

New Old Agenda: Current Nuclear Disarmament Concerns

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What the nuclear weapon states should do? A kind of relatively new agenda in the sphere of nuclear arms control incorporates “old building blocks” dating back to previous decades and existing treaties. The problem is that in recent time even some of that old building blocks started to give cracks.

START I Replacement or Extension

START I Treaty expires in December 5, 2009, three years before SORT reductions (limiting strategic deployed weapons to 1700-2200 by 2012) are to be completed. That leaves SORT without verification procedures. In summer of 2006 at G8 summit in Petersburg Presidents V.Putin and G.Bush instructed MFAs and MODs to start consultations on replacing START I with any new arrangement, or extending procedural side of it.

Several parties urged the United States and Russia to agree on further cuts in strategic nuclear arms. The European Union issued a statement at Vienna PrepCom where it stressed the need for more progress in reducing nuclear arsenals through appropriate follow-on processes. Europeans also urged Russia and the United States to begin “negotiations on an effectively verifiable agreement to best achieve the greatest possible reductions” in tactical nuclear weapons.

After in early 2007 the US State Department announced that has, as yet, no plans on what should happen after expiration of START I, Norwegian and German foreign ministers urged Russia and USA to do something in this respect and negotiate.

While the Russians insist on a legally binding agreement, the Americans have focused on “transparency and confidence-building measures” that would still allow both sides to verify each others' arsenals and capabilities. The primary aim of a new agreement could be the creation of a new verification mechanism.

Reserve Arsenals Issue.

By Western estimations, Russia possess about 4,384 strategic nuclear warheads and US maintained 3878 warheads in 2006.

Russia by experts estimations (there are no official published figures on TNW) possess about 3,300 sub-strategic (tactical) nuclear warheads, but another 9000 are estimated by Western sources to be in reserve, since SORT Treaty (2002) does not require to destroy warheads, just decommission them. Russia, in its turn, is dissatisfied with large American reserve arsenals. A U.S. working paper on disarmament submitted to the NPT conference PrepCom on May 3, 2007 stated that the planned development of a reliable replacement warhead “advances the goals expressed in the preamble and Article VI of the NPT” by making it possible to reduce the size of the reserve stockpile of nuclear weapons and making it more unlikely that nuclear testing needs to be resumed. Destruction or limitation of reserves remain an important unresolved issue.

Modernization of Nuclear Forces

Rate of Modernization of Russian Strategic forces triples. Russian MoD announced 17 new modern nuclear Topol-M missiles to be added in 2007 while previous several years average rate was 6 per year. After SS-18 and SS-19 type ICBMs with multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles are retired, Russia decided by the end of this decade to deploy multiple warheads on its SS-27 (“Topol-M”) silo- and mobile-based ICBMs to maintain parity with the United States. Russia has «a 21st century weapon», said on May 30 the commander of the Russian Ground Forces, Alexei Maslov, following two successful missile tests (of a strategic RS-24 MIRV intercontinental missile and a new version of the Iskander (SS-26), an advanced theater-level surface-to-surface missile). Commander stressed: «We now have new (missile) systems at the strategic as well as theater level. These systems can beat any operational and future missile defenses».

US in its turn plans to experiment with new types of modernized warheads. The United States must build new nuclear weapons to maintain its deterrent capabilities, a National Nuclear Security Administration official said on June 15. The development of new warheads to replace the U.S. Cold War stockpile is necessary to assure a nuclear deterrent for the future, John Harvey, the NNSA's policy planning staff director, told the New America Foundation Washington.

Decision of Britain to renew its Trident system and extend its operation till 2050 also inevitably mean some modernization of Trident missiles and carriers. All nuclear countries, Britain included, now tend to add to missile arsenals additional sub-systems aimed at penetrating through various layers of ABM. Exactly as predicted by experts in 2002 when Washington broke the ABM Treaty, arms race between “shield and sword” started again after 30 years when it was somewhat halted by ABM Treaty limitations on “shield” component.

Cooperative Threat Reduction Program

When START would end in 2009 there would be legal problems in implementing CTR (Cooperative Threat Reduction, renewed in mid-June 2006) programs without START. These projects are currently carried out under the CTR umbrella agreement, formally called the U.S.-Russian Agreement Concerning the Safe and Secure Transportation, Storage and Destruction of Weapons and the Prevention of Weapons Proliferation. The elimination procedures of Russian strategic weapons are regulated by the START conversion or elimination protocol and verified under the START inspection protocol. Thus, the United States and Russia would have no legal basis for the elimination of Russian arms and the verification of this elimination even if the efforts continued to be financially supported under the CTR programs.

Transparency Issue

Offensive nuclear transparency inter-MFA US-Russian working group has been disbanded in 2006 and yet in the process of substitution by some new mechanism. But there is not enough transparency on transparency measures.

No public declarations or transparency announcements on TNW since 2004. No talks. But with planned American ABM stations in Eastern Europe, and with nuclear Korea and Iranian risk TNW might be redeployed and are in demand again. Removal of remaining US TNW from Europe may make significant difference. But would it motivate Russia to further cut its own TNW arsenal?

Potential Withdrawal from INF Treaty

Russian officials announced in early 2007 that Russia might withdraw from INF Treaty (of 1987) and re-create an arsenal of short and intermediate range missiles. INF has unlimited time frame and to loose it would be very challenging.

Two competing motivations are given by Russian leadership:

- (1) “because third states like Iran, Korea, Israel, etc, developed intermediate range missiles” (V.Putin in Munchen and Foreign Minister S. Lavrov)
- (2) “because USA will be deploying ABM elements in Poland and Czech Republic till 2012 (Chief of General Staff Yu.Baluevsky)

Argumentation raised in domestic debates in Russia on this issue is as follows:

- ABM in Europe is not effective (if not useless) against Korea and Iran, it is even more useless against most of Russian rocket forces which target missiles via North pole. But revenge Russian measures (re-introduction of short range missiles) would be useless against USA. It rather looks like political “punishment” for European countries who agreed to host US ABM bases.
- This step will “invite” the USA to re-create or return to Europe US short and intermediate range missiles. And that already would touch interests of all

European countries. As result, Russian step may antagonize Europe towards the USA.

- Potential Russian withdrawal from INF will inevitably raise anti-Russian fears within NATO and would further militarize NATO, which in its turn would decrease Russian security.
- Withdrawal from INF would be a violation by a nuclear power of NPT Article VI obligations.
- Russia gives hints that it may use INF missiles in non-nuclear mode, as conventional vehicle in regional balances.

Although NATO governments stress their continued interest in cooperating with Russia on missile defense issues, including within the NATO-Russian Council, they refuse to negotiate with Moscow parameters of BMD architecture NATO countries plan establish for Europe.

Conventional Forces Relocations

CFE (Conventional Forces Treaty, concluded in 1990, adapted in 1999) is considered by many sides as less and less binding. Adapted version of CFE was ratified among European states only by Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, but not by any of NATO countries. US plans to deploy elements of ABM in Poland and Czech Republic may motivate Russian side redeploy more conventional forces to areas from which they can threaten or cover by strike those new military objects in Eastern Europe. These steps may lead to violations of the CFE Treaty. Would that be an extra argument for Russia to abandon the CFE Treaty? Russia refers to decision of NATO to create two new military bases in Romania and Bulgaria and stresses that the West is undermining CFE, while the West insists that it is Russia who creates problems by not withdrawing remaining contingents from Georgia and Moldova.

If both the conventional CFE Treaty and nuclear INF Treaty would be disbanded at the same time that would represent a deepest crisis in the whole arms control regime.

Submarines and Sea-based Nuclear Weapons

Russia has dismantled 145 out of 197 decommissioned Soviet-era nuclear submarines (Source: Russian Federal Agency for Nuclear Power). Russia has signed cooperation agreements on the disposal of decommissioned nuclear submarines with the United States, Britain, Canada, Japan, Italy and Norway. The disposal program will cost an overall \$2 billion. Disposal of 17 boats is underway and 32 more will be scrapped in the future by 2010.

Russia is concerned that the United States continues to keep its nuclear long-range sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs) ready for deployment. In the past, Russia made

numerous failed attempts to include nuclear-armed SLCMs in strategic arms limitation treaties.

Chemical Weapons Destruction

Within the frameworks of the Global partnership program foreign donors pledged to allocate about \$20 billion during 2002-2012 period. Of the \$20 billion over ten years the G8 promised to raise at Kananaskis, the Global Partnership has achieved pledges of over \$17.5 billion, including Russia's own contribution. Russia is now ready financially to take on an increased share of the burden. But donors should seek to increase the predictability and reliability of funding by planning how they will spend their pledges and taking concrete steps to do so.

By 2012 Russia is bound to destroy the total of its chemical weapons stockpiles (about 4,5 millions of shells). By 2007 Russia is bound to destroy one fifth of its 40 thousands tons of chemical agents, inherited from the USSR. By now Russia has destroyed about 19 percent of its chemical weapons stockpile, including destruction of 3623 tons of blister agents and neutralization of more than 4000 tons of nerve agents. Russia met the April 2007 deadline to destroy 8000 tons of chemical warfare agents.

Cooperating to Remove or Secure Vulnerable Fissile Material Worldwide

Disposition and elimination of unused fissile materials remain a serious problem on the way of nuclear disarmament.

For Russia, the multilateral plutonium disposition program will need total funding of roughly \$2 billion (\$1 billion in capital costs, \$1 billion in operating costs) to dispose of the 34 tons of Russian Pu covered by the 2000 agreement; approximately half this amount has been pledged. To remain on schedule, the fossil fuel plant construction at Zheleznogorsk needs additional funding from Global Partnership donors amounting to at least \$100 million to reach the estimated total program cost of around \$1 billion.

American DOE plans to repatriate 1,370 kilograms of HEU to Russia by 2010, and to return or validate acceptable disposition of 22,743 spent fuel assemblies of U.S. origin by 2019. The deadline for U.S. acceptance of spent fuel was extended in 2004 from 2009 to 2019; all shipments of U.S. and Soviet-origin HEU fuel are to be completed on a priority basis according to level of security threat. Programs for Russian-origin HEU reactors targeted for conversion by 2014 or repatriation by 2010 will only succeed if stronger incentives are given to host nation governments to convert these facilities. GP countries should work together to use diplomatic influence and financial assistance to accelerate this effort.

In conclusion, the following **List of current priorities in the field of nuclear arms control and non-proliferation** steps could be recommended. Those steps include measures which could be undertaken by the nuclear powers to support the credibility of the NPT, by carrying on their obligation under art. VI, and more generally steps that could reinvigorate nuclear disarmament – and hence, prevent further nuclear proliferation.

- *Russian and American strategic weapons and SORT.*
- Firstly, the SORT agreement (as the only agreement in strategic area which would remain valid after 2009) should clearly be made irreversible and extended in time-frame, possibly by additional protocol (otherwise its ceilings only formally work until 2012).
- Secondly, system of START-I verification, inspections and data exchange measures should be as a package extended at least for the period 2009-2012 (after end of START-I limit and until the end of time frame of SORT).
- Thirdly, a further significant reduction of deployed strategic nuclear weapons should be planned down to the level comparable by factor with level of three other old nuclear powers (level of hundreds, instead of level of thousands) with some stringent deadlines.
- Fourthly, withdrawn or decommissioned warheads and delivery systems are to be destroyed, and the fate of accumulated reserve arsenals is to become a subject for a separate line of negotiations aimed at “excessive warheads elimination” agreement.
- *Sub-strategic Nuclear Weapons.* First of all, all possible efforts should be made to prevent dissolution of the INF Treaty and re-introduction into Russian and American arsenals of short and intermediate range nuclear (and conventional-headed) missiles. That would lead to emergence of numerous regional imbalances and heightening of stakes and risks in many regional conflicts. Among other consequences, Russian potential withdrawal from the INF may lead to reintroduction of large quantities of the US sub-strategic weapons to Europe.
- *Tactical Nuclear Weapons* have only been withdrawn and reduced as for now by unilateral measures. As a first step towards opening of line of negotiations on TNW initial declarations on general quantities and composition by types of tactical nuclear arsenals possessed by sides should be extended. Transparency, even if only relative and partial, on tactical nuclear weapons of two major nuclear powers may have important influence onto willingness and readiness of smaller and newer nuclear powers to enter in principle into arms control and limitation multilateral dialogue.
- *Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).* The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty should enter into force as a critical way of preventing further vertical proliferation, and this depends primarily on the decision of the United States to rescue the treaty.

Efforts should be made to motivate India, Pakistan and North Korea to follow Israel in acceding to the CTBT.

- *Fissile Materials Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT)* should be discussed and negotiated in a short time, as far as overproduction of the weapon grade fissile materials in the world is obvious and extremely dangerous in view of risk of nuclear terrorism. Urgent conclusion of FMCT may become a shared priority for Russia and the West exactly in situation of new security concerns regarding risk of nuclear terrorism.
- *The smaller nuclear powers* should also contribute to the disarmament agenda. Modernization of nuclear forces (Chinese forces, renewal of “Trident” in the UK, etc.) is to be indefinitely postponed, though this only could be achieved through own decisions of those nuclear powers and not imposed by major nuclear powers.
- *Non-deployment of country’s own nuclear weapons beyond its borders* on other countries’ territories should become a legally binding norm of international relations. Only American nuclear forces are currently deployed outside national territory (in European NATO countries). Being insignificant in quantities for NATO strategic tasks, these residual American weapons on European soil create unnecessary precedent for other official or de-facto nuclear powers who might decide to ‘share’ its nuclear weapons with allies, creating dangerous imbalances and de-facto proliferating.
- *Nuclear Weapon Free Zones.* The nuclear powers should agree with no reservation to respect proposals for establishing nuclear weapon free zones, and commit to respect the zones already established.
- *Reliance on nuclear weapons* in national security strategies should be manifestly reduced. Nuclear weapons should be all de-alerted, and strategy of launch-on-warning is to be avoided.
- *De-facto nuclear powers* are also expected to contribute to the disarmament agenda, by acceding to existent relevant for them arms control treaties, by converting some arms control mechanisms (like INF) into multilateral, by respecting the basic NPT constraints, and by stopping further nuclear modernization and plans for future developments of nuclear weapons.