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PROSPECTS FOR U.S. AND RUSSIAN NUCLEAR CUTS IN VIEW OF NPT
ARTICLE VI COMMITMENTS

The first Session of the Preparatory Committee of the 2015 NPT Review Conference will be held in Vienna on April 30–May 11, 2012. The agenda includes progress made by nuclear-weapon states on implementing the Action Plan contained in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.¹ The plan includes 64 individual actions in three sections:

- ❑ nuclear disarmament;
- ❑ nuclear nonproliferation;
- ❑ peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

It would therefore be interesting to discuss the conclusions published in October 2010 by experts of the Arms Control Association (ACA), an American NGO (see Table 1).² The ACA assessed the efforts being undertaken by countries which have acquired nuclear weapons and the so-called “states of concern.” There are 10 individual categories for each of the 11 countries (China, France, Russia, UK, the United States, India, Israel, Pakistan, North Korea, Iran, and Syria), with progress in each category graded from A (highest) to F (lowest). The authors of the methodology believe that the grades can be applied universally, although they have also tried to take into account the individual capacity of each individual country to contribute to nuclear disarmament in each category. Based on these grades the authors then assessed the overall contribution of each country.

The methodology has some clear drawbacks, but overall this piece of research provides a fairly accurate reflection of the international community’s views and expectations with regard to the efforts being undertaken by the key countries to strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime. The average grade given to the official nuclear-weapon states, as a measure of their compliance with their commitments, is B. It suggests that these states are making greater efforts in the area of nuclear disarmament than the countries which remain outside the NPT, as well as the states of concern. Russia, however, earned a lower-than-average B-grade (as did China), which calls for an analysis of the reasons for such a situation.

This article discusses specific steps which could be undertaken in addition to Actions 3–6 of the action plan (see Annex 1), which apply to nuclear-weapon states. The 2010 NPT Review Conference called on the states which possess the largest nuclear arsenals to play the leading role in implementing the Action Plan.³ The purpose of this article is therefore to look at the possible steps Russia and the United States could undertake in the near time frame in order to demonstrate their commitment to Article VI of the NPT.

Of course, both countries are already pursuing a broad range of efforts in line with their NPT commitments. These efforts are by no means limited to nuclear reductions, and this is clearly illustrated by the already mentioned ACA research. Nevertheless, the entry into force of the New START treaty and the beginning of its implementation (Action 4) undoubtedly represent the biggest achievement of 2011. Russian and American officials invariably emphasize this in their public pronouncements.⁴



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Table 1. Assessment of Efforts Being Undertaken to Strengthen the NPT Regime

Standard	Nuclear-Weapon States					Non-NPT States			States of concern		
	China	France	Russia	UK	U.S.	India	Israel	Pakistan	DPRK	Iran	Syria
Banning nuclear testing	B	A	A	A	B	D+	C	D+	F	B-	C
Ending fissile material production for weapons	B	A	A	A	A	F	F	F	F		
Reducing nuclear weapons alert levels	A	B	C	B	C	A	D+	A	D		
Nuclear force reductions	F	C+	B-	D+	B-	F	D	F	F		
Negative security assurances	B+	C	C	C	B	B+	D+	B	F		
Nuclear-weapon-free zones	B	B	C	B	C	C-	C-	C-	F	C-	C
IAEA safeguards						C+	C	C	F	F	F
Nuclear weapons-related export controls	C-	A	C	A	A	A-	A	F	F	F	F
Multilateral nuclear security commitments	B	B+	A-	A	B+	A	B	A*	D	D+	D+
Criminalization and illicit trafficking commitments	B+	B+	A	A	B+	A	B+	B	D	C	D+
Overall grade	B-	B	B-	B	B	C+	C-	C-	F	D	D

*This assessment does not take into account steps Pakistan has taken to address risks related to its internal political instability and the security of its nuclear arsenal, facilities, and material.

Source: Peter Grail and ACA Research Staff, "Assessing Progress on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament," 2010.

The return to the framework of verifiable nuclear reductions which existed when the previous START treaty was still in force is clearly a major achievement; its significance is difficult to overestimate. But there are also some circumstances which are not entirely in line with the Action Plan adopted by the 2010 Review Conference.

To begin with, the Action Plan calls on the nuclear-weapon states “further [to] enhance transparency.”⁵ Unfortunately, it must be recognized that the level of transparency of the American and Russian nuclear forces has actually gone down compared with the situation when the previous START treaty was in force. Both sides exchange detailed information about the state of their strategic offensive arsenals twice a year—but that information is confidential, and only a brief summary of it is released to the general public.⁶ It is very difficult to assess the progress being made by both countries in reducing their nuclear arsenals based on these short summaries. What is worse, this state of affairs can even create a misleading impression that the arsenals are actually being ramped up rather than reduced, even though the Action Plan calls on the parties to commit to the principle of irreversibility in relation to the implementation of their treaty obligations (Action 2).

During a briefing at the UN about progress being made in implementing the New START treaty the two sides unveiled aggregate numerical data concerning their strategic nuclear arsenals, accurate as of September 1, 2011.⁷ If one compares these figures with the numbers released on February 1, 2011,⁸ when the treaty entered into force (see Table 2), it becomes obvious that the number of deployed Russian nuclear warheads has gone up by 29, and the number of deployed and non-deployed delivery systems has increased by six. That has already caused a lot of raised eyebrows among our foreign colleagues,⁹ and the Russian delegation will surely face many questions at the upcoming session of the Preparatory Committee. These questions could have been avoided had Russia made available to the general public a more detailed set of data, such as those that were released under the previous START treaty. It is hard to accept that this information is sensitive enough to warrant the current secrecy.

There is also another worrying development that has to do with the principle of irreversibility. The United States and Russia both have far-reaching plans for the modernization of their strategic arsenals. Washington intends to replace 12 strategic nuclear submarines at some point in the future, and to deploy new types of strategic bombers and ICBMs; these programs will cost an estimated \$400 billion.¹⁰ Russia has similar plans, although they will probably cost less than America’s. But whereas Washington’s plans are so far a matter of a fairly distant future, foreign experts believe that Moscow is already implementing its own programs at a rapid pace. Reportedly, Russia is now developing no fewer than five new strategic ICBMs and SLBMs, including the Yars; the Bulava; the Liner; an unknown new type of ICBM which was test-launched at Plesetsk in late September;¹¹ and a future liquid-fuel heavy ICBM. In the United States all these developments are cited to justify the need for further financing to speed up the modernization of strategic offensive weapons.¹² It is hard to say why exactly some Western specialists have formed such an opinion. It could be because of the deficit of official information regarding Russia’s strategic offensive weapons modernization programs. Another possible reason is Russia’s rhetoric in response to the deployment of missile defense in Europe. Nevertheless, that is the state of affairs we now have to face, and it hardly strengthens America’s and Russia’s positions at the upcoming NPT Review Conference.

The Action Plan adopted by the 2010 Review Conference requires Russia and the United States not only to seek the early entry into force of the New START treaty, but also to continue discussions on follow-on measures in order to achieve deeper reductions of their nuclear arsenals (Action 4). The Plan also outlines a commitment by the nuclear-weapon states “to undertake

Table 2. The U.S. and Russian Strategic Nuclear Arsenals

	USA		Russia	
	Feb. 5 2011	Sep. 1 2011	Feb. 5 2011	Sep. 1 2011
Deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and HBs	882	822	521	516
Deployed warheads	1,800	1,790	1,537	1,566
Deployed and non-deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and HBs	1,124	1,043	865	871



further efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons, deployed and non-deployed, including through unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures” (Action 3) and to “address the question of all nuclear weapons regardless of their type or their location as an integral part of the general nuclear disarmament process” (Action 5b).

It has now been a full year since the two sides outlined their preliminary positions on further nuclear reductions. The ratification resolution of the U.S. Senate includes a paragraph under which the U.S. administration is to initiate, not later than one year after the entry into force of the New START treaty, negotiations with Russia on verifiable reductions of non-strategic (tactical) nuclear weapons.¹³ U.S. officials have already made attempts to begin consultations with Russia on this issue.¹⁴

The Russian side is not refusing to discuss the problem—but it sets forward a number of preconditions. Speaking at a plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Russia insists on “taking into account several other

factors which have a negative impact on strategic stability, such as plans for placing weapons in outer space, creating strategic offensive weapons with non-nuclear warheads, and deploying a unilateral system of global missile defense.” “Neither can we ignore the significant imbalances in conventional weapons, especially against the backdrop of dangerous conflict situations which remain unresolved in many parts of the world,” the minister added. “The same factors and their interplay must be taken into account in any discussion about the prospects for tactical nuclear weapons reductions,” Lavrov said. Russia continues to believe that the first step in resolving this problem should be the removal of tactical weapons stationed abroad to national territory, and the dismantlement of the attendant nuclear weapons infrastructure on foreign territory.¹⁵

It is therefore becoming increasingly obvious that if the two sides begin to negotiate the next round of nuclear cuts the list of questions being discussed will not be limited to strategic offensive weapons. There will be other important issues on the table: first and foremost, missile defense, non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW), and strategic weapons with non-nuclear warheads.¹⁶ Missile defense is the most important of the three. Any progress on this issue would facilitate the resolution of the other two. Conversely, without progress on missile defense there can be no dialogue on NSNW, strategic offensive weapons with non-nuclear warheads, or further strategic nuclear reductions.

Although consultations on missile defense continue, no discernible progress has been made, which is very unfortunate. Russia wants the United States to provide legally binding guarantees that the missile defense system now being deployed in Europe will not be directed against Russia.¹⁷ Washington says it is willing to provide verbal and written assurances, but it stops short of any legally binding guarantees.¹⁸ Given the current situation in domestic American politics it is

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ROLAND TIMERBAEV: Can we count on the NPT being extended indefinitely? How realistic is that goal, which Russia and many other countries have set themselves? I believe that this extremely important objective can in fact be achieved. <... > What is needed for that to happen? First of all, it will require the completion of talks on banning nuclear weapons tests. This needs to be done before the start of the 1995 Review Conference, if at all possible. <... > Another important task, as part of implementing Article VI of the NPT, is to end the production of weapons-usable fissile materials. <... > The problem of providing security guarantees to non-nuclear weapon states came up back in the mid-1960s during the NPT talks. The commitment must be simple and unambiguous: nuclear weapon states must pledge not to use nuclear weapons against those countries which have undertaken - and are in compliance of - their obligation not to acquire nuclear weapons or any other explosive nuclear devices.

“NPT: the Treaty Must Endure, for Russia and the Whole World”
Yaderny Kontrol (Russian Edition), 1995, No 1, P. 5.

very difficult to see how the incumbent administration could issue such guarantees even if it wanted to.

It is possible that the missile defense problem can be resolved if, instead of trying to achieve their conflicting and very ambitious goals in one fell swoop, the two sides try to identify one specific technical task (even a small one) on which they could pursue practical cooperation. The United States and the Soviet Union had a long history of rivalry in space exploration. But even during the Cold War, back in the mid-1970s, they launched a small but very practical technical project, the ASTP (Apollo-Soyuz Test Project). It is largely thanks to that project that cooperation in manned space exploration between our two countries has now become so close and productive that Russia and the United States are indispensable to each other in this area. The two sides would do well to find something equivalent to the ASTP in missile defense—a small project that would not pose any risks to either side and could serve as a starting point.

If Russia and the United States manage to find a way of addressing the missile defense problem they will be able to launch substantive dialogue on non-strategic nuclear weapons.¹⁹ One realistic option would be to undertake coordinated unilateral initiatives on nuclear weapons. Such initiatives would primarily involve the adoption and further enhancement of trilateral transparency measures (Russia, the United States, and NATO). In parallel with the implementation of these initiatives Russian and American specialists could work together on developing technical verification means and procedures for monitoring their nuclear warheads inventories.

It is also important to start discussing the problem of strategic non-nuclear weapons.²⁰ To begin with, Russia needs clearly to articulate which kinds of weapons with non-nuclear warheads, apart from ICBMs and SLBMs, it regards as strategic non-nuclear weapons. It remains unclear whether Moscow's definition of such weapons includes heavy bombers (HB), air-launched cruise missiles (ALCM), or sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCM). Russian generals believe that because these weapons can be deployed covertly and their time to target is relatively short, they also represent a substantial factor of instability. Neither is it clear whether Russia will insist on including in the negotiations some destabilizing non-nuclear high-precision weapons which are not covered by any control mechanisms. For example, should there be any restrictions on stationing bombers on the territory of new NATO members based on the notion that, with their short time-to-target, these bombers can threaten strategic Russian facilities when armed with high-precision weapons? Russia may also propose to restrict the patrol areas of cruise missile submarines so as to prevent the deployment of a large part of the American submarine fleet close to Russian territory.

Mutual understanding between Russia and the United States in their search for comprehensive solutions to all the aforementioned problems will be impossible to achieve unless both sides take each other's security concerns seriously. On the other hand, by taking these concerns into account and making progress on all the issues outlined above the two sides can build mutual trust and lay the foundations for another round of nuclear reductions, thereby strengthening the NPT regime. Such an approach would also help Moscow and Washington to leave in the past the


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SERGEY KORTUNOV: The best nuclear strategy for Russia at this moment would be non-aggressive, non-offensive and non-provocative (let us even say, friendly) but credible deterrence, aimed not just towards the U.S. but in all directions. That would be the Russian version of the classic French Gaullist doctrine of dissuasion, which is an alternative to the U.S. doctrine of deterrence through intimidation. Politically, effective dissuasion against the United States will not require Russia to maintain military-strategic parity in terms of the quality, quantity or military capability of its nuclear forces. Basic logic and common sense dictate that even if America were to acquire a massive superiority in nuclear weapons in the foreseeable future - provided of course that Russia retains a guaranteed capability to deliver a retaliatory strike - such a turn of events would not end the state of nuclear interdependence in the relations between the two countries. In other words, the prospect of exchanging nuclear strikes would still remain equally unacceptable to both sides.

**“The Future of Nuclear Disarmament”
Yaderny Kontrol (Russian Edition),
1996, No 17, P. 10.**



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strategy of mutual nuclear deterrence, which continues to dominate bilateral relations despite proclamations about the end of the Cold War and the Reset policy. 

NOTES

¹ The Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, UN, 2010, NPT/CONF.2010/50(VOL.I), May, <<http://www.un.org/ru/documents/ods.asp?m=NPT/CONF.2010/50%28VOL.I%29>>, last accessed February 22, 2011.

² Peter Grail and ACA Research Staff, "Assessing Progress on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament, 2009–2010, Arms Control Association," October 2010, <<http://www.armscontrol.org/reports/2009to2010ReportCard>>, last accessed February 22, 2012.

³ NPT/CONF.2010/50. V. I. P. I., IB, ii.

⁴ See, for example: S.V. Lavrov, Statement at the plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, March 1, 2011, <http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/DC036EDF3687A901C325784600474F50>, last accessed February 22, 2012; Rose Gottemoeller, "U.S. Priorities in Nuclear Arms," New York, October 20, 2011, <<http://fpc.state.gov/175924.htm>>, last accessed February 22, 2012.

⁵ NPT/CONF.2010/50. V. I. P. I., IB, Action 5g.

⁶ In early December 2011 the U.S. State Department released detailed information on MOU data. Russia has not done so yet. See, in particular: Hans M. Kristensen, "U.S. Releases Full New START Data," FAS Strategic Security Blog, December 9, 2011, <<http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2011/12/newstartnumbers.php>>, last accessed February 9, 2012.

⁷ "The New START Treaty," Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance, October 20, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/175945.htm>, last accessed February 22, 2012.

⁸ "New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms," Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance, June 1, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/164722.htm>, last accessed February 22, 2012.

⁹ Hans M. Kristensen, "New START Data: Modest Reductions and Decreased Transparency," FAS Strategic Security Blog, October 24, 2011, <http://www.fas.org/blog/ssp/2011/10/newstartdata.php>, last accessed February 22, 2012.

¹⁰ Tom Collina, and Kelsey Davenport, "U.S. Must Rethink New Subs, Bombers," *Defense News*, 2011, October 24, <<http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=8031421&c=FEA&s=COM>>, last accessed February 22, 2012.

¹¹ Ivan Safronov, "Fragments of a Missile found on a Cosmodrome," *Kommersant*, September 29, 2011, <<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1783440>>, last accessed February 22, 2012.

¹² Mark Schneider, Prepared testimony, House Armed Services Committee, Strategic Forces Subcommittee Hearing, "Nuclear Weapons Modernization in Russia and China: Understanding Impacts to the United States," October 14, 2011, <<http://armedservices.house.gov/index.cfm/2011/10/nuclear-weapons-modernization-in-russia-and-china-understanding-impacts-to-the-united-states>>, last accessed February 22, 2012.

¹³ U.S. Senate Resolution of Advice and Consent to Ratification of New START Treaty, December 22, 2010.

¹⁴ Peter Baker, "Arms Talks Now Turn to Short-Range Weapons," *New York Times*, December 24, 2010; Rose Gottemoeller, Opening Statement to the Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, January 27, 2011.

¹⁵ S.V. Lavrov, Statement at a plenary session of the Conference on Disarmament. Geneva, March 1, 2011.

¹⁶ For details, see: Anatoli Diakov, Eugene Miasnikov, and Timur Kadyshev, "Nuclear Reductions After New START: Obstacles and Opportunities," *Arms Control Today* (May 2011), pp. 15–22.

¹⁷ See, for example: S.V. Lavrov, "Russian Foreign Minister's Answers to Questions by Listeners of *Golos Rossii*," *Radio Rossii* and *Ekho Moskvy* radio stations. October 21, 2011, <http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/78B20450AE87C3D1C3257931002706D2>, last accessed February 22, 2012.

¹⁸ Ellen Tauscher, "Transatlantic Missile Defense: Phase II and the Lead Up to the NATO Chicago Summit," Atlantic Council Missile Defense Conference, Washington, DC, October 18, 2011, <<http://www.state.gov/t/us/c42569.htm>>, last accessed February 22, 2012.

¹⁹ For details, see: Diakov, Miasnikov, and Kadyshev, op. cit.

²⁰ For details, see: Eugene Miasnikov, "Strategic Conventional Arms: Deadlocks and Solutions," *Security Index*, No. 3 (96) (Summer 2011), pp. 9–15.

ANNEX 1. EXCERPTS FROM THE FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE 2010 NPT REVIEW CONFERENCE

Volume 1. Part I. Conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions

I. Nuclear Disarmament

B. Disarmament of nuclear weapons

[...]

Action 3: In implementing the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, the nuclear weapon States commit to undertake further efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons, deployed and non-deployed, including through unilateral, bilateral, regional and multilateral measures.

Action 4: The Russian Federation and the United States of America commit to seek the early entry into force and full implementation of the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms and are encouraged to continue discussions on follow-on measures in order to achieve deeper reductions in their nuclear arsenals.

Action 5: The nuclear-weapon States commit to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament, contained in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, in a way that promotes international stability, peace and undiminished and increased security. To that end, they are called upon to promptly engage with a view to, inter alia:

- a. Rapidly moving towards an overall reduction in the global stockpile of all types of nuclear weapons, as identified in action 3;
- b. Address the question of all nuclear weapons regardless of their type or their location as an integral part of the general nuclear disarmament process;
- c. To further diminish the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies;
- d. Discuss policies that could prevent the use of nuclear weapons and eventually lead to their elimination, lessen the danger of nuclear war and contribute to the non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons;
- e. Consider the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States in further reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons systems in ways that promote international stability and security;
- f. Reduce the risk of accidental use of nuclear weapons; and
- g. Further enhance transparency and increase mutual confidence.

Nuclear-weapon States are called upon to report the above undertakings to the Preparatory Committee at 2014. The 2015 Review Conference will take stock and consider the next steps for the full implementation of article VI.

Action 6: All States agree that the Conference on Disarmament should immediately establish a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament, within the context of an agreed, comprehensive and balanced programme of work.

[...]

