant exchange of information and the elaboration of the measures to verify the fulfillment of such an obligation.

The refusal of the Biden administration to continue pressure on Russia in favor of such an agreement is now being blamed by its rivals.

The US State Department claimed that there was not enough time to work out such an agreement, as there were only a little more than two weeks between the inauguration of the new US president and the expiration of the New START. The State Department also said that Russia had refused to negotiate on the issue, arguing that a verification agreement was "an additional condition" for reaching an agreement on the New START extension, which was "unacceptable" to Russia. According to the State Department, the New START extension gives the United States the necessary time to address the concerns in this area.

Interestingly enough, the State Department makes no mentioning of the issues that may be (and are) of concern to the Russian side. All the "myths" it exposes are directly related to US security interests. The State Department does not even hint that the U.S. side would be willing to at least consider the Russian position on a number of issues that Moscow has repeatedly raised in official and unofficial contacts over the years. These concerns are reflected in a number of official Russian documents - the Military Doctrine, National Security Strategy, and others.

It is not yet clear how seriously the US leadership is prepared to engage in constructive negotiations on the whole range of strategic stability issues. Nevertheless, if any discussions on possible new nuclear arms control agreements do begin with the new U.S. administration, the sides will in any case have to not only discuss, but also take seriously mutual interests and concerns in order to find the necessary compromise in order to achieve practical results. Otherwise, there is no prospect for a successful continuation of the arms control policy.

Possible approaches to nuclear arms control by the Biden administration

According to initial statements by the representatives of the new US administration, it intends to focus its nuclear arms control policy on two main issues. The first one is to reach an agreement with the Russian Federation on the control of all nuclear arsenals of the parties, including tactical (or, more correctly, non-strategic) nuclear weapons. The second is to engage China in bilateral or multilateral nuclear arms control negotiations in order to establish control over China's nuclear arsenal in some form ensuring full information about its status and prospects for development. [Renewing America's ... 2021].

It is symptomatic that neither the first, nor the second option yet have the objective of reducing nuclear arsenals. It is primarily a question of agreeing on a verification system and ensuring predictability of the development of Russia's and China's nuclear forces. In his seminal paper 'Binarization of Foreign Policy Conduct', although discussing the other world's theater,

prof. Anis H. Bajrektarevic gives an accurate diagnosis for this issue too: “Confrontation is what you get, and cooperation is what you are fighting for.”

US-Russia

Despite the apparent logic and even simplicity of the approach to controlling all Russian and US nuclear arsenals, success in reaching such an agreement is more than doubtful. Before entering into a formal dialogue with the Russian Federation, the United States will have to address a number of difficult issues directly related to the country's initial position to be brought forward as the subject of discussions.

Putting aside the political context of the issue and assuming that Russia and the United States agreed in principle to establish control over all nuclear warheads in their arsenals, the parties will have to solve a number of extremely difficult problems. These problems are not only of a technical nature but also of a military-political and military-strategic nature. In particular, the authors believe that before the beginning of negotiations the sides should agree on whether tactical (or non-strategic) nuclear weapons should be "equated" to strategic ones in a new agreement and if not, by what criteria should these weapons be divided into the two categories? On the basis of the yield of the warhead, or on the characteristics of the vehicle on which this warhead can be deployed?

In all previous nuclear arms control treaties, including the New START, the reference was primarily made to delivery vehicles, which from a military strategic point of view is quite reasonable and accepted by both sides. But the question remains open; whether the same logic can be applied to non-strategic systems. In the field of strategic weapons, parties have identified intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and heavy bombers (HB) as such carriers. These systems are mainly the ones to be controlled. In the case of NSNWs, the range of nuclear weapon delivery vehicles to be controlled will expand dramatically and may include many missiles (both ballistic and cruise missiles) and a significant list of aircraft which normally perform conventional missions, i.e., are "dual-use". Until a certain period of time, heavy artillery could also perform "nuclear functions". Thus, control of NSNWs should imply control over a wide spectrum of conventional arms of the parties capable of carrying nuclear weapons. From a practical point of view, the approach seems unrealistic.

Proceeding from the above, the authors of this article come to the logical conclusion that there is only one way for the parties to establish control of NSNWs - to control only nuclear warheads and to give up the control over delivery vehicles. In such a case it would be no longer a control of "nuclear weapons", but the control of nuclear warheads. Hence, the whole system of "nuclear arms control" breaks down into at least two parts - strategic arms control and nuclear

warheads control. Clearly, the transition from the control of nuclear weapon delivery vehicles to the control of nuclear warheads represents rather a complex task, which would require considerable time to generate and agree upon specific measures allowing the parties to be fully assured of compliance with their obligations.

Even with the strategic arms covered by the New START, issues are not straightforwardly sorted out. Thus, in accordance with the established practice of US-Russian arms control agreements, all of the parties' nuclear weapons are divided into two major categories: deployed (i.e. ready to use) and non-deployed.¹ Separate limitations are imposed on each of these categories. For example, the New START Treaty sets 700-unit levels for deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs and deployed heavy bombers, as well as a separate 800-unit level for deployed and non-deployed delivery vehicles. There is also a level of 1,550 for warheads on deployed strategic launchers. However, the Treaty is silent about the permitted number of non-deployed warheads. This raises another question: which nuclear warheads are to be controlled: all, separately strategic and separately non-strategic, or separately deployed and separately non-deployed? Or is it necessary to introduce separate sub-levels for these categories of nuclear warheads? The Russian side proposes to focus on the "deployed part" of the nuclear arsenals of the sides [Introductory remarks ... 2021]. The US position on this issue is still unclear.

The issue of drawing the line between strategic and non-strategic nuclear warheads seems likely to be the most difficult. Probably it is impossible to do this at all. For example, the same nuclear bomb can be deployed on both heavy and other types of bombers that are not strategic. It should be added that low-yield nuclear warheads are already deployed on strategic nuclear weapon carriers, the Trident II SLBMs. In addition, the United States arsenal contains nuclear warheads with a variable yield. Hence, the criterion of yield to divide warheads into "strategic" and "non-strategic" is unacceptable. Therefore, dividing nuclear warheads into these two categories could only be done on the basis of other parameters.

In case the parties agree on controlling nuclear warheads on a deployed - non-deployed basis, they also would have to solve a number of important problems. One of them is how to count nuclear bombs and cruise missiles ready for deployment on the parties' heavy bombers. In "real life", these weapons are not deployed. Russian and US heavy bombers implements their missions on a regular basis in various regions of the world. According to public reports, they do not carry nuclear weapons on board. In other words, weapons that can be deployed on HBs

¹ Hereinafter the authors use the terminology adopted in international treaties. It differs slightly from the "military" terminology, which, for example, adopts the term "rapidly deployed" weapon systems.

should be included in the category "non-deployed nuclear warheads". The same should apply to US NSNWs stored at bases in five European NATO countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey), although they are ready for immediate deployment on combat aircraft. The appropriate drills for transporting U.S. nuclear weapons from underground bunkers and placing them on aircraft are regularly conducted by NATO forces as part of the Steadfast Noon military exercise. [Samozhnev 2020].

On the other hand, under the New START, each heavy bomber is counted as one launcher and one warhead and is thus "partially" included into the "deployed" category in terms of the number of warheads allowed. This seemingly unimportant issue still needs to be resolved and could have an impact on the success of a future agreement. It is directly related to the issue of "upload capacity" - the ability to quickly build up the number of deployed nuclear warheads on strategic and other carriers through the availability of nuclear bombs and missile warheads in storage facilities ready to be mounted on carriers. Thus, if the "deployed - non-deployed" nuclear warheads approach is adopted for the purpose of an agreement, the parties will most probably have to introduce at least one more sub-level of warheads that are "in active reserve", which would further complicate such negotiations.

In our view, there is no point in saying that an agreement can be reached on the overall level of nuclear warheads without dividing them into deployed and non-deployed ones. After all, according to the U.S. side, such an agreement must be "verifiable," that is, accompanied by an appropriate control system. However, such a system will differ sharply in relation to the same deployed and non-deployed nuclear warheads, to the warheads that are in "active reserve" and to those that are in storage (in storage facilities) awaiting shipment to the troops or to the plant for dismantlement. Accordingly, parties will in any case have to introduce separate categories for "non-deployed" systems, both according to their individual types (warheads, bombs, etc.) and according to the stage of the life cycle they are in. In addition, it will be necessary to develop a system for controlling the movement and transportation of nuclear warheads to different destinations and by different modes of transport.

Again, we emphasize that the above reasoning refers to a scenario where both sides have reached a full understanding of the desirability of working out a "verifiable" agreement on the control of the nuclear warheads. It should also be noted that the authors have touched upon only a small part of the problems that the sides will face in trying to achieve this goal. Not to mention a host of technical issues, the sides will have to overcome many organizational hurdles related to the high level of secrecy in the nuclear sphere, as well as to achieve an unprecedented level of trust, which was not present even in the "best days" of U.S.-Russian relations.

Consequently, the enthusiasm of the previous US administration, who thought that such an agreement could be worked out in two or three months, is completely incomprehensible. In our estimation, two to three years would not be enough, given the fact that the basic control provisions have to be tested by experimentation and only then fixed "on paper". All negotiations are likely to take even longer. Thus, statements by the new US administration regarding a five-year extension of the New START (which it believes gives enough time to prepare a new agreement) can also be considered overly optimistic. Under the current circumstances, the authors believe that parties could return to the idea of freezing their nuclear arsenals in the form of a "political commitment without additional conditions", as Russia proposed in 2020. Such statements by the United States and Russia are the realistic maximum that the parties can count on in the foreseeable future in moving towards nuclear arms control.

US-China

The prospects for the second, the Chinese track of nuclear arms control policy announced by the new US administration, are not encouraging for a considerable part of the expert community. It should be noted that despite the best efforts of the previous US administration Russia refused to join the US in pressuring the Chinese leadership to engage the PRC in the nuclear arms negotiations. In his speech in February 2021, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov reiterated this position: "We will never persuade China". He also said that Russia could not imagine multilateral talks without the participation of Britain and France. [Speech by the Minister ... 2021].

As for the United States, it remains to be seen what approach it might take to meet the challenge. The Trump administration mainly tried to use "forceful" methods in its attempts to "bring China to the negotiating table". The U.S. accused China of seeking to dramatically increase its nuclear arsenal, to acquire the capability to wage a "controlled" nuclear war, to increase the counterforce capabilities of its nuclear forces, and to be reluctant to disclose information on the status and plans for development in this area. In the United States there existed (and still exists) a view that the creation of additional military threats to China, such as the threat of the deployment of US medium-range missiles in the region, may play a role in changing China's position on the negotiations. The United States also put pressure on Russia, literally demanding that it "force" the PRC to enter into negotiations (Gertz 2020). Some experts suggested other "soft" ways to put pressure on China, including recognizing its "great power" status, opening up the prospects of improving strategic relations with the US while negotiating

on nuclear arms, and making attempts to prove that China's joining the nuclear arms control system could generate serious military and political benefits for the country.

As it is known, all the US attempts have yielded no success. China stubbornly refused not only to engage in nuclear arms control talks, but also to be transparent in that area, including in sharing data on the conditions of its nuclear arsenal and even in providing official information on the number of its nuclear forces. China's leadership did not give reasons for its refusal, but it may be assumed that it has its roots in the decades-long nuclear policy of the country dating back to the time of Mao Zedong. In particular, there is the principle of no first use of nuclear weapons, which China would most probably have to abandon if it chooses to negotiate and to disclose full information about its nuclear forces, thus sharply increasing their vulnerability to a hypothetical nuclear strike [Savelyev 2020].

China's condition for joining the talks has been repeatedly expressed by its officials - to further reduce the nuclear arsenals of Russia and the US to a level comparable to that of China². It appears that China will continue to adhere to this position, and it is unlikely that the US could find serious tools to fundamentally change this situation. Therefore, one can conclude that the nuclear arms control priorities announced by the new US administration, both in the Russian and Chinese sectors, do not yet have serious prospects. This conclusion is supported by the fact that Russia has its own views on arms control priorities, which in many cases do not coincide with the American vision of the problem.

Russia's priorities

After the New START was extended, there were almost no spheres of “congruent” interests left in the field of arms control in terms of their priorities between Russia and the US. However, this discrepancy does not appear to be an insurmountable obstacle for continuing nuclear arms control dialogue, or even negotiations, with the Biden administration. In any case, both Russian and American sides do not rule out this scenario.

The basic contours of a possible Russian position on nuclear arms control negotiations were outlined in the abovementioned statement of the Russian Foreign Ministry of October 20, 2020 and in a number of other documents published after the new US administration came to the White House [Opening address ...2021; Statement by the Minister ...2021]. These and other official documents talked about the possibility of "comprehensive bilateral negotiations on future

² Another option is a dramatic buildup of China's nuclear arsenal to the level of Russia and the US. Such an option is in principle not excluded if China implements a major program for the deployment of additional nuclear weapons, while Russia and the US continue to reduce their nuclear arsenals.

nuclear missile arms control, with mandatory consideration of all factors affecting strategic stability" [Statement of the Russian Foreign Ministry ...2020]. This wording cannot be said to give complete clarity about the possible negotiating position of Russia, especially since the statement was "linked" to the proposal to extend the New START for one year and the "freezing" of nuclear arsenals of the parties. Since the issue of "freezing" was virtually removed from the agenda of U.S.-Russian relations, and the New START was extended for five years without additional conditions, the said position of the RF, according to the authors, can be substantially adjusted in the future. Nevertheless, one can make a number of conclusions on the basis of the Foreign Ministry's Statement, albeit tentatively.

First of all, we should note that in contrast to Russia's position stated earlier that after the New START "further steps in nuclear disarmament should be comprehensive in nature and all nuclear-weapon states should be involved in the process..." [Vladimir Putin...2012], Russia now also allows for bilateral negotiations with the United States. However, the wording "talks on future control" is not quite clear. If to approach it "strictly", we cannot talk about the negotiations themselves with the aim of working out a specific agreement, but about "negotiations about the future negotiations". In our view, it would then be appropriate to speak of bilateral consultations or discussions on the parameters of such negotiations.

Nor does the wording "nuclear missile arms control" provide complete clarity. This category could include both strategic and non-strategic means of nuclear attack. However, it does not cover all nuclear weapons, e.g. nuclear torpedoes, bombs, nuclear-armed underwater drones, which the Russian President spoke about on March 1st, 2018. [Address...2018]. Consequently, one can conclude that the question of the Russian Federation agreeing to control all of the parties' nuclear weapons remains open.

It is not quite clear what meaning is embedded in the notion of "comprehensive negotiations", and in what exactly should this "comprehensiveness" manifest itself? The country's official position on these issues is formulated only in very general terms. Still, examples of a comprehensive approach to security issues can be found in the history of Soviet-American negotiations. Thus, the very first strategic arms limitation treaty, SALT-1, was so comprehensive. From 1969 to 1972, the parties simultaneously worked out two agreements: the Anti-Ballistic Missile Defense Treaty (ABM Treaty) and the Interim Agreement on Certain Measures with Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. Both documents were signed at the same time, on 26 May 1972, and went down in history as SALT-1.

This is not the only example. Thus, in the second half of the 1980s, the USSR and the US were engaged in comprehensive negotiations in three areas - strategic offensive weapons

(START), intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles (INF) and defense and space. The Soviets insisted that all three agreements must be signed simultaneously, establishing a clear link between the three "building blocks" and stressing the need to reach agreement on defense and space as a condition for signing the START-1 and the INF treaties. Initially, the US accepted this condition, on which the negotiations themselves were dependent. However, as we know, the INF Treaty was negotiated much earlier than the other documents. After serious consideration, the USSR leadership decided to withdraw this treaty from the general "package" and sign it earlier, in 1987. Then, a few years later (in 1991), the START-1 was negotiated, while the defense and space negotiations saw no progress. Given the lack of any prospect of an agreement on space-based missile defense systems and "space strike weapons", and the fact that the ambitious SDI program by that time was virtually ceased to exist and had been replaced by the more modest Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS), the USSR once again removed the "linkage" of the remaining two parts of the negotiating "package". At the same time, the Soviets made a statement regarding the need to retain the ABM Treaty as a condition for reductions under START I.

Thus, there do not appear to be any formal obstacles to holding "comprehensive bilateral negotiations". All that remains is to determine what part this "complex" might consist of. In the aforementioned statement, the Russian Foreign Ministry puts forward a condition for future negotiations on "nuclear missiles". They can only take place "with mandatory consideration of all factors affecting strategic stability". As in previous cases, the above wording does not give complete clarity about how Russia believes the talks should be conducted. After all, any arms control negotiations have an explicit subject matter. In this case it is "nuclear missiles". Strategic stability does not fit within the framework of such talks. The only thing that can be done is to agree on the wording that the concluded agreement promotes strategic stability and to fix it in the preamble of the future treaty. It seems unlikely that this approach would suit the Russian side.

Another option would be to insist on a comprehensive approach to negotiations that would cover the whole range of factors that, in Russia's view, affect strategic stability. Once again we emphasize that what has been written above does not constitute a specific proposal by the authors on the formulation of Russia's approaches and position on this issue. The authors' reasoning is just an attempt to follow the logic of statements made by Russia's top leadership on the issues of strengthening security and strategic stability, including those represented in official documents adopted at the highest level, including the Military Doctrine and the National Security Strategy of the RF (as mentioned above). It follows from these documents that the main factors affecting strategic stability, apart from nuclear weapons, include missile defense,

strategic long range high-precision non-nuclear weapons (including non-nuclear prompt global strike weapons) and space weapons. Thus, an "integrated" approach to negotiations could be to conduct several negotiations in parallel - in each of these areas under a single title. For example, "Negotiations on (missile and) nuclear arms limitation and strengthening strategic stability".

The likelihood of such negotiations is negligible, which refers primarily to the three "building blocks" of factors affecting strategic stability. Nevertheless, it seems to make sense to consider, at least in general terms, some aspects of imposing limitations on the named weapons systems in order to assess the possibility of such negotiations, if not at present, then in the future.

Strategic high-precision non-nuclear weapons

From the verification point of view, the most "promising" is the resolution of the issue of strategic high-precision non-nuclear weapons. With the extension of the New START, a number of such systems are directly subject to it. This is particularly true for the replacement of nuclear warheads with non-nuclear warheads in existing ICBMs and SLBMs. In other, less clear-cut cases (e.g., deployment of new types of intercontinental ballistic missiles in open positions, which has been suggested as one of the options for building a non-nuclear US prompt global strike system) [Myasnikov 2010], the issue may be addressed in the Bilateral Consultative Commission operating within The New START framework. In any case, according to the authors, the conclusion of a separate treaty on strategic non-nuclear weapons is not required, since many limitations of such weapons are already covered by the provisions of the acting New START Treaty.

Space weapons

With regard to the issue of space-related arms control, it is even more problematic, in our view, than for non-strategic nuclear weapons, to reach any comprehensive agreement in this area. What the authors have in mind here is not the difficulty of making a political decision to carry out such negotiations, but rather the definition of the subject matter of the negotiations themselves and the issues of verification. For example, whether such negotiations will deal with "space weapons" issues in general or go through three possible tracks: anti-satellite weapons, space-to-Earth weapons and the space element of advanced BMD systems.

If it comes to "space weapons," the parties should understand that a complete ban on "space weapons" is unfortunate due to the fact that many existing weapons systems (for example, ICBMs and SLBMs) have the potential to engage satellites in orbit. But before that the parties must come to a joint vision of what they understand by the terms "space weapons," "weapons in

space" and a number of other concepts, including "weapons" as such. Without such an agreement, it is almost impossible to negotiate any restrictions or bans on an activity when the subject matter of the negotiations itself is not clearly outlined.

Here it should also be kept in mind that a number of possible "space weapons" systems, unlike NSNWs, do not currently exist, and such negotiations can only talk about preventing (prohibiting) their creation or development. But here the negotiators can expect another "technical trap", which the Defense and Space Talks fell into in the second half of the 1980s. The parties spent quite a lot of time trying to draw a clear line between "creation" and "development". The parties tried to become clear what is "experiment" versus "test", "experimental device" versus "prototype", what is a "laboratory" (a room with or without walls) and whether it could be in space, as well as a host of other technical issues. Solving a set of these questions is an extremely difficult task. In any case, many of these remained open after six years of concrete discussions in Geneva (1985-1991). As the practice of such negotiations shows, it is impossible to avoid discussing all these technical problems. Otherwise, lack of clarity on certain aspects of a future agreement leads to increased suspicions between the parties and, as a consequence, undermines the treaty itself.

The list of problems to be solved if an agreement to enter into "space negotiations" is reached could go on and on. Not all of them will be easy to solve, even if the parties have the political will to conclude such an agreement. Inevitably there will be the issue of "space weapons" of the third countries, in particular China and some NATO states, of "dual-use" assets such as "space debris collectors" and maintenance and repair satellites, and a whole range of others. It remains to be seen whether it is even possible to agree on all these issues from a purely technical point of view.

Missile defense

It is obvious that for Russia the problem of missile defense is the most pressing in terms of ensuring its national security. Almost immediately after the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, Russia made persistent attempts to return to at least some limitations on defensive means or to neutralize the effectiveness of US missile defense systems, increasing the potential for missile defense penetration during the development and modernization of strategic offensive systems. It appears that should the U.S.-Russian arms control dialogue resume, the Russian position will in some form require that defensive systems to be taken into account in the strategic balance of the parties. Such limitations are believed to contribute to strategic stability, and consequently to security at all the levels of confrontation - from regional to global.

The ABM Treaty was supposed to place restrictions on systems "to counter strategic ballistic missiles or their elements in flight paths". All other missile defense systems were not subject to limitations. In 1997, the parties were able to agree on specific characteristics of BMD systems (the so-called "New York Protocols") that would allow these systems to be classified as "strategic" and "non-strategic". That had to be done in order to strengthen the ABM Treaty regime, which the Russian side viewed as a prerequisite for the entry into force of START II. And while both sides did not formally accept this "separation" of strategic and non-strategic BMD systems, it was nevertheless present in discussions of issues connected with the consequences of US deployment of BMD in Europe and Asia. In any case, US representatives have repeatedly stated that "theatre missile defense" in Europe "does not threaten" the deterrence potential of Russian strategic forces, is not capable to intercept ICBMs and SLBMs, and is intended exclusively to protect US allies from threats from such countries as Iran and North Korea.

However, the situation with the issue of this "separation" changed dramatically in November 2020 after the successful test of the US SM-3 Block IIA anti-ballistic missile, which for the first time shot down an intercontinental ballistic missile target from a ship equipped with the AEGIS anti-missile system [US Successfully....2020]. The anti-missiles are being built as a part of a joint US-Japanese project [Tosaki 2019]. They are designed to be fired from the Mk 41 all-purpose launchers that equip US cruisers and destroyers of certain classes and Aegis Ashore ground systems in Poland and Romania.

This test made it very difficult, if not impossible, for Russia and the U.S. to reach any kind of agreement on limiting their missile defense systems. Thus, Russia had every reason to demand that theater missile defense systems be taken into account in the overall balance of such armaments of the parties. Russia's position could apply not only to missile systems directly tested as strategic missile defense, but also to missile launchers without regard to what kind of missile system they contain. In addition, the system of control of such weapons is dramatically complicated because they are deployed not only on US ships, but also on the territories of other countries. One can only speculate whether the U.S. conducted this test solely to test the technical capabilities of the new anti-missile system or whether it was a deliberate step aimed at eliminating any prospect of reaching an agreement in this field.

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The above brief overview of the main arms control areas that can contribute to confidence-building, strategic stability and international security shows the dramatic complexity

of the "technical side" of control, which may require enormous effort by the parties and a considerable period of time to agree on all provisions of the future agreements. The divergence of Russian and US interests regarding arms control priorities is quite obvious. Thus, for the US, the main focus is on establishing control of all nuclear arsenals of the parties (including China). For Russia, it is the control of strategic offensive and defensive weapons (both nuclear and non-nuclear), addressing the problem of "space weapons" and some others. In such a situation, it would seem possible to seek a compromise solution, including comprehensive and interrelated negotiations on a number of the above areas simultaneously. Consequently, both Russia and the United States would have to make mutual concessions, the nature of which could be determined both during the negotiations themselves and even before they began. However, in the current situation of strained relations between the two countries, one can hardly expect any progress in this area in the near foreseeable future.

We can conclude, that arms control can no longer play the role of a "driving force" to improve international relations. On the contrary, without such improvement, arms control negotiations are hardly feasible, since arms control steps require a very high level of trust between the parties. Hence, the focus should, in our view, be on the unconditional fulfillment of all the obligations undertaken by the parties under the extended New START, using this agreement as a "point of reference" in US-Russian relations and without waiting for its expiration date, trying to continue on the nuclear disarmament path.

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Abstract. The article provides an analysis of the likely goals and positions of Russia and the United States on nuclear arms control. The U.S. administration aims to reach an agreement with Russia to control all of the parties' nuclear arsenals, including non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW), as well as China's involvement in nuclear arms negotiations bilaterally or multilaterally in order to establish control over China's nuclear arsenal. Russia's likely position in the negotiations is a solution of the problem of missile defense, strategic high-precision non-nuclear weapons and space weapons. The authors believe that without a high level of trust between the parties, there are rather few good prospects for the continuation of the arms control dialogue for the foreseeable future.

Key words: arms control, nuclear weapons, the New START, negotiations, nuclear warheads, non-strategic nuclear weapons, missile defense, strategic precision-guided non-nuclear weapons, space weapons.

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