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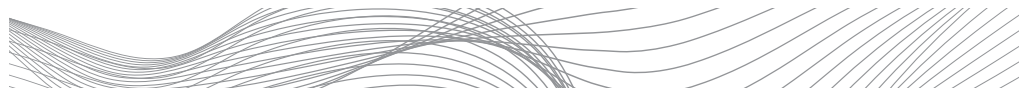
Global Edition

Sergey Semenov

Strategic Offensive Arms Control in Russia-U.S. Relations: Lessons Learned



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The recent years witnessed a near complete collapse of the bilateral arms control architecture between the Russian Federation and the United States of America. During the Geneva summit in June 2021, Presidents Putin and Biden agreed to relaunch the bilateral dialogue on strategic stability issues. This occasional paper is intended to analyze the lessons to be learned from the New START negotiations process and analyze the solutions found by the negotiators to reach an agreement.

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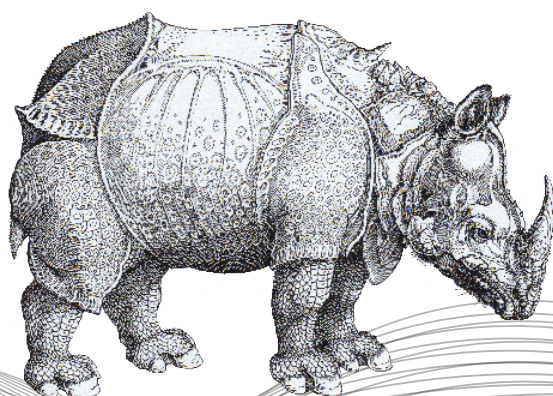
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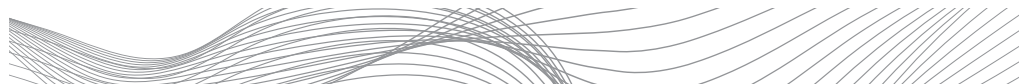
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Highlights

- The negotiations on the New START were able to produce a swift result thanks to the great political will displayed by the two sides.
- The objective of the negotiations was to reduce the numerical limits on the strategic offensive arms and appropriately simplify and adapt the verification machinery. The parties differed on the extent to which verification procedures had to be adapted. The U.S. initially advocated for the retention of the most intrusive measures, including perimetral monitoring and unlimited exchange of telemetry, while the Russian negotiators saw no value added in such measures as they did not serve to verify specific provisions of the New START.
- One of the major accomplishments of the Russian delegation is the inclusion of an additional limit on deployed and non-deployed launchers, which limited the breakout potential. Counting all warheads, both nuclear and conventional, would have also precluded breakout scenarios with conventional ICBMs.
- Among the key stumbling blocks at the negotiations was the issue of counting warheads deployed on heavy bombers. The U.S. insisted on instituting “real” counting rules for the air leg with appropriate verification measures at storage facilities. The Russian side managed to decline the proposal due to the associated technical and financial difficulties.
- The eventual compromise on telemetry was conditioned by the U.S. home politics. While telemetry was not needed to verify the Treaty, U.S. Senate saw it as an important confidence-building measure to be retained. However, a limited number of exchanges does not allow the United States to use the data obtained to improve missile defense.
- The critique of the New START presented by the Republicans may be summarized as “New START is deficient because it is not START”.



Strategic Offensive Arms Control in Russia-U.S. Relations: Lessons Learned

Sergey Semenov

Under the Trump administration the United States withdrew from the INF Treaty, the Open Skies Treaty. The prevailing ideology within the administration of the 45th U.S. President was neither conducive to the extension of the New START Treaty, which is the bedrock of strategic offensive arms control. Although the Treaty was extended as one of the first foreign policy decisions of the Biden administration, one should nurture no illusions. The restoration and renovation of arms control and strategic stability architecture will take a lot of effort and may take longer than the five years provided for in the extension clause of the New START.

Based on the broad range of literature and the U.S. records of the New START negotiations, which had been leaked by Wikileaks and which still officially remain classified, the author analyses the key issues raised during the negotiations and the tools that were used to resolve them, including central provisions of the Treaty, limits on road-mobile ICBMs, missile defenses, inspections activities and telemetry. The section is followed by a brief overview of the ratification process of the New START Treaty in Russia and in the United States and subsequent strategic offensive arms control consultations.

CHAPTER I. NEW START TREATY: NEGOTIATIONS AND KEY PROVISIONS

Arms control negotiations are by no account an easy process. The length of the New START protocol testifies that the negotiations required a lot of effort. Drawing upon the leaked U.S. diplomatic cables from the START follow-on (as it was called by the U.S.) negotiations, this chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive analytic overview of the Russian and U.S. approaches to post-START strategic offensive arms control.

Given the amount of detail present in the cables, the author does not intend to describe all the facets of the negotiations in detail. Otherwise, the volume of the chapter would greatly surpass the boundaries of an occasional paper. The author's intention is to structure the text in a way that would explain the key differences in the respective national stances and illustrate how the Russian and U.S. delegations managed to overcome their divergencies in the course of the talks.

Strategic Offensive Arms Control History: SALT I, SALT II, START I, START II

The history of strategic offensive arms control began in 1972 when the SALT I interim agreement was concluded together with the ABM Treaty. The Treaty was the first international agreement to

really limit an unrestricted build-up of strategic offensive arms. The aggregate ceiling, which was defined as the number of ICBM and SLBM launchers as of July 1, 1972, was not to be exceeded. The parties agreed to refrain from the construction of additional ICBM silo launchers, with the deployment of new SLBM launchers only being allowed to replace an equal number of the older ones. At the same time, new restrictions were imposed on the conversion of light ICBM launchers for the deployment of heavy ICBMs. The treaty was to be verified with national technical means (NTM).

The crucial importance of SALT I consists in its laying the grounds for the future arms control talks. The Treaty gave additional incentives for Moscow and Washington to pursue limitations on their nuclear stockpiles. Of course, as the first agreement in this field it could not be perfect since the Soviet Union and the United States were only beginning their arms control efforts. At the same time the Treaty only limited launchers and did not envisage numerical restrictions on warheads (at that time only the United States had successfully deployed ICBMs and SLBMs with independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV)). As a result, the SALT I failed to hamper further improvement of the two countries' missile arsenals. For instance, in the 1970s due to further deployment of MIRVed missiles the number of deployed warheads increased threefold in the USSR and twofold in the United States. The Treaty also did not impose any limits on heavy bombers.

The follow-on SALT-II was signed in 1979 and was to remain in force until 1985. The Treaty established equal numerical ceilings on all the means of delivery of SOA, including strategic aviation. The numerical ceilings were as high as 2400 delivery vehicles, and since 1981 – 2250 delivery vehicles. Separate sublimats were established for MIRVed ICBM and SLBM launchers and heavy bombers armed with long-range ALCMs (no more than 1320 units total), MIRVed ICBM and SLBM launchers (no more than 1200 units total), and MIRVed ICBM launchers (no more than 820 units).

SALT II never formally entered into force due to the anti-Soviet hysteria which followed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Nevertheless, the two countries' nuclear forces levels were in line with the SALT limits up until May 1986 when the United States exceeded the limit on heavy bombers deployed with long-range ALCMs.

In 1991, right before the end of Cold War the Soviet Union and the United States signed START I, which is an unprecedentedly detailed and meticulous agreement, encompassing a broad range of issues. The pathway to its conclusion was long and rocky as it took the two countries almost twelve years to negotiate a new agreement on strategic offensive arms. For the first time in the history of arms control limits were imposed not only on the number of launchers or means of delivery but also on the number of deployed warheads.

The numerical limits of the Treaty may be summed up as follows:

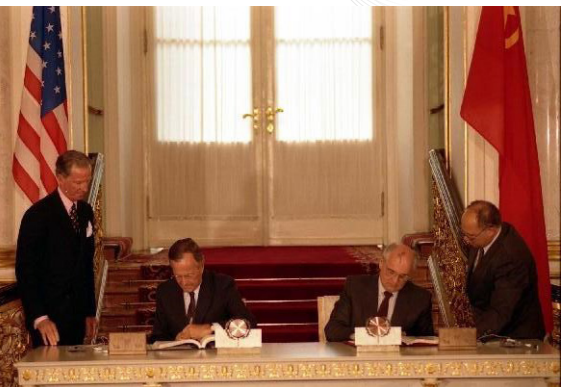
- No more than 1600 deployed means of delivery, including no more than 154 heavy ICBMs.
- No more than 6000 warheads on deployed means of delivery, including no more than 4900 warheads on SLBMs and ICBMs, no more than 1100 warheads on mobile ICBMs, and no more than 1540 warheads on heavy ICBMs.



- The total throw-weight of the deployed ICBMs and SLBMs was not to exceed 3600 tons.

The Treaty relied upon a very elaborated set of counting rules. ICBMs and SLBMs were considered to be deployed with the maximum number of warheads they had been tested with. Every heavy bomber not fit for ALCMs was considered to be deployed with one warhead regardless of its real loading, whereas the heavy bombers equipped for long-range ALCMs were considered to be deployed with:

- Eight warheads if it was a Soviet HB within the sublimit of 180 bombers.
- Ten warheads if it was a U.S. HB within the sublimit of 150 bombers.
- The bombers exceeding the aforementioned sublimits were counted with the real number of warheads deployed on them.



Presidents George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev sign START, 31 July 1991.

Source: www.nps.gov

At the same time the START I envisaged a set of limitations on the modernization and the development of new strategic offensive arms, prohibiting the creation of new heavy ICBMs and SLBMs, mobile launchers for heavy ICBMs, SLBMs and ICBMs with more than ten warheads, the development of air-launched air-surface ballistic missiles, etc. The Treaty also specified basing restrictions for SOAs, including mobile ICBMs.

Such a set of obligations had to be verified through a complex and intrusive verification mechanism that included national technical means, inspection activities, continuous monitoring at specified facilities, data exchanges including telemetry exchanges. It should be noted that the telemetry exchanges were a novel mechanism specifically designed to verify the throw-weight of the missiles on the number of warheads deployed on ICBMs and SLBMs.

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought unexpected facets to the implementation of the START I. The Soviet SOAs same to be deployed on the national territories of four newly independent states, out of which only Russia continued as a nuclear-armed state. Under the Lisbon protocol signed in 1992, the rest – Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan undertook to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapons-states.

The Treaty entered into force on December 5, 1994 and was in force up until December 5, 2009. START I was instrumental in achieving a better security environment for our country in the difficult 1990s, when the Russian Federation was faced with unprecedented economic, military, and political crises. As Amb. Antonov point out, the START I came to be the peak of bilateral arms control process in terms of the depth of its arrangements¹.

The START I was soon followed by START II, which provided for more dramatic reductions in the two countries' strategic offensive armaments. Hence, the total number of warheads deployed on strategic delivery vehicles was to be reduced to 3000-3500 warheads, including 1700-1750 of them atop SLBMs). The Treaty's requirement to withdraw MIRVed ICBMs from service, however, was most painful for Russia given that such missiles comprised the bulk of the Russian nuclear forces. Such a prohibition mirrored the U.S. understanding

¹ Антонов А.И. Контроль над вооружениями: история, состояние и перспективы. М.: Российская политическая энциклопедия, ПИР-Центр, 2021. Р. 22-32

of strategic stability, which viewed ICBMs with multiple warheads as a destabilizing factor. While the Russian side rejected the division of SOAs into “more and less destabilizing” and insisted that each type of SOA had its particularities, it nevertheless, signed the Treaty.

Its implementation would have demanded a complete overhaul and restructuring of the Russian nuclear forces. As a result, the START-II was heavily criticized in Russia and may have impaired the Russian second-strike capabilities if the Treaty had been carried out. For the United States, the adversarial effect of START II would have been less tangible as the SLBMs, which comprise the basis of the U.S. strategic nuclear forces, were not affected as significantly.

The Russian Federation ratified the START II in 2000 but denounced it after the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty, which, in the Russian view, constituted an extreme circumstance affecting the supreme national interest.

The New START immediate predecessor, the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT, a.k.a. the Moscow Treaty) was a document of different nature if compared with START I or START II. In essence, the Treaty only put the unilateral statements by Presidents Bush and Putin into a legally-binding form. SORT envisaged that by 2012 each side will reduce its nuclear forces to 1700-2200 deployed nuclear warheads. The Treaty did not contain any specific sublimates and allowed each party to structure its nuclear forces at its discretion.

The positive aspect of this Treaty is that it was the only arms control agreement the Bush Jr. administration agreed to. As such it signaled the two countries willingness to pursue further reductions of their nuclear arsenals. At the same time, in the absence of specific definitions and implementation procedures, it created a lot of room for misunderstanding. For instance, Moscow and Washington diverged on the essence of counting rules and central limits. The United States proceeded from the notion of “operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads”, which the nuclear forces reduction could be achieved through simple downloading of the deployed launchers. In other words, a significant “breakout potential” was created by the United States.

START Implementation Results & START Follow-On Discussions Under Bush Administration

In 2006 at the Saint Petersburg G8 summit Presidents Putin and Bush agreed to begin consultations on further prospects for START and START follow-on treaties.² This agreement was reaffirmed during the last summit between Presidents Putin and Bush Jr. in April 2008.³

As the head of the Russian delegation at the New START negotiation and then-director of the Department for Security and Disarmament Affairs of the Russian Foreign Ministry Amb. Anatoly Antonov notes, START I Treaty, which could be extended several times, was to expire in 2009. But for several reasons the extension of the original START Treaty, the option provided for by the Treaty, was not considered feasible. Firstly, the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty made the extension impossible given the direct linkage between the

The START I came to be the peak of bilateral arms control process in terms of the depth of its arrangements

² Антонов А.И. Контроль над вооружениями: история, состояние и перспективы. М.: Российская политическая энциклопедия, ПИР-Центр, 2021. С. 40

³ Rose Gottemoeller. Negotiating the New START Treaty. Cambria Press, 2021. P.



two treaties. Secondly, the ceilings outlined in the START were out of touch with military-political realities of the time.

Finally, there was no need for further participation of Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan in the strategic offensive arms control process given that by 2000 nuclear weapons had been withdrawn from their territories, with means of delivery having been eliminated or converted. Their participation was also impractical from the political standpoint as they had acceded to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapons states⁴.

More specifically, in addition to purely political reasons, the Russian military was not ready to extend the START I as it imposed significant and unequal limitations on the Russian nuclear forces. For instance, the START I did not allow Russia to conduct flight tests of MIRVed "Topol-M" ICBMs without additional modifications as well as to increase the number of warheads deployed on Sineva SLBMs⁵. The Russian military leadership also considered unfair and unjust the Treaty's provisions dealing with rail-mobile and road-mobile ICBMs as well as heavy ICBMs – systems only possessed by the Russian Federation. Another reason for the military's discontent with START I was its cumbersome and intrusive verification regime (inter alia, continuous monitoring at Votkinsk Machinebuilding Plant), which was regarded as disadvantageous for Russia⁶.

The START Treaty intrusive verification regime was a mixed blessing as its implementation was associated with many procedural and substantive concerns during the exchange of notifications and inspections. The treaty envisaged twelve types of inspections and exhibitions, continuous perimetral monitoring at the Votkinsk Machinebuilding Plant, telemetry exchanges, and other measures. As a result, a great number of procedural questions were raised in the JCIC (Joint Compliance and Inspections Commission) concerning the deployment of U.S. strategic bombers and other issues. In its turn, the United States questioned the Russian compliance practices. Inter alia, on some occasions U.S. inspectors were not able to verify the number of reentry vehicles on ICBM. Besides, there were disagreements regarding the notifications upon ICBMs exit from the production facilities, inspection of road-mobile ICBMs during data-update inspections, the basing of mobile ICBMs outside of their "restricted areas", and telemetry issues.⁷

At the same time a simple non-extension of START without achieving new agreements would have dealt serious damage to strategic stability. The SORT Treaty was equipped with no verification measures, and after the expiration of the START, its implementation would have been impossible to verify.

⁴ Ibid. P. 41

⁵ Vladimir Dvorkin. START I Lessons. SIPRI Yearbook 2008. P.661

⁶ США переиграли СССР на переговорах по Договору СНВ-I. Независимое военное обозрение. URL: https://nvo.ng.ru/history/2009-08-07/14_snv.html

⁷ 2005 Adherence to and Compliance With Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments. U.S. Department of State. URL: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/rls/rpt/51977.htm>

However, the attempts to negotiate a new agreement with the Bush administration bore no fruit. The U.S. side was only willing to somewhat deepen the relevant provisions of the SORT, but nothing more. Washington also proposed to reduce the verification mechanism to solely confidence building measures (inter alia, the exchange of telemetry), which was unacceptable for Russia. The draft treaty presented by the United States in October 2008 did not envisage sizeable reductions in the size of the nuclear forces in comparison to the SORT (Moscow) Treaty and was considered as extremely weak by Russia⁸.

Beginning of the New START Negotiations under Obama Administration

The full-fledged negotiations process only became possible after a new administration came to power in Washington. The joint statement of the two presidents regarding the negotiations on further reductions of strategic offensive arms adopted in London on April 1, 2009, laid the grounds for the bilateral negotiations on a new legally binding agreement in this sphere. Inter alia, the statement read:

“As leaders of the two largest nuclear weapons states, we agreed to work together to fulfill our obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and demonstrate leadership in reducing the number of nuclear weapons in the world. We committed our two countries to achieving a nuclear free world, while recognizing that this long-term goal will require a new emphasis on arms control [...]. We agreed to pursue new and verifiable reductions in our strategic offensive arsenals in a step-by-step process, beginning by replacing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with a new, legally-binding treaty. We are instructing our negotiators to start talks immediately on this new treaty and to report on results achieved in working out the new agreement by July”⁹.

The statement also envisaged that the numerical limits on SOAs would be lower than those in the 2002 Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions. The verification measures, as the two presidents stated, were to be predicated upon the experience of the START Treaty implementation.¹⁰

At the same time there was a joint understanding between

⁸ Vladimir Dvorkin. START I Lessons. SIPRI Yearbook 2008. P.661

⁹ Joint Statement by President Dmitry Medvedev of the Russian Federation and President Barack Obama of the United States of America. April 1, 2009. White House of Barack Obama. URL: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/joint-statement-president-dmitriy-medvedev-russian-federation-and-president-barack-obama>

¹⁰ Joint Statement Between the United States of America and Russia Regarding Negotiations on Further Reductions in Strategic Offensive Arms April 1, 2009. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PPP-2009-book1/pdf/PPP-2009-book1-doc-pg394.pdf>



the two countries that the START implementations experience would be used to the greatest extent possible. As Amb. Anatoly Antonov notes “The negotiations were not held from scratch and made use of everything valuable and really working from the earlier treaties, first and foremost, from the START I.”

The preliminary talks took place on April 29, 2009, in Rome. As described by the head of the U.S. delegation Rose Gottemoeller, the objective of the preliminary round was to “touch noses”, i.e., exchange opinions on the basic structure and key elements of the New START¹¹. At that time, the sides agreed on a preliminary schedule for the negotiations. The U.S. stance regarding the START follow-on treaty (SFO)¹² was that the new treaty was to provide a real picture of the two countries strategic nuclear forces”, i.e. count real deployed warheads rather than rely upon attribution rules. Under the U.S. proposal, the NST was to include two ceilings: an overall limit on “operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads” and a limit on the overall number of SOAs. The START verification procedures were to be appropriately modified and simplified. However, the initial verification package presented by the U.S. delegation at a later round of the talks “mechanically” retained the majority of START I verification measures¹³.

The two delegations also ruled against the participation of Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Belarus in the follow-on negotiations. Nevertheless, both Russia and the United States agreed that their concerns regarding the security assurances should be accommodated. Originally the participation in the NST was of most interest in Ukraine, which believed that the security assurances granted to it under the Budapest memorandum were linked to its participation in arms control. After that, Belarus and Kazakhstan also began to manifest some interest in the issue. These states thought they would be able to assist Moscow and Washington in resolving issues. Nevertheless, both the Russian Federation and the United States believed it was improper for non-nuclear-weapons states to participate in nuclear arms control. The two countries’ delegations also found the Ukrainian stance somewhat inconsistent as neither Ukraine, nor any other post-Soviet state raised the issue when the Moscow treaty was being negotiated. The two sides agreed to elaborate a joint approach to this issue and reaffirm the validity of security assurance given to those states¹⁴.

The Russian views of the modalities for NST had already been presented to the U.S. side on December 15, 2008, in response to a draft treaty the United States had provided to Russia in October 2008. At that time the United States advocated for “SORT plus” approach, whereas the Russian stance could be characterized as “START lite”¹⁵. In particular, at least during the early stage of the negotiations the Russian Federation was somewhat reluctant to move away from START attribution-based counting rules. Hence, Amb. Antonov challenged to the concept of “operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads” (ODSNW), on which no common understanding existed. The Russian



Anatoly Antonov, the Ambassador of Russia to the United States

Source: www.washingtonian.com

¹¹ Rose Gottemoeller. *Negotiating the New START Treaty*. Cambria Press, 2021. P. 27-28

¹² SFO (START follow-on) was the U.S. term during the negotiations. While the term is interchangeable with the New START (NST), hereinafter in the text the author will use the former.

¹³ GUIDANCE FOR A/S GOTTEMOELLER AT U.S./RUSSIA TALKS IN ROME ON A START FOLLOW-ON AGREEMENT. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09STATE41125_a.html

¹⁴ https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09MOSCOW1347_a.html

¹⁵ Gottemoeller, Op. Cit. P. 29

delegation also emphasized that a new treaty was to address Russian concerns regarding missile defense. “If the talks did not address this linkage, it would be “extremely difficult to find a common basis for a START follow-on treaty.”¹⁶

At the exploratory round as well as further-on in the course of the talks, U.S. chief negotiator Rose Gottemoeller retorted that the negotiations were to stay “laser-focused” on SOAs, whereas missile defense concerns were to be addressed at a different forum. As she recalls in her memoir, the U.S. side greatly benefited from the fact that the two presidents narrowed down the mandate of the talks as it allowed to repel Russian insistence to include missile defense issues into the NST¹⁷.

Among other issues of principle that emerged at the preliminary talks were numerical limits (the U.S. had not elaborated its position on the issue at that time) and conventional ICBMs. Russia emphasized that such missiles were to be brought under the scope of the SFO¹⁸.

The first benchmark for the NST talks was to agree upon a joint understanding on the basic parameters of the new treaty by July when Presidents Obama and Medvedev were to hold a bilateral summit in Moscow. Initially, the Russian side advocated for less specificity in the Joint Understanding, presumably, in order to have more leeway during the subsequent negotiations. However, as the summit loomed and time pressure built, Moscow became more proactive. For example, the Joint Understanding which Presidents Obama and Medvedev had agreed to sign at the Summit had remained vague and general at Russian insistence as late as three days before the Summit. However, under new instructions from Medvedev, Russian diplomats agreed to include specific numbers and detailed commitments into the Joint Statement¹⁹.

In particular, the Joint Understanding envisaged that the SFO would contain the following elements:

- Limits on SOAs in the range of 500-1100 for SDVs, and in the range of 1500-1675 for their associated warheads. The specific numbers and counting rules were to be determined through subsequent talks. It should be noted that the United States insisted upon a lower limit (1500) on deployed warheads and a higher limit on SDVs, whereas Russia, to the contrary, advocated for more warheads (1675, just a symbolic reduction from the SORT levels) and less delivery vehicles (500).
- Definitions, data exchanges, notifications, eliminations, inspections and verification procedures, as well as other confidence building and transparency measures, as adapted, simplified, and made less costly in comparison to the START Treaty.
- A provision that each Party would determine for itself the composition and structure of its strategic offensive arms.
- A provision underscoring the interrelationship of SOAs and ballistic missile defense.

¹⁶ U.S.-RUSSIA TALKS IN ROME ON START FOLLOW-ON AGREEMENT. April 29, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09ROME476_a.html

¹⁷ Gottemoeller, Op. Cit. P. 172

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ A/S'S Gordon And Gottemoeller Discuss Moscow Summit With Baltics, Czechs & Poles. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09USNATO302_a.html



- A provision on the impact of ICBMs and SLBMs in a non-nuclear configuration on strategic stability.
- An obligation to base the strategic offensive arms exclusively within the Parties' national territories.
- A clause on the establishment of a Bilateral Consultative Commission.
- A provision that the treaty would not be applicable to "existing patterns of cooperation in the area of strategic offensive arms with a third state" (between the United States and the United Kingdom on Trident D5 SLBMs)²⁰.

The subsequent negotiations built upon the joint understanding. Working groups had been formed to tackle specific inspections, conversion and elimination, memorandum of understanding issues. However, by the fifth negotiating round the parties identified several problematic issues that had to be resolved in order to make further progress within working groups. The combined list of the issues to be resolved is as follows:

- Numerical limits on deployed delivery vehicles for SOAs. As discussed below, the United States advocated for a higher number of delivery vehicles and a lower number of strategic nuclear warheads.
- Numerical limits on deployed and non-deployed launchers of ICBMs and launchers of SLBMs (the U.S. side initially was opposed to the very idea of the third limit as it had not been provided for by the Joint Understanding). At the same time the third limit on launchers was seen by Russia as a way to limit the upload potential created by the reliance upon the notion of "operationally
- Counting rules for heavy bombers. As discussed below, Russia insisted that only nuclear armaments actually deployed on heavy bombers were to be counted against the agreed ceilings.
- Removing Peacekeeper and Minuteman II ICBMs and their launchers from accountability under the new treaty and removing converted submarines (SSGNs)²¹ and heavy bombers²² from verification regime.
- Inseparable interrelationship between SOAs and MD.
- Non-nuclear configuration of ICBMs and SLBMs.
- Retaining the continuous monitoring regime at the production facility for mobile ICBMs (Votkinsk Machinebuilding Plant).
- Special limitations and verification measures for mobile ICBMs, which are not envisaged for other kinds of SOAs.
- Retaining the provisions on the exchange of telemetry in the

²⁰ The Joint Understanding for The Start Follow-On Treaty. White House, Office of the Press Secretary. July 8, 2009. URL: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/joint-understanding-start-follow-treaty>

²¹ The United States had previously converted four out of eighteen Ohio-class submarines to carry only sea-launched cruise missiles and wanted to remove the submarines from accountability. Russia insisted that verification and transparency measures be still applied to the vessels.

²² The United States envisaged the conversion of B-1B heavy bombers only for non-nuclear missions.

new treaty.

- Tightening up verification measures for SOAs (increasing the number of inspections, while reducing the number of facilities to be inspected).
- Removing “new kinds of SOAs” tested for non-nuclear purposes from coverage under the future agreement.
- For the MOU, whether technical characteristics such as maximum numbers of reentry vehicles flight tested should be included for missiles as a transparency measure.²³

The following subsections explore the aforementioned divergencies in greater detail. The author considers feasible that the detailed *exposé* be structured by issue rather than by the chronology of the negotiations.

Central Limits

During the first round of negotiations in Moscow, the United States reaffirmed its proposal that the central limit of the SFO be imposed on “operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads” (ODSNW). As the U.S. negotiators argued, such an approach “*would eliminate the over-counting of strategic nuclear warheads caused by attributed warheads and would provide both parties with a more accurate insight into the other’s strategic force structure, both with respect to deployed nuclear warheads, and deployed delivery vehicles and their operational potential*”²⁴ An ODSNW was defined by the United States as a nuclear warhead deployed on ICBM, SLBM, or on heavy bomber or located in a “*specified weapon storage area associated with or directly supporting a heavy bomber air base*”²⁵. The approach was in stark contrast with the START I attribution rules-based approach to counting warheads. The beauty of this approach is that it would allow the two sides to have an accurate picture of the size of each other’s nuclear arsenals.

While the United States was interested in gaining a more accurate insight into the Russian strategic nuclear forces, the Russian concern was to limit the U.S. upload potential. The proposed limitations solely on ODSNW could not constrain the U.S. capabilities in this regard as the United States still had a great number of non-deployed nuclear warheads, means of delivery and launchers²⁶.

The considerations about the U.S. upload potential prompted Russia to add a new provision limiting the total number of both

²³ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-V): (U) Closing Plenary, October 1, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA843_a.html

²⁴ U.S. NON-PAPER ON ELEMENTS OF A START FOLLOW-ON TREATY 2009 May 19. Wikileaks. URL: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09STATE50910_a.html

²⁵ U.S. NON-PAPER ON ELEMENTS OF A START FOLLOW-ON TREATY 2009 May 19. Wikileaks. URL: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09STATE50910_a.html

²⁶ Ibid



deployed and non-deployed launchers and heavy bombers²⁷. As Amb. Antonov noted more than once in the course of the talks. “Warheads do not fly on their own” and only limits on delivery vehicles and their launchers would lead to real reductions. Thus, the Russian delegation emphasized that the SFO was to contain three different limits on warheads, launchers (both deployed and non-deployed) and delivery vehicles²⁸.

The limit on deployed and non-deployed launchers was considered necessary as non-deployed warheads could be mounted upon non-deployed missiles at storage facilities, with the assembly placed into non-deployed launchers. The limit was to encompass non-operational silo launchers, as well as test and training ICBM silo launchers, SSBNs in extended overhaul, and newly-constructed SSBNs that had not yet been loaded with SLBMs.

The Russian side was not particularly worried about the non-operational MX and Minutemen III silo launchers. The real concern was posed by 24 launch tubes on 14 Trident SSBNs, with each missile having the capacity to carry up to 8 warheads. Russian military experts assessed that the SLBMs in these launchers could be loaded with over 2000 warheads. The State Duma was well aware of this fact and believed that the two SSBNs in port for extended overhaul were also available for rapid upload, which, as the Russian negotiators argued, could have become an impediment for the ratification process.²⁹

Initially the United States resisted the third limit, arguing that the U.S. approach on limiting SDVs and their associated launchers was efficient enough. While recognizing that the United States indeed had some spare warheads at storage facilities, the U.S. side also proposed to forgo the limit on deployed and non-deployed launchers by enacting appropriate confidence building measures regarding the upload potentials of the two states. Inter alia, the U.S. delegation expressed willingness to declare the number and location of such warheads stored at operational heavy bomber bases, and to limit their number. The American side was also open to elaborating monitoring and inspection measures for verifying the quantity and location of spare warheads.³⁰ On several instances Rose Gottemoeller also indicated that the upload process was quite lengthy, so Russia would have a number of strategic warnings detectable from NTMs³¹. The U.S. side also tried to mirror the Russian proposition by tabling proposals to limit the number of non-deployed road-mobile ICBM, which will be discussed in the following sections. It should be noted that the introduction of specific limits on mobile ICBMs would have run counter to the long-held Russian view that SOAs could not be divided into “most destabilizing” and “less destabilizing”, all SOAs had to be

²⁷ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-V): (U) START Follow-On Negotiations, September 21, 2009, Morning Session. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA781_a.html

²⁸ Start Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-I): Meeting Of Start Follow-On Negotiations In Geneva, June 1, 2009, Morning Session. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA443_a.html

²⁹ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): (U) Ad Hoc Working Group Meeting, October 21, 2009 https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA920_a.html

³⁰ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-I): Start Follow-On Negotiations, June 1, 2009, Afternoon Session. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA444_a.html

³¹ START FOLLOW-ON DISCUSSIONS, OPENING SESSION, MOSCOW, MAY 19, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09MOSCOW1331_a.html

treated equally³².

The decision to stay with three limits was reached at the end of the negotiations after time consuming and exhausting discussions. The New START has separate ceilings on the total number of warheads deployed on strategic delivery vehicles, deployed strategic delivery vehicles and the deployed and non-deployed launchers of ICBMs and SLBMs.

Numerical limits

As it is seen from the Joint Understanding of July 8, 2009, initially there was a wide gap between the numerical limits proposed by Russia and the United States. Hence, initially Russia put forward a limit of 500 SDVs and 1675 warheads, whereas the United States advocated for a higher ceiling for SDVs (1100) and a lower limit for ODSNW (1500). When the limit on deployed and non-deployed SOA launchers was discussed, the initial Russian proposal was 600 and the U.S. one – 850.

Launchers. Amid negotiations, the proposed numerical ceilings still differed significantly. Russia proposed to install the limit of 600 deployed and non-deployed launchers, whereas U.S. aspired to have no less than 850 launchers. In a one-on-one conversation with the head of the U.S. delegation Rose Gottemoeller Amb. Antonov admitted that it would be a serious concession from the Russian side to accept the limit as high as 700 launchers³³.

The decision on the numerical limits depended on several factors. Firstly, during the talks the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review was ongoing and the United States had not decided the future of its nuclear forces. Secondly, when the United States had agreed to count warheads and delivery vehicles in non-nuclear configuration against the treaty ceilings, the U.S. delegation wanted to preserve the maximum leeway for the deployment of such systems.

The numerical limit was not decided as a stand-alone issue. The decision on the final figures was made after the parties exchanged several package proposals aimed at unravelling the Gordian knot of the negotiations. Such proposals had been presented through the contacts between the national security advisors (Gen. Jones and Mr. Prikhodko) as well as through the discussions between the Chief of the Russian General Staff and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The final limits are 700 deployed delivery vehicles, 800 deployed and non-deployed ICBM and SLBM launchers and non-deployed heavy bombers, and 1550 warheads on deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers³⁴.

Warheads
do not fly on
their own

³² START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): (U) Ad Hoc Group Meeting, October 29, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA977_a.html

³³ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): (U) Plenary Meeting, October 29, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA976_a.html

³⁴ Antonov. Ibid. P. 43



SOA & Missile Defense

Since early-on in the negotiating process Russia emphasized that the SFO was to include at least some reference to the interrelationship between strategic offensive and strategic defensive armaments. If the issue had not been properly tackled, Moscow would be unable to sign the SFO. Moreover, it could only decrease its strategic nuclear forces if it understood the size of U.S. strategic defensive arms and was confident that the U.S. missile defenses could not downgrade the Russian deterrence potential.³⁵

In essence, the very concept of the close interrelationship between the SOA and missile defenses was not something new in the arms control world. It was in the late 1960s that both the Soviet Union and the United States arrived at the conclusion that an uncontrollable development of strategic defensive systems would be conducive to an arms race and would be destabilizing for the strategic parity. This mutual understanding was instrumental in achieving SALT-I and the ABM Treaty, which was referenced to in the agreements on strategic arms. The only treaty that did not contain such a reference was the SORT Treaty concluded in 2002, six months after Washington withdrew from the ABM Treaty.

At the same time, the Russian delegation was receptive to the U.S. reasoning that missile defense concerns were to be tackled at a different forum: what Russia wanted was to recognize the interrelationship between the SOAs and missile defense and its increasing importance as the SOAs were reduced. Later on, the Russian side also proposed to list “significant build-up of missile defense as a reason for withdrawal from the Treaty”. Given that the United States was vehemently opposed to the inclusion of specific provisions on missile defense issues in the main body of the NST, the Russian delegation came up with the ideal of unilateral statements to resolve the missile-defense concerns.³⁶ Later in the course of the talks Russia also demanded a written presidential-level assurances that ICBM or SLBM launchers would not be converted to missile interceptors launchers, that interceptor launchers would not be converted into the launchers for offensive systems, and that the sides would not to enable interceptors to perform the functions of offensive systems. Under the New START, the United States also undertook not to reconvert ICBM or SLBM launchers into missile interceptors’ launchers and vice versa.³⁷

In this regard the New START contains this extremely important recognition of the link between strategic offensive armaments and, as Amb. Antonov wrote, “reproduces the known legal principle on the inalterability of circumstances, which were the basis for the conclusion of the treaty.

³⁵ START Follow-On Discussions, Opening Session, Moscow, May 19, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09MOSCOW1331_a.html

³⁶ Gottemoeller challenges this affirmation in her memoir, but according to the U.S. cables from the negotiation it was Amb. Antonov who first came up with the idea

³⁷ Antonov. Op. Cit. P 49-50.

Moreover, through its unilateral statements upon the ratification of the New START, Russia clearly signaled that any significant build-up of U.S. missile defense would be regarded as a reason for withdrawal.

Conventional SDVs

As discussed above, at the beginning of the negotiations Russia was opposed to the term “operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads”, the key word being “nuclear”. Given that the United States was considering the option to deploy “a small number” of conventionally armed ICNMs or SLBMs, the Russian leadership considered that the New START was to limit warheads (!) rather than ODSNW. The underlying motivation was that the term “warhead” would also encompass conventional warheads, which would be counted against the limit of the Treaty³⁸.

At an earlier stage of the negotiations, Russia sought to completely prohibit this type of weaponry invoking several sets of arguments. Among them, the most important one was that it was impossible to distinguish between nuclear and non-nuclear armed ICBMs in flight. Thus, such conventional ICBMs would have dealt serious damage to strategic stability given the uncertainty around the warheads. Moreover, as the representatives of the Chief Operational Directorate of the Russian General Staff argued at the negotiations, given the lower yield of conventional warheads, it would require more than one ICBM to strike the target. Such a massive use will certainly be noticed by automatic early warning systems. That correlated closely with the 2008 study by the National Academy of Sciences, which also outlined that in order to strike targets in “rogue states” such as Iran, North Korea or destroy terrorist assets in Afghanistan or Iraq would need to overfly the Russian territory, which could not make the Russian military optimistic about this prospect.³⁹ However, the U.S. military sought to complement the use of conventionally armed ICBMs with some transparency measures. For instance, Russia would have been notified of the launch so as not to trigger a dangerous nuclear crisis.⁴⁰

Another Russian concern was that the U.S. deployment of conventional ICBMs may trigger a multilateral arms race involving new actors. More than five nuclear-armed states would have the capability to deploy a conventional ICBM following the U.S. suit. Particularly concerning for the Russian Federation was the prospect of close Russian neighbors (e.g., Ukraine) building such missiles⁴¹.

Moreover, the Russian military was concerned that the United States wanted to achieve reductions in the nuclear forces in order to



A Yars RS-24 intercontinental ballistic missile system during the 72nd anniversary of the end of World War II on the Red Square in Moscow.

Source: www.newsweek.com

³⁸ Corrected Copy: START Follow-On Discussions, Second Session, Moscow, May 20, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09MOSCOW1347_a.html

³⁹ Committee on Conventional Prompt Global Strike Capability, U.S. Conventional Prompt Global Strike: Issues for 2008 and Beyond, National Research Council of the National Academies, Washington, D.C., August 2008, <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12061.html>

⁴⁰ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): (U) Plenary Meeting, October 22, 2009 Wikileaks. URL https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA936_a.html

⁴¹ Ibidem



consolidate and enhance its conventional superiority. Russia did not understand if U.S. was intent on compensating for the reductions in strategic nuclear forces with a build-up of U.S. conventional power.

However, it was the Russian delegation that recognized there was no time to negotiate a ban on such systems. Instead, Amb. Antonov suggested that non-nuclear warheads be counted against the treaty limits. This would buy some time to tackle the issue in the future.⁴² The U.S. delegation guidance allowed to meet Russia halfway on the issue. In exchange the U.S. side wanted Russia to agree to a warhead limit of 1500, SDV limit of 700-900, and to exclude from accountability the SDVs that were under the scope of START I but were no longer part of nuclear forces.⁴³

Counting rules

After agreeing in principle to count operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads, the negotiators had to elaborate detailed counting rules. As evidenced by the course of the talks, both sides put forward converging counting rules for delivery vehicles: ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers.

U.S. envisaged limits on deployed ICBMs and SLBMs and their associated launchers with a separate limit on non-deployed mobile launchers of ICBMs. In its turn, Russia proposed three different limits (see above). The U.S. questioned the utility of the Russian approach on the grounds that non-deployed road-mobile ICBM launchers comprised the bulk of the Russian non-deployed launchers.

Among the most difficult problems facing the negotiators were the counting rules for heavy bombers. The START used attribution-based counting. As the basic understanding was that the New START was to reflect the real situation, devising viable counting rules to that end proved to be very challenging. The initial Russian proposal was that nuclear gravity bombs or nuclear-tipped air-launched cruise missiles be counted only when they were actually loaded onto a heavy bomber. Given that in ordinary circumstances nuclear weapons were not actually loaded on heavy bombers, that would have meant that the air component of the nuclear forces would have always been at zero deployed warheads. Such an approach, as the U.S. negotiators countered, would have probably led to no cuts in the air leg as under the Russian approach a state party could retain the weaponry in unlimited numbers at the air bases. Under the Russia proposal, inspectors would only be able to inspect the deployed heavy bombers and verify the number of nuclear weapons actually deployed on them.

The U.S. proposed an alternative method, which envisaged counting warheads at weapons-storage facilities at heavy bomber bases to provide an accurate image of the air leg together with appropriate verification measures⁴⁴. The essence of the proposal was that long-range nuclear air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) and nuclear armaments for heavy bombers other than LRNA that are located both

⁴² (U) START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): One-On-One Heads Of Delegation Meeting, October 21, 2009. Wikileaks. URL https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENE-VA947_a.html

⁴³ https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09STATE75614_a.html

⁴⁴ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-V): (U) First Meeting Of The Inspection Protocol Working Group, September 22, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA804_a.html

on any deployed heavy bombers and in nuclear armaments weapons storage areas associated with the air bases where heavy bombers are deployed, would be counted against the aggregate ceiling on nuclear warheads set forth in the New START Treaty. Under the U.S. proposal, the inspectors were to get access to both heavy bombers themselves and the associated storage areas to verify the quantities of nuclear armaments there.

For Russia, a more accurate insight into the U.S. heavy bomber fleet was not as important. As the head of the Russian delegation noted during the negotiations, the emphasis should have been placed on the elimination of the upload potential. The best way to do so was to permanently convert or eliminate strategic bombers. “Warheads cannot fly on their own”, the Russian delegation emphasized. “Russia was not trying to find out U.S. secrets” and was not interested in having access to the warheads in the storage areas⁴⁵.

Later on, in the course of the talks the United States continued to insist upon establishing credible counting rules for heavy bombers armaments. However, technical differences between Russian and U.S. arsenals weighed in heavily into these considerations. Whereas the U.S. kept its ALCMs with nuclear warheads already inserted into them at the storage areas on the bomber bases, Russia stored its warheads separately from missiles at special storage facilities that were not part of bomber bases. In order to circumvent the difference, the U.S. was willing to count only missile bodies, effectively mirroring the Russian logic that “warheads could not fly on their own”⁴⁶.

The Russian military was reluctant to accept the counting of missile bodies as those could be transported into and out the storage facilities at the air, this heavily decreasing the efficiency of the verification regime. A compromise approach, aimed at solving the issue, had been introduced by the U.S. delegation in its correspondence with Washington. U.S. negotiators proposed to create the category of non-deployed LRNA and to store these non-deployed LRNA in a central storage facility that are located far from the bases for deployed heavy bombers.

Under the proposal, excess ALCM would have been removed from the air bases, with their numbers declared in the memorandum of understanding. The deployed ALCM (those in the storage facilities at the air bases) in their turn would be subject to verification measures. Such an approach, however, would have resulted in additional expenses on the transportation of missile frames and the construction of additional storage facilities, which Russia viewed as unacceptable.⁴⁷

In the private conversation between the two heads of delegations, Amb. Antonov admitted that it was unlikely that the U.S. proposed counting rules for heavy bombers would be accepted. In his view, storage areas contained items not subjected to inspections that would be shrouded during the inspections. That would translate into suspicions of cheating. One could neither exclude the possibility that ALCM bodies would simply be removed before the arrival of inspec-

As the basic understanding was that the New START was to reflect the real situation, devising a workable accounting technique to that end proved to be very challenging

⁴⁵ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-V): (U) Plenary Meeting, September 22, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA819_a.html

⁴⁶ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): (U) Ad Hoc Working Group Meeting, October 21, 2009 Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA920_a.html

⁴⁷ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE-002, U.S. PROPOSAL FOR COUNTING HEAVY BOMBER (HB) NUCLEAR ARMAMENTS Wikileaks. URL https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA943_a.html



tors⁴⁸. Moreover, the U.S. proposal was not adopted as it still did not resolve the Russian concerns about the upload potential given the uncertain correlation between air base storage facilities and central storage facilities⁴⁹. Eventually, the two countries agreed to employ the attribution rule (1 warhead per 1 bomber) to the effect of counting warheads deployed on heavy bombers.

Road-mobile ICBMs

The initial U.S. draft treaty envisaged additional restrictions on road-mobile ICBMs, including limits on their location (restricted areas and deployment areas) reflecting the relevant provisions of START I. For this very reason the Russian delegation characterized the first U.S. draft as “imbalanced”. As the then-head of the Legal & Treaty Directorate of the Russian Ministry of Defense Gen. Evgeny Buzhinskiy noted, “two out of seventeen articles, 14 of 138 paragraphs, and 23 out of 135 definitions,” dealt with road-mobile ICBMs, while only the Russian side had this type of weaponry. Such attention, from the Russian standpoint, was not justifiable as mobile missiles were no more efficient or destabilizing as other SOAs, and even less effective than U.S. SSBNs. Their movement could be monitored by national technical means and is limited to specific basing areas, whereas nuclear submarines enjoy far less transparency⁵⁰.

The U.S. side did not agree with the Russian assessment. Their intention was to “verify limits rather than restrict operations”. As the U.S. delegation internal documents reveal, such an interest was conditioned by the fact that mobile ICBMs could successfully avoid detection when deployed in the field as well as through quick dispersal. The issue had been addressed in START I through the concentration requirement, i.e., the road-mobile ICBMs were to return to the missile base upon the receipt of the inspection’s notification (only for data update inspections).

As the representative of the U.S. Department of Defense at the negotiations argued, the difference between submarines and road-mobile missiles was that SSBNs were easily observed from national technical means, whereas road-mobile systems were easier to conceal. Moreover, in the U.S. view, one could not conceal the construction of a new SSBN, whereas the number of mobile missile systems could be increased at a greater pace.

Russia was not opposed to providing more information regarding its road-mobile force in principle, but what it wanted was symmetrical obligation. As road-mobile ICBMs constituted the bulk of the Russian missile forces, and SSBNs – of the

⁴⁸ U) START FOLLOW-ON NEGOTIATIONS, GENEVA (SFO-GVA-VI): ONE-ON-ONE HEADS OF DELEGATION MEETING, OCTOBER 21, 2009 Wikileaks. URL https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA947_a.html

⁴⁹ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): (U) MOU Working Group Chairs’ Meeting, October 23, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA955_a.html

⁵⁰ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-IV): (U) START FOLLOW-ON NEGOTIATIONS, RUSSIAN RESPONSE TO U.S. DRAFT TREATY AND RUSSIAN-PROPOSED TREATY ELEMENTS. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA733_a.html

U.S. nuclear forces, symmetrical obligations regarding SSBNs were to be introduced⁵¹.

The United States, however, continued to insist on more stringent verification procedures for road-mobile ICBMs, which are extremely hard to detect from national technical means. In the U.S. view it was in recognition of this fact that the START negotiators agreed to cover mobile ICBMs from cradle to the grave⁵². The concern expressed by the United States was that without relevant verification and confidence-building measures, Russia would be able to produce and deploy road-mobile ICBMs unhampered. Such an assertion, however, was inconsistent with the limited capabilities of the ICBM factory in Votkinsk.⁵³

Under the START I, the U.S. concerns had been allayed by the continuous perimetral monitoring at Votkinsk Machinebuilding Plant. This form of monitoring originally appeared in the INF Treaty and was meant to distinguish between the missile stages of INF-prohibited and START-compliant missiles, which were produced in Votkinsk. The United States in their initial draft treaty proposed to continue such form of verification on reciprocal basis. Nevertheless, Russia was vehemently opposed to the continuation of such monitoring and was in no need of U.S. reciprocity on this matter. In fact, as HOD Antonov put it during the negotiations, Russia wanted *“what Russia wanted was for the U.S. to sign the Votkinsk agreement [on the withdrawal of American inspectors – S.S.]. He said the U.S. should not be under any illusion that Russia would revisit the issue of the closure of the Votkinsk perimeter portal monitoring facility*⁵⁴.

At the following round of negotiations the U.S. delegation received new guidance stipulating that the U.S. side would be willing to forego this type of verification activities in exchange for 1) continuation of the practice of placing permanent unique identifiers on each mobile ICBM; 2) prenotification to the United States at least 60 hours in advance of the exit from the facility of a mobile ICBM subject to the limitations of the Treaty, to include information about the type and variant of the missile, the scheduled time of departure of the mobile ICBM, and its unique identifier number; and 3) installation and operation of a closed circuit TV camera at the rail exit of the facility that would be connected via satellite feed to a remote U.S. monitoring facility to track the entry and exit of railcars from the final missile assembly facility to confirm that declarations are being provided accurately. As a gesture of reciprocity, the United States would be prepared to pre-notify the exits of missiles or first stages from a similar United States facility and install a closed-circuit TV there⁵⁵.

In order to retain the continuous monitoring, the U.S. also put forward an alternative solution. Among the most far-reaching was the proposal to provide for the Russian continuous presence

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² START Follow-On Negotiations, Moscow (SFO-MOSCOW): (U) Plenary Meeting, October 13, 2009 Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09MOSCOW2600_a.html

⁵³ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): One-On-One Heads Of Delegation Meeting, October 22, 2009 Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENE-VA949_a.html

⁵⁴ START Follow-On Discussions, Opening Session, Moscow, May 19, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09MOSCOW1331_a.html

⁵⁵ SFO-V Guidance-004: Mobile Missile Monitoring Provisions. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09STATE98566_a.html



Russia was not trying to find out U.S. secrets and was not interested in having access to the warheads in the storage areas

outside of nuclear storage facilities at Kings Bay and Bangore naval bases, where SSBNs were deployed⁵⁶.

U.S. compromise proposals however did not meet the interests of Moscow. It is not that Russia was in principle opposed to additional confidence building measures, but unilateral restrictions applying only to Russia were unacceptable. The Russian Ministry of Defense neither saw any value added for Russia in getting additional insight into the relevant U.S. facilities. As to the use of unique identifiers, that was only possible if those applied to all the legs of the two countries' nuclear forces and, in particular, to U.S. SLBMs.⁵⁷

Eventually, the concerns were resolved in line with the Russian philosophy that all strategic offensive arms had to be treated equally. As Rose Gottemoeller notes the solution came in the form of using unique identifiers for the missiles, which proved to be one of the major breakthroughs in the NST. "Such unique identifiers also appear in every notification of missile, bomber, or launcher movement", which allows Russia and the United States to monitor each other's nuclear forces round the clock.

Inspections

Verification procedures under START were considered excessively costly and complicated. START I provided for 16 types of inspections (up to 28 inspections per year). As discussed above, it also relied upon telemetry exchanges, notifications, national technical means to verify the compliance with the provisions of the Treaty. Such a comprehensive and intrusive approach was justified at the end of Cold War but was no longer seen as appropriate in 2009⁵⁸. The joint understanding that the verification measures would be rendered less costly and complicated was conditioned by the fact that the inspections used to impede the operations at inspected facilities for several days, both before and in the course of inspections⁵⁹.

In the course of the negotiations Russia and the United States diverged on to what extent the New START should be less costly and less complicated. In its initial proposals Russia stated that the verification regime should put a premium on the use of national technical means and notifications and have a lower number of inspections (a total of 10 in the first draft), whereas the United States wanted to have as many as 22 inspections per year⁶⁰. There were approximately 150 notifications in the START Treaty, but only about 30 were actually used, so some of the inspections were expected to be foregone. The Russian proposal simply reflected this practice.⁶²

⁵⁶ https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA1019_a.html

⁵⁷ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): (U) Plenary Meeting, October 27, 2009 https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA963_a.html

⁵⁸ (U) START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): Plenary Meeting, October 19, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA910_a.html

⁵⁹ Rose Gottemoeller. New START Verification Regime: How Good Is It? Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. URL: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/05/21/new-start-verification-regime-how-good-is-it-pub-81877>

⁶⁰ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-V): (U) First Meeting Of The Inspection Protocol Working Group, September 22, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA804_a.html

⁶¹ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-V): (U) First Meeting Of The Inspection Protocol Working Group, September 22, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA804_a.html

⁶² https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA910_a.html

Russia also proposed to eliminate formerly declared facilities inspections. Eliminated objects could be monitored from national technical means, which had been the usual practice under the START I. As the experience of START implementation had manifested there had never been any problem with eliminated facilities. If any issues arose, they could be discussed within the Bilateral Consultative Commission (BCC). The United States, however, wanted to ensure they would be able to conduct an inspection if they had any questions⁶³.

Overall, the Russian approach was to reduce the level of detail in the inspection protocol. A somewhat revealing comment was made by the Russian co-chair of the Inspections protocol working group (IPWG) Col. Ryzhkov as he cited having no problem with inspections under the Vienna document, which were not provided for in great detail. Russia also proposed to agree upon specific modalities of inspections within the BCC after the treaty was ratified.

The United States challenged such an approach. Their proposal on inspections contained more details and they wanted to retain more from relevant START provisions. At the same time the U.S. negotiators recognized that a greater level of detail was a mixed blessing as sometimes it resulted in ambiguities⁶⁴.

In order to further substantiate its stance, the Russian delegation calculated the so-called load-factor (dividing the maximum number of inspections by the number of inspectable facilities). Under START, the factor was 0,44., under the U.S. proposal 0,92 (more than twofold increase). Under the Russian proposal the load-factor was to be reduced to 0,29.⁶⁵⁶⁶

Russia also worked hard to reduce the need for elimination inspections by ensuring that the results of elimination would be observable from NTM⁶⁷

After lengthy considerations, the two countries could agree upon two types of inspections. Type 1 inspections (the most intrusive ones) cover facilities with deployed warheads, delivery vehicles, and launchers, whereas Type 2 inspections are designed for facilities with non-deployed launchers⁶⁸. The total number of inspections was decreased to 18 per year for each party. As proposed by the Russian Federation the total number of notifications was decreased to 42 instead of 152 under START I.

Rose Gottemoeller, the head of the U.S. delegation, cited the New START verification regime as one of the major breakthroughs,

⁶³ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-V): (U) Plenary Meeting, September 22, 2009. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA819_a.html

⁶⁴ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-V): (U) Second Meeting Of The Inspection Protocol Working Group, September 23, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA820_a.html

⁶⁵ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): (U) First Meeting Of The Inspection Protocol Working Group, October 20, 2009 https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA919_a.html

⁶⁶ https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA957_a.html

⁶⁷ https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA1226_a.html

⁶⁸ Gottemoeller. Op. Cit



maintaining that its elements are well-suited for further arms control efforts.⁶⁹ At the same time it should be noted that within the United States and especially within the expert circles close to the Republican Party, the NST verification procedures did not prompt a lot of enthusiasm. Several Republican experts with close ties to the U.S. Senate posited that in terms of verification the Treaty was the “Iron Pyrite of Arms Control”⁷⁰ that the New START was extremely beneficial for Russia and damaging for the United States as “Russia got exactly what it wanted in New START – large loopholes to exploit and a dramatic reduction in the START Treaty’s verification regime (START I)”. According to Mr. Schneider, the absence of attribution-based counting rules does not allow to verify the total number of the warheads deployed.

Assistant Secretary of State for Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance in the 2nd Bush administration Paula de Sutter also criticizes the NST verification mechanisms as failing to accommodate the concerns regarding ICBM shrouds and covers hampering the verification of the total number of reentry vehicles that arose during the implementation of START I⁷².

Such harsh criticism, of course, should be taken with a grain of salt given the acute internal political fight in the United States. The conservative faction of the Republican party is known for posturing as being harsh and uncompromising on national security matters. Accordingly, the experts affiliated with Republican-oriented think tanks and news outlets (Heritage Foundation, National Institute for Public Policy, Real Clear Defense) have used, use, will continue to use whatever occasion arises to denigrate the Democrats’ accomplishments in the national security domain.

It also should be noted that the gist of the Republican critiques was not dealing with specific provisions of the New START that were tailored to the NST key provisions, but rather deplore the very fact that the New START is not START. Telling are the arguments alike “Article V of the New START has 125 words. Article V of the original START Treaty contains 1,863 words”⁷³.

The New START is equipped with a fully functional verification system that allowed both Russia and Washington to verify each other’s compliance. The fact that even the Trump administration, known for “highly-likely”-style intelligence assessments kept certifying the Russian compliance is illustrative.



Soviet inspectors and their American escorts among several dismantled Pershing II missiles.

Source: www.sipri.org

⁶⁹ Gottemoeller, Op. Cit. P. 207

⁷⁰ The title refers to the article penned by Amb. Anatoly Antonov and Hon. Rose Gottemoeller “Keeping Peace in the Nuclear Age -- Why Washington and Moscow Must Extend the New START Treaty” published in *Kommersant*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *Security Index*, in which the two diplomats referred to the NST as the “golden standard of arms control”. Iron pyrite is commonly denominated as fool’s gold.

⁷¹ Mark B. Schneider. The Iron Pyrite Standard of Arms Control. *RealClear Defense*. March 27, 2021. URL: https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2021/03/27/the_iron_pyrite_standard_of_arms_control_770088.html#_edn1

⁷² Paula De Sutter, Verification and the New START Treaty. The Heritage Foundation, July 12, 2010. URL: <http://www.heritage.org/research/lecture/verification-and-the-new-start-treaty>.

⁷³ Schneide. Ibid

Telemetry

During the talks, the U.S. side tried to convince the Russian side of the importance of telemetry exchanges. In the American view, telemetry provided data about throw-weight and the potential number of reentry vehicles, as well as the number of reentry vehicles tested, and that this data could be used to assess characteristics of new types. The Russian diplomats countered that since neither the Russian nor the U.S. draft treaties contained any reference to throw-weight, there was no need to make an assessment as to potential, all that had to be done is to count the number of warheads.⁷⁴⁷⁵

Moreover, in the START negotiations the ABM Treaty weighed in heavily in the telemetry discussions. At that time, neither Russia, nor the United States were allowed to expand its missile defenses, which facilitated the exchange of telemetrical information⁷⁶. As Russian negotiators argued, the only benefit of telemetry exchanges was that the U.S. intelligence community would be able to collect information about the Russian nuclear forces more easily. Since it was Russia and not the United States that was testing new missiles at that time, it would have been disadvantageous for Russia to agree to unrestricted exchange of telemetrical information.⁷⁷⁷⁸

The exchange of telemetry information was unacceptable for Russia for several other reasons not directly connected to the essence of the new treaty. The United States allegedly use the telemetry data obtained as a result of the START implementation in order to master its global missile defense. Moreover, the United States circumvented the START telemetry provisions by developing Trident D-5 SLBM jointly with the United Kingdom⁷⁹. However, the United Kingdom does not test Trident II missiles very often: according to the Guardian, only two tests were conducted in 2011-2017, one of which failed.⁸⁰

The U.S. side also wanted to include throw-weight data in the initial memorandum of understanding (baseline declaration). The U.S. justified the inclusion alleging that it was necessary to distinguish between existing and new types of SOAs. In order to do so, the United States needed to determine the maximum number of warheads. The Russian delegation rejected such an approach. The objective of the treaty was to verify the number of operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads, not the maximum capacity of a delivery vehicle. Therefore, Russia was not willing to accept such provisions in the treaty⁸¹.

Eventually, the agreement on the inclusion of telemetry in

The only benefit of telemetry exchanges was that the U.S. intelligence community would be able to collect information about the Russian nuclear forces more easily

⁷⁴ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-I): START Follow-On Negotiations, June 3, 2009, Morning Session. Wikileaks. URL: https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA447_a.html

⁷⁵ START FOLLOW-ON NEGOTIATIONS, GENEVA (SFO-GVA-IV): (U) START FOLLOW-ON NEGOTIATIONS, RUSSIAN RESPONSE TO U.S. DRAFT TREATY AND RUSSIAN-PROPOSED TREATY ELEMENTS. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA733_a.html

⁷⁶ https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA1061_a.html

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ START FOLLOW-ON NEGOTIATIONS, GENEVA (SFO-GVA-IV): U.S.-HOSTED RECEPTION, SEPTEMBER 1, 2009 AND INITIAL MEETINGS OF WORKING GROUP CHAIRS, SEPTEMBER 2, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09STATE94672_a.html

⁷⁹ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-V): (U) START Follow-On Negotiations, Russian Presentation Of Proposed Treaty Elements, September 21, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA784_a.html

⁸⁰ How did the Trident test fail and what did Theresa May know?. The Guardian, January 23, 2017.

⁸¹ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-V): (U) Second Meeting Of The Memorandum Of Understanding Working Group, September 25, 2009. Wikileaks. URL: https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA826_a.html



the Treaty was reached only in exchange for the inclusion of clauses dealing with the offense-defense interrelationship.⁸² The road to such an agreement was extremely challenging, as up to the very final days of the negotiation process the two sides continued to insist upon expanding the telemetry exchanges, whereas Russia was keen to limit it to the greatest extent possible^{83,84}.

The eventual agreement on exchanging can be seen as an achievement by both Russia and the United States. The United States managed to persuade the Russian leadership to retain at least some exchanges, whereas the Part VII of the New START Protocol dealing with telemetrical information reflects almost all the reservations made by the Russian military: the exchanges take place on equal basis but on no more than on five ICBM and SLBM launchers within calendar year, with the exact launches being designated by the testing party. As of signing of the Treaty the United States used to conduct no more than five tests per year, with Russia testing around 10 ICBMs and SLBMs every year. This means that the limit of five launches on which telemetry will be exchanged means that the United States does not receive any information, which may damage Russian security interests. Moreover, the scope of telemetry is limited and does not include data on the acceleration of ICBM/SLBM stages, which renders the data provided unusable for the development of U.S. missile defense⁸⁵.

It should be pointed out that the U.S. sought to include telemetry-related provisions into the New START not because those are particularly useful as a confidence-building measure but rather as a way to counter the criticism from Congress and ensure the advise and consent of the Senate. As Rose Gottemoeller recalls, after the visit of Congressional observers to the negotiations (Senator Feinstein, Senator Kyl), she was instructed to do her best to get the telemetry into the treaty.⁸⁶

New START Ratification Process

The New START got the advice and consent of the U.S. Senate on December 22, 2010. The Senate resolution, however, gave unilateral interpretations incompatible with the spirit and letter of the NST on the issues, which were most sensitive for Russia. While the advice and consent resolution of the U.S. Senate put forward only two legally binding conditions: the President of the United states was to certify

⁸² SFO-GVA-VIII: (U) Telemetry Working Group Meeting, February 4, 2010 https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10CDGENEVA31_a.html

⁸³ Start Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VI): One-On-One Heads Of Delegation Meeting, October 22, 2009 https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA949_a.html

⁸⁴ START Follow-On Negotiations, Geneva (SFO-GVA-VII): (U) Admiral Mullen And General Makarov Meeting, November 23, 2009. Wikileaks. https://search.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09GENEVA1065_a.html

⁸⁵ Antonov. Op. Cit. P. 49-50

⁸⁶ Gottemoeller. Op. Cit. P.65

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Russian compliance and to report to the Senate on any noncompliance issues and on whether the NST remained in the national interest of the United States. The president was also obligated to certify that the U.S. NTMs were adequate to ensure “effective monitoring of Russian compliance”⁸⁷.

Under other conditions, the President was required:

- To certify that no telemetry on missile defense interceptors or satellite launches would be provided to the Russian Federation under the NST;
- Was urged to make clarification regarding CPGS program.
- Provide to telemetry regarding the CPGS systems other than in exchange for telemetry on the Russian weapons system not listed as SOAs in Article III of the New START.
- Certify that he intended to modernize the U.S. nuclear triad and maintain the U.S. missile motor production base.
- Seek negotiations with Russia to address the mismatch between the two countries' non-strategic nuclear arsenals and report on such efforts on the yearly basis.
- Certify that all stages of the Phased Adapted Approach on BMD capabilities in Europe as well as the modernization of the GBI would be carried out.

The resolution also contained a number of non-binding understandings of the Senate stipulating, *inter alia*, that:

- The unilateral statements by the Russian Federation on missile defenses do not create obligations for the United States, thus creating no impediment for the deployment “as soon as possible” of BMD system capable of defending the United States against a limited ballistic missile attack.
- The President was expected pursue balanced reductions of the U.S. nuclear forces so that there be not imbalance between the Russian Federation and the United States.
- Conventionally armed SOAs would not be regarded as new types of SOAs covered by the New START.

As a response to the set of unilateral interpretations by the U.S. Senate, the Russian State Duma adopted countermeasures, designed to preclude damage to the Russian national interests. *Inter alia*, the Federal Law on the ratification of the New START maintained that telemetry exchanges could only be conducted after all relevant procedures have been agreed upon in the Bilateral Consultative Commission. Regarding non-strategic nuclear weapons, the Russian legislature maintained that such reductions could only be carried out after full and unconditional implementation of the NST. Such

⁸⁷ New START Treaty: Resolution Of Advice And Consent To Ratification. U.S. Department of State. URL: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/rls/153910.htm#:~:text=New%20START%20Treaty%3A%20Resolution%20Of%20Advice%20And%20Consent%20To%20Ratification,-Share&text=The%20first%20such%20report%20shall,either%20classified%20or%20unclassified%20form.>



reductions are to be discussed in the context of missile defense and take into account the concerns related to conventionally armed ICBMs, disparity in conventional weapons, outer space militarization and other factors influencing strategic stability. The legislation also provided that new types of SOAs would be discussed within the BCC, with the NST covering “all types of offensive weapons of strategic range”. The law further limited the telemetry exchange with the United States only to existing types of SOAs, with no information being provided on new types of SOAs as well as post-boost stages of the flight tests⁸⁸.

Conclusions

The political significance of the New START is not limited to its contribution to the strengthening of strategic stability. The New START is another evidence that Russia and the United States are serious about their obligations under Article VI of the NPT and pursue effective and efficient measures related to the cessation of nuclear arms race. The strategic offensive arms reductions under the Treaty are transparent, irreversible, and verifiable, which makes it close to being the gold standard for arms control agreements.

As discussed above, New START became a solid compromise between the two countries and is a successful agreement in the sense that neither Russia, nor the United States are completely satisfied with the outcome, which is a marker of a good agreement⁸⁹.

Among the advantages of the Treaty Amb. Antonov cited the following:

- The Russian concept of a less costly and complicated treaty was adopted.
- The Russian Federation was not obliged to drastically change the structure of its strategic nuclear forces. Moreover, as of the signing of the Treaty Russia was almost in full compliance with the numerical limits.
- ICBMs and SLBMs in non-nuclear configuration were brought under the scope of the agreement.
- Special measures of transparency and verification for Russian rail- and road-mobile ICBMs, which existed under START I, were eliminated, with the perimetral continuous monitoring at Votkinsk Machinebuilding Plant being dismantled.
- The verification, conversion and elimination measures were appropriately simplified and adapted.

Of course, more could have been done to limit the U.S. upload potential, sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs), bring additional weapons systems under the scope of the Treaty. However, given the time constraints for the negotiations the Treaty is indeed the gold standard for arms control processes⁹⁰.

⁸⁸ Antonov. Op. Cit. P. 53-63

⁸⁹ Author's conversation with high-ranking Russian MFA official. October 1, 2020

⁹⁰ Antonov. Op. Cit. P. 51-52

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The U.S. optic on the issue is slightly different, however. While most of the experts and policymakers did not put in doubt the efficiency of the New START, the Republicans in Congress and the think tank community unleashed a wave of criticism against the New Treaty. Most if the criticism is hardly justified is motivated primarily by the considerations of internal politics of the United States.

For instance, it is difficult to serious consider the claims by U.S. Republican-oriented experts that among the major drawbacks of the New START are:

- The absence of prohibition on nuclear air-launched ICBMs, which was present in START I. It was during the START I negotiations that the two parties recognized that such delivery vehicles are not efficient enough.
- The absence of prohibition on rail-mobile systems;
- The absence of limitations on non-strategic nuclear warheads⁹¹.

⁹¹ Mark B. Schneider. New START: The Anatomy of a Failed Negotiation. National Institute for Public Policy. P. 25-50



CHAPTER II: STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE ARMS CONTROL AFTER NEW START

The New START Treaty was successfully extended before the Treaty's expiration date – February 5, 2021. The extension was preceded by several rounds of fruitless negotiations with the Trump administration. At the time, the talks (or rather interagency consultations with the United States) stalled over the U.S. demand to bring all nuclear warheads under the New START and to adopt more intrusive verification measures. While Russia eventually agreed to a non-binding “freeze”, Moscow saw no value in unilateral concessions to the United States on the matters of verification. As a counterinitiative, the Russian Federation put forward an initiative to compose a new “strategic equation”, i.e., a new understanding of strategic stability, that would take into account all the factors influencing the military-strategic balance.

Regrettably, the New START cannot be extended for another period of five years, which means that Russia and the United States have less than five years to craft a replacement for NST.

The final chapter of this research provides an overview of negotiations and consultations on strategic stability, which took place after the conclusion of the New START Treaty, as well as surveys the factors bearing any influence whatsoever on the new strategic equation⁹².

U.S. Attempts to Negotiate Another Arms Control Agreement Under the Obama Administration

In 2013 President Barack Obama during his visit to Germany announced his intention to seek further reductions in U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals.

*“After a comprehensive review, I’ve determined that we can ensure the security of America and our allies, and maintain a strong and credible strategic deterrent, while reducing our deployed strategic nuclear weapons by up to one-third. And I intend to seek negotiated cuts with Russia to move beyond Cold War nuclear postures.”*⁹³

Before the Berlin speech, President Obama wrote a letter to President Putin, in which he proposed to focus on the strategic issues in the bilateral relations rather than quarrel over minor things. In the missive, the U.S. side proposed to “elaborate a legally-binding agreement on transparency measures including data exchange regarding missile defense systems, which would confirm that the two countries strategic defensive systems do not pose a threat for each other’s national security”. Kommersant newspaper cited its sources in the U.S. Department of State saying that by a legally-binding agreement the Obama administration meant a so-called executive agreement, which are only binding for the administration that signed it⁹⁴.

⁹² Excerpts from this research has previous been published at Security Index #7, 2021 available at <http://www.pircenter.org/en/security-index/226-3516256>

⁹³ Remarks by President Obama at the Brandenburg Gate -- Berlin, Germany. June 19, 2013. President Barack Obama White House. URL: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/19/remarks-president-obama-brandenburg-gate-berlin-germany>

⁹⁴ Доверительные грамоты. Газета «Коммерсантъ» №80 от 15.05.2013, стр. 1 URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2187951>

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Initially Russia was quite skeptical about the proposed arrangement. Hence President Putin's assistant for foreign policy affairs Amb. Yuri Ushakov stated that "there were no shifts regarding missile defense", whereas Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov regretted that there was not enough political will in Washington to resolve the issue⁹⁵. However, transparency measures were deemed useful by themselves, which, according to some sources, made Russia more willing to review the proposition. Review, but not agree. As one may presume, transparency regarding missile defense is a step in the right direction, but that was not enough. At that time Russia insisted on getting legally-binding assurance that the U.S. missile defense in Europe was not developed against Russia.

For the Obama administration achieving further strategic arms reductions was also a matter of home politics. While the United States realized that the size of its nuclear forces may have been excessive for its national security needs, it could not proceed with unilateral reductions as such measures would have prompted harsh criticism from the Republicans in Congress. The considerations of U.S. home politics greatly affected the Russian perception of the U.S. proposal on further nuclear forces reductions. At that time Russia saw no benefits in engaging with deal-incapable Obama administration as its relations with Congress were sour at best^{96,97}.

In conformity with New START Resolution of Ratification, President Obama also sought an agreement on non-strategic nuclear weapons. In his Berlin speech he announced that the United States would consult with NATO allies "to seek bold reductions in U.S. and Russian tactical weapons in Europe"⁹⁸. According to Rose Gottemoeller⁹⁹, the U.S. chief-negotiator during the New START talks and at that time Acting Undersecretary of State for International Security and Arms Control, the allies, however, were quite unwilling to agree to changes that would affect NATO nuclear sharing arrangements¹⁰⁰.

Eventually no significant bilateral discussions were held on the issue. Due to the increasing crisis in the bilateral relations (especially over the Snowden file), President Obama cancelled the bilateral summit with the Russian leader, only attending the G20 summit in Saint-Petersburg. As Russian media reported, the decision was prompted by Obama's frustration over Russia's unwillingness to engage on the matters of further nuclear cuts and missile defense co-operation.

Washington perceived Russian unwillingness to discuss further nuclear cuts as a sign that Russia was not intent on seriously dealing with President Obama. Hence, Russia declared that it would only be possible to discuss future reductions once the New START central provisions were implemented (in 2018). Summit was cancelled. Thomas Countryman, Acting Undersecretary of State for International Security and Arms Control, in an interview to the author



President Barack Obama at the Brandenburg Gate, Germany, June 19, 2013.

Source: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/>

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Author's notes during Amb. Kislyak lecture at MGIMO, 2018

⁹⁷ <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2215128>

⁹⁸ Barack Obama. Op. Cited

⁹⁹ Rose Gottemoeller. Negotiating the New START Treaty. Cambria Press, 2021. P. 177

¹⁰⁰ For a detailed analysis of the current situation around nuclear sharing see an article by Nikita Degtyarev, Vladimir Orlov



noted that the 2013 proposition failed over the two sides inability to agree upon the agenda, “upon what’s on the table and what is not”¹⁰¹.

According to some sources, the United States presented additional SOA proposals in 2016, which faced a harsher response from the Russian Government¹⁰².

Trump administration approaches to New START

Former Obama administration officials described “Trump administration’s dramatic incompetence”¹⁰³ as one of the reasons for the stalemate in the bilateral dialogue on nuclear nonproliferation and arms control. President Trump himself described the New START as one of many “bad deals” struck by Barack Obama.

His inner circle was neither very fond of the Treaty. The most vivid example of that was the appointment of John Bolton, one of the staunchest opponents of arms control as such, as the national security advisor. While Bolton himself did not deny the possibility that the New START could be extended, he hinted that the extension was very unlikely¹⁰⁴.

Among other impediments to arms control dialogue between Russia and the United States were the following factors:

- The collapse of interagency process on arms control and non-proliferation (under Bolton)¹⁰⁵. The National Security Council, as some sources allege, went defunct as a policy coordination body.
- Unstable HR situation. The officials responsible for nuclear issues were constantly changing in the State Department. For instance, only in 2018-2019 there was a confirmed Undersecretary of State for International Security and Arms Control (Andrea Thompson), the rest of the tenure there being nobody overseeing the process. Marshall Billingslea, special presidential envoy for arms control, was nominated to the position, but the nomination was never considered by the Senate.
- Absence of regular contacts. Only few sessions of bilateral consultations took place with no time to discuss the details. That combined with the lack of mutual trust, meant the absence of an institutional basis for progress in the area of strategic stability. During the final months of the Trump administration, Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov recognized that there were no contacts between the two countries rather than through the Embassies in Washington and Moscow¹⁰⁶. Less public contacts between national security advisors were focused on broader issues of bilateral agenda and could not produce any breakthrough.

¹⁰¹ Author’s interview with Hon. Thomas Countryman, November 27, 2021

¹⁰² Polycentric Nuclear World: Challenges and New Opportunities. Edited by Alexey Arbatov and Vladimir Dvokin. Moscow, Rosspen. P.76

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ Bolton Declares New START Extension ‘Unlikely’. Arms control Today, July 2019. URL: <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-07/news/bolton-declares-new-start-extension-unlikely>

¹⁰⁵ John Bolton. The Room Where It Happened. P. 442.

¹⁰⁶ Сергей Рябков: Россия в отношениях с США должна перейти к политике сдерживания и избирательного диалога. Interfax. December 23, 2020. URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/interview/742593>

The consultations that began in June 2020 were also partly conditioned by the considerations of U.S. home politics. Given that President Trump's rating of approval at that time plummeted¹⁰⁷ due to his poor management of COVID-19 pandemic, his team was in desperate search of impressive steps in the foreign policy domain. This drive for foreign affairs successes underpinned the conclusion of so-called Abraham accord between Israel and Arab states. The same motivation was underlying the talks with Russia: Trump PR managers thought that striking a deal with Russia would demonstrate that the president was capable of striking "better deals" in arms control.

As Amb. Mikhail Ulyanov, the permanent representative of the Russian Federation to the international organizations in Vienna, put it, the dialogue was highly professional. For the first time in almost a decade, the Russian and the U.S. military officials could discuss the issues of concern face to face.

The professional nature of the dialogue, however, contrasted with the PR campaigns undertaken by Marshall Billingslea, Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control. During the first round of consultations, the U.S. delegation also put the Chinese flag into the room manifesting the need for China to participate. Such a move caused frustration among the expert community and the Chinese officials and was dimmed to be "unprofessional".

Another problem was numerous official comments by U.S. officials, in which the desired was presented as accomplished. For instance, in the run-up to the elections the United States, the U.S. side deliberately created an impression that some breakthroughs took place during the negotiations between the national security advisors, which was far from truth.¹⁰⁸

Before the consultations, the Trump administration elaborated on why the New START was a "bad deal"¹⁰⁹. The first line of criticism was related to the non-participation of China in the Treaty (which is nonsense as the Treaty is bilateral and the countries' nuclear arsenals and postures differ dramatically). At that time, the U.S. officials harshly criticized the massive Chinese "nuclear build-up" behind the "great wall of secrecy"¹¹⁰. Such political estimates at the same time were in stark contrast to the assessments made by the U.S. intelligence community. For instance, the annual Congressionally

¹⁰⁷ Presidential Approval Ratings -- Donald Trump. Gallup Polls. URL: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/203198/presidential-approval-ratings-donald-trump.aspx>

¹⁰⁸ U.S.-Russian Arms Control Working Groups Meet. Arms Control Association. URL: <https://www.armscontrol.org/blog/2020-08/us-russian-nuclear-arms-control-watch>

¹⁰⁹ Online Press Briefing with Ambassador Marshall Billingslea, Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control, And Lieutenant General Thomas A. Bussiere, Deputy Commander, United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM)

U.S. Department of State Archive. URL: <https://2017-2021-translations.state.gov/2020/06/24/online-press-briefing-with-ambassador-marshall-billingslea-special-presidential-envoy-for-arms-control-and-lieutenant-general-thomas-a-bussiere-deputy-commander-united-states-strategic-command-u/index.html>

¹¹⁰ VIRTUAL EVENT: Behind the Great Wall of Secrecy: China's Nuclear Buildup. Heritage Foundation. URL: <https://www.heritage.org/arms-control/event/virtual-event-behind-the-great-wall-secrecy-chinas-nuclear-buildup>



The New START covers 41% of the U.S. strategic stockpile, not 92 as voiced by Billingslea

mandated DoD report on the Chinese Armed Forces underscored that the Chinese nuclear forces had 200-300 warheads¹¹¹. The numbers were consistent with the annual assessment by the National Aerospace Intelligence Center (NASIC)¹¹².

The second line of criticism dealt with the New START “weak verification regime”¹¹³. As discussed in the relevant sections of Chapter I, their criticism effectively mirrored the critiques presented by Congress during the ratification process. The arguments may be summarized as follows: “this is not START I, and that is why it is bad”. Indeed, as discussed in chapter I, the New START adapted and simplified the START I verification procedures, where appropriate. At the same time, as both Russian and American experts recognize, the Treaty’s verification regime is efficient enough to detect possible noncompliance¹¹⁴. Such criticism may be explained by the fact that a significant part of the administration’s arms control team had previously worked in the relevant Congressional bodies, which were opposed to the New START¹¹⁵.

Finally, the representatives of the Trump administration were critical of the fact that New START covers more than 90% of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and only 45% of the Russian nuclear arsenal¹¹⁶. Such figures apparently misrepresent the reality¹¹⁷ as the methodology of the counting is unclear. First of all, one fails to understand if by saying “arsenals” the author of the phrase, Amb. Marshall Billingslea meant warheads, launchers, or means of delivery. Apparently, the envoy referred to the former, distracting the real picture and counting all the Russian non-strategic stockpile as deployed. Only in this scenario, the figures would have a distant semblance of reality.

One should remember that the New START covers only strategic arsenals. For instance, based on the available estimated of the warheads in reserve, the New START covers 41% of the U.S. strategic stockpile, not 92 as voiced by Billingslea¹¹⁸.

Thus, such affirmations may only be considered as a cover-up for the U.S. drive to include all nuclear warheads into arms control. Still, the term “all nuclear warheads” brings about more uncertainty as it is not clear whether the United States meant just encompassing the Russian arsenal of NSNW or it intended to bring the entire stockpile, including spare warheads, warheads prepared for dismantlement, warheads in long-term storage under the scope of the next arms control agreement. The prospects and modalities for such arrangements will be discussed in section 3.3.

Against this backdrop of unrealistic U.S. demands, the two countries were unable to extend the New START during the Trump

¹¹¹ Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2020 Annual Report to Congress A Report to Congress Pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, as Amended. U.S. Department of Defense. URL: <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>

¹¹² Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat Report. NASIC. URL: <https://www.nasic.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Article/2468137/2020-ballistic-and-cruise-missile-threat/>

¹¹³ Billingslea, Op. Cit.

¹¹⁴ Smith, Bryan, Verification After the New START Treaty: Back to the Future, No. 463, July 16, 2020. URL: https://nipp.org/information_series/smith-bryan-verification-after-the-new-start-treaty-back-to-the-future-information-series-no-463/

¹¹⁵ Gottemoeller, Op. Cit.

¹¹⁶ U.S., Russia close to a deal on nuclear arms control, says special envoy. PBS. October 20, 2020. URL: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/u-s-russia-close-to-a-deal-on-nuclear-arms-control-says-special-envoy>

¹¹⁷ Это все ультивативные приемы». Kommersant. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4500949>

¹¹⁸ US Officials Give Confusing Comparisons Of US And Russian Nuclear Forces. Federation of American Scientists. URL: <https://fas.org/blogs/security/2020/10/nuclear-arsenal-confusion/>

presidency. As discussed above, the Russia was willing to combine a one-year extension with a freeze on the entirety of the nuclear arsenals without additional verification measures. The U.S. side persisted in its insistence, arguing that “verification is not an add-on, it is an intrinsic part of arms control”.¹¹⁹ Indeed so, but at the same time verification should be tailored to the essence of the agreement.

Eventually, the Russian refusal to extend the New START with the Trump administration was correct. The Biden administration extended the Treaty as one of his first foreign-policy decision, which gave the two countries additional time to look into the modalities and arrangements for further arms control process.

The extension of the NST was evaluated differently by arms control experts in Russia and in the United States. In Russia there is almost unanimous consensus that the extension was in line with the security interests of the two countries. While the Russian Federation had concerns about the procedures the U.S. side used for the implementation of the NST as well as concerns about the broader foreign policy agenda of Washington, it refrained from torpedoing the extension discussions by bringing additional issues into the agenda.

At the same time, according to Andrey Baklitskiy, leading researcher at the Institute for International Studies at MGIMO, maintains that such attention to the extension of the New START, which, in theory, should have been a technical issue, is a symptom of the deplorable state of Russia-U.S. relations. Concurring are Feodor Loukiyanov and Gen. Buzhinskiy, who posited that the extension of the New START was likely to be an isolated positive act against the backdrop of deteriorating Russia-U.S. relations.¹²⁰ At the same time, some in the Russian expert community questioned the Russian proactiveness on this issue. Alexander Yermakov, an expert at the Russian International Affairs Council, maintained that Russia active insistence on the prompt extension of the NST damaged the Russian negotiating positions, convincing many in Washington that Russia needed NST to a greater extent than the United States¹²¹.

Former U.S. Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Thomas Countryman concurred with this assessment. In an exclusive interview to Yaderny Kontrol electronic journal, he stated that “Russia clearly articulated its position and should make additional steps. Otherwise, hawks in Washington would solidify in the belief that postponing the extension would allow to get more concessions from Russia”¹²².

In the United States the extension was welcomed by Democrats

¹¹⁹ Billingslea. Op.Cit.

¹²⁰ Эксперты: ДСНВ актуален для РФ и США, но его продление не вызовет потепления в отношениях. TASS. January 27, 2021. URL:

¹²¹ Alexander Yermakov. New Epoch In Arms Control. Russian International Affairs Council. URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/novaya-epokha-kontrolya-nad-vooru-zheniyami/>

¹²² Sergey Semenov. Russian and U.S. experts comment on the the importance of and the prospects for the New START. Yaderny Kontrol 4, 2021. PIR Center. URL: <http://www.pircenter.org/articles/2216-885200>



and the military, which viewed it through the lens of ensuring the predictability in the development of the Russian nuclear forces with an accurate NST verification-based insight into the Russian nuclear capabilities.

At the same time Republican politicians and experts characterized the extension for five years as a squandered opportunity and lost leverage over Russia¹²³¹²⁴. As Senator Tom Cotton, known for his radical statements on national security issues, observed, “President Biden is giving Vladimir Putin a gift by unconditionally extending the New START treaty.”

Surprisingly enough, some high-ranking members of the Biden administration were receptive to the Republican arguments and weighed the option to extend the NST for 2-3 years. Inter alia, such is idea was promoted by Victoria Nuland, who currently oversees U.S.-Russian relations as the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs¹²⁵.

Conclusions

Notwithstanding recent advances in technology, strategic offensive arms remain the centerpiece of strategic stability discussions. The impact of new weapons systems should not be overrated: the emergence of MIRV in early-1970s, development of high-precision cruise missiles, and the Strategic Defense Initiative, as academician Arbatov¹²⁶ notes, had much more significant implications for arms control than the current advances.

That, however, does not mean that novel weapons systems should be ignored. As the former head of the Arms Control and Nonproliferation Directorate of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) of the Russian Federation once pointed out, it is necessary to preempt the implications of the emergence of new weapons technologies through timely political and legal steps¹²⁷. The real task of arms control nowadays is to determine what past methods are still applicable to the realities of today and what innovations are to be introduced to stabilize the military political balance of today.

In sum, it is possible to identify the following menu of issues, which in the view of Russia or the United States, are to be included into the security equation:

- Missile Defense.
- Conventional and novel nuclear precision-guided systems with strategic ranges (that will have to be defined through negotiations);
- Intermediate-range land-based ballistic and cruise missiles.
- Outer space systems and anti-satellite weapons.
- Non-strategic nuclear warheads.

¹²³ Dangerous Nuclear Policy Idea No. 1: Unconditionally Extending New START for Five Years. The Heritage Foundation. URL: <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/dangerous-nuclear-policy-idea-no-1-unconditionally-extending-new-start-five-years>

¹²⁴ Mark Schneider. Ibid.

¹²⁵ Why ‘New START’ Nuclear Treaty Split Biden From Trump. Bloomberg. URL: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-28/why-new-start-nuclear-treaty-split-biden-from-trump-quicktake>

¹²⁶ Arbatov. Op. Cit.

¹²⁷ Gennadiy Evstafyev. Disarmament Is Back. Security Index # 2 (82), Volume 13.

- Cyber threats to critical infrastructure.

Currently missile defense cannot upset the strategic balance: the numbers and the capabilities of U.S. BMD systems do not suffice to limit Russian second strike capabilities. That, however, does not imply that it will not have such capabilities in the future. Further development of SM-3 Block IIA interceptors, further improvement of their tactical-technical specifications and their deployment in Poland or on ships operating in direct proximity to Russian naval bases is a serious concern for Russia. That underscores the importance of the Russian propositions aimed at reducing the uncertainty around U.S. BMD-capabilities. Possible solutions, as discussed above, could include restoration (in some form) of 1997 New York agreements on missile defense as well as transparency measure. A joint threat assessment through the channels of National Security Councils would be a useful step in this direction.

The same goes with conventional strategic armaments, which include a wide range of weapons systems. While Russia defines strategic systems as those having an application in a first counterforce strike, a more detailed definition with relevant technical specifications has yet to be elaborated. In order to do so, again a joint threat assessment would be feasible in order to understand what systems are of real concern and entail tangible destabilization risks and what is just a demand-driven stance.

The area of cyber and space activities is at the same time most and least ripe for multilateral strategic stability negotiations. Most ripe because in these areas' superiority or inferiority in contrast to other elements of strategic equation are impossible to measure. At the same time no understanding exists on what is to be done in this field. Some of the proposals include a possible prohibition of cyber-attacks on C4ISR infrastructure and other facilities critical to international security, ban on arms deployment in outer space and attacks against critical space infrastructure. However, such arrangements would be difficult to verify, and their value is that of political confidence-building measures. The value may be increased if relevant political arrangements are accompanied by dialogue formats between the militaries and other agencies concerned of the nuclear-armed states. P5 may be a good basis to that end.

In other areas of multilateral disarmament, the prospects are not so promising. The disparity between Russia and the United States on the one hand, and other nuclear-weapons states on the other is conspicuous. The very philosophy of arms control is to strengthen and stabilize deterrence by ensuring strategic predictability. Nevertheless, there is no such thing as multilateral deterrence: each country's nuclear arsenal is tailored to its specific national security needs. In the area of strategic offensive arms there is currently no balance of needs that would allow for rapid progress on the issue. However, confidence-building measures regarding the most disturbing elements of the strategic equation appear beneficial for all the P5 states and deserve further exploration. In the future, the mismatch may be offset by creating a common ceiling including both strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons, which is long way to go.

The only form of achieving progress in terms of further agreements on arms control and specifically strategic offensive arms control is the holistic approach proposed by Russia – the new “strategic equation”, which would encompass all the factors influencing

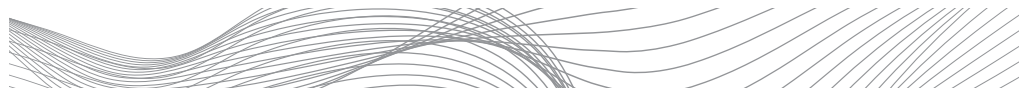


strategic stability. Its composition and solution will require a number of package deals and tradeoffs.

One should not nurture illusions that such tradeoffs may be found overnight. Moreover, the solutions to some of the most pressing issues of strategic stability may not be found in a bilateral setting, although bilateral agreements will certainly incentivize relevant multilateral discussions. While it is tempting to name the P5 format as the venue where major discussions will take place, it is far from reality. P5 is one of the elements of the strategic puzzle. Relevant strategic capabilities are also possessed by other nations – therefore, the role of the Conference on Disarmament, especially, on outer space issues, should not be underestimated notwithstanding its current impasse and stagnation. ■

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABM – Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty;
ALCM – air-launched cruise missile;
CFE – Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe;
HB – heavy bomber;
ICBM – intercontinental ballistic missile;
INF – Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty;
NST – New START Treaty;
SALT – Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty;
SLBM – submarine-launched ballistic missile;
SOA – strategic offensive arms;
SORT – Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty;
SSBN – Strategic submarine, ballistic, nuclear;
START – Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty.



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This occasional paper was made within the framework of the project «Rebuilding the Russian-American Dialogue on Global Security», which is part of the program «Nuclear Nonproliferation & Russia». Russian-American dialogue on global security issues has been among PIR Center's priorities for many years. With the current deteriorating state of the bilateral relations, the importance of such dialogue between the two countries has been increasingly growing over the past few years, a tendency that will expectedly remain valid for many years ahead.