

CHAPTER 10

COMPARING APPROACHES TOWARDS GLOBAL ZERO IN THE MODERN PERIOD

Vladislav Chernavskikh

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, "vertical" nonproliferation — advancement and stockpiling of existing nuclear arsenals — was becoming less of a concern to states parties to the NPT compared to the potential "horizontal" proliferation — spread of nuclear weapons to new countries.¹

Russian and U.S. nuclear forces were cut dramatically: START I entered into force in 1994 and START II was negotiated and signed in 1993, while unilateral Presidential Nuclear Initiatives prompted withdrawal and elimination of a significant share of Russian and U.S. non-strategic nuclear arsenals. The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program enabled the nuclear disarmament of the former Soviet Republics of Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. The South Africa dismantled its nuclear program and joined the NPT, Iraq's program was curtailed through international effort, and an Agreed Framework was negotiated between North Korea and the United States to stop the former from acquiring weapons-grade fissile material.

This chapter will attempt to investigate approaches and attitudes towards the issue of complete nuclear disarmament in public policy, political establishments and nuclear decision-making mechanisms of Russia and the United States after the Cold War examining a few cases when the political pivot to that goal seemed the most active.

¹ Leigh-Phippard, H. (1997) 'Multilateral diplomacy at the 1995 NPT review and extension conference,' *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 167-190, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09592299708406048> (21 May, 2021).

1995–2000. NPT review process and progress on Article VI obligations

After the end of the Cold War which was followed by a significant amelioration in the strategic relationship between Russia and the U.S., substantial diplomatic progress on nuclear disarmament obligations enshrined in Article VI of the NPT was made in the framework of the NPT review process. The momentum didn't last for long — the George W. Bush administration's nuclear policy has effectively neglected the diplomatic commitments on disarmament made by its predecessor. Nevertheless, the achievements of the 1995 and 2000 NPT review conferences remain as an outstanding example of effective Russia-U.S. diplomatic cooperation on their disarmament obligations under the cornerstone treaty.

1995 NPT Review Conference

The first NPT review conference to be held after the end of the Cold War, the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, had two main tasks before it: in addition to the usual mission of reviewing the treaty's implementation states parties were to negotiate and decide on whether the NPT should be extended indefinitely or for an additional set period or periods of time. Western and Eastern European groups believed that for the Treaty to be strengthened, it needed to be extended indefinitely, while the non-aligned states argued that an indefinite extension would perpetuate its weaknesses and inequalities and, thus, either wanted the NPT to be extended only for a limited period, or wanted to have another review conference at a future point to decide the future of the treaty.²

On the central issue of the 1995 conference Russian and American positions converged — both nuclear superpowers had a firm goal of extending the treaty indefinitely. 'Our main task at the '95 Conference was the extension. This was the crux of the matter, and then how we get it was another matter' — states Grigory Berdennikov, Russia's chief negotiator at the 1995 conference. Thomas Graham, director of the U.S. ACDA at the time recalls that 'The United States would never, under any circumstances, vote for

² Ibid.

anything but indefinite extension. We didn't care about consensus, and that was the line we took'.³

Prior to the conference, the Clinton administration launched a diplomatic campaign, sending officials to engage with the governments of the NAM states, promoting the idea of indefinite extension. Even the highest levels of the American political establishment became involved in lobbying for the extension.⁴ In addition, U.S., Russia UK and France issued a four-power statement on nonproliferation to the CD, in which they reaffirmed their commitment to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to nuclear disarmament. Finally, all NWS sought to provide improved security assurances to NNWS, unilaterally through the issuing of statements on negative security assurances and collectively through the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 984 on positive security assurances.⁵

In the end, the conference unanimously adopted a 'package deal': in addition to extending the NPT indefinitely, decisions on Strengthening the Review Process, on Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, and a Resolution on the Middle East were adopted.

Decision on Principles and Objectives outlined the so-called 'yardsticks' for assessing progress on all of the most contentious areas covered by the NPT Review Process. In regard to Article VI, it laid out a 'program of action' for further nuclear disarmament, which called for negotiating the CTBT, a fissile materials treaty, and for the "determined pursuit" by the nuclear-weapon states of "systematic and progressive efforts" to reduce nuclear arsenals.

The Decision served as an additional incentive for NNWS to support the extension — a supplementary concession from the NWS addressing their concerns about the implementation of the Treaty once it was extended. It was a price that the NWS were willing to pay to have the treaty extended by consensus. The key part was to avoid any conditions being attached to them. According to a South

³ Onderco, M.; Nuti, L. (2020) 'Extending the NPT? A Critical Oral History of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference,' Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, available at <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Extending%20the%20NPT%20-%20A%20Critical%20Oral%20History%20of%20the%201995%20Review%20and%20Extension%20Conference.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

⁴ Dunn, L. (1995) 'High Noon for the NPT,' *Arms Control Today*, vol. 25, no. 6, pp. 3–9, available at www.jstor.org/stable/23625630 (21 May, 2021).

⁵ Ibid.

African negotiator Peter Goosen,⁶ the proposal was born out of an idea to push for compliance without jeopardizing the Treaty itself — that's why the document opted for principles that would have moral strength and could be seen as binding without imposing a legally binding conditionality. As there was no conditionality between the elements of the package, the outcome was satisfactory for the NWS.

The decision was a significant event — it marked the first time that the NWS made such an elaborate commitment that expanded on their original obligation to strive for nuclear disarmament enshrined in the Article VI of the Treaty and created certain expectations for further progress on disarmament at the 2000 Review Conference.

2000 NPT Review Conference

During the 1995-2000 review period, the NPT regime saw positive and negative developments alike. One on hand, the CTBT was negotiated, reductions in nuclear weapons have occurred under START I and START II was ratified by Russia; the UK and France have reduced their warhead quantities, types, and the number of deployment locations, and the IAEA safeguards have been strengthened as have the Zangger Committees export control mechanisms.⁷ On the other hand, U.S. Ratification of START II 1997 extension protocols and the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty succession, demarcation, and confidence-building agreements had stalled as the U.S. was planning to amend the ABM Treaty and create a new missile defense system. Furthermore, Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests in 1998 and missile tests in North Korea struck a serious blow to the nonproliferation regime and international security. The stalemate on the FMCT in the CD, rejection of CTBT by the U.S. Senate, and reaffirmations of elaborate nuclear weapons doctrines by Russia and the U.S. were also among the biggest grievances for the disarmament advocates.

Despite the initial array of overwhelmingly pessimistic forecasts⁸ predicting that 'the stage is set for a messy and corrosive NPT

⁶ Welsh, S. (1995) Delegate perspectives on the 1995 NPT review and extension conference.

⁷ Reaching Critical Will (2000) News in Review, available at (last accessed: April 24, 2020) http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/NIR2000/nir_24april.pdf (21 May, 2021).

⁸ Johnson, Rebecca (2000) The NPT Review: Disaster Averted. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, vol. 56, no. 4, pp. 52-57, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2968/056004013> (21 May, 2021).

Review Conference,⁹ the 2000 NPT Review Conference went down in history as one of the most successful, concluding with a final document that solidified the 1995 indefinite extension decision and further defined the nuclear disarmament program of action or 'practical steps,' including an 'unequivocal undertaking' by the NWS to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.¹⁰ Overall, the result was a robust and comprehensive outlook on the future and the past of treaty. 'When the delegates returned home, there was a sense that the treaty was in good shape'.¹¹

One of the key components to the successful conference was the active participation of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) – a group of seven states (Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, and Sweden) that promoted the disarmament agenda by building a compromise with the NWS. As some experts posit, the emergence of New Agenda Coalition as a powerful negotiating and pressurizing force at the Conference was more important than the outcome document itself.¹²

The P5 knew that in order to facilitate a successful outcome they would need to act as a unified grouping. Prior to the Conference, to clearly demarcate areas of agreement and disagreement and develop a joint statement, they've held a series of meetings. Among other things, they have agreed to avoid inflammatory rhetoric in their statements. However, a disagreement over the U.S. plans to deploy a new national missile defense system and the role the ABM Treaty's impact on strategic stability persisted.

Russia-U.S. relationship in that period was under a serious strain brought on by the conflict in Yugoslavia and NATO's European expansion. Furthermore, Russian and U.S. perspectives on strategic stability and arms control started to diverge.

⁹ Davis, Zachary (1999) 'NPT 2000: Is the Treaty in Trouble?' *Arms Control Today*, vol. 29, no. 8, pp. 10 – 14, available at www.jstor.org/stable/23626163 (21 May, 2021).

¹⁰ Du Preez, J. (2008) 'Avoiding a Perfect Storm: Recharting the NPT Review Process,' *Arms Control Today*, vol. 38, no. 8, pp. 13 – 18, available at www.jstor.org/stable/23628509 (21 May, 2021).

¹¹ Müller, H. (2014) *The NPT Review Conferences*, in *The Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime at a Crossroads*, Institute for National Security Studies, p. 22, available at [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/180773/memo137%20\(5\)_May%2020.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/180773/memo137%20(5)_May%2020.pdf) (21 May, 2021).

¹² Vanaik, A. (2000) 'Sixth NPT Review Conference,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 35, no. 39, pp. 3468 – 3470, available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4409765> (21 May, 2021).

Russian position, delivered in the opening statement by Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov,¹³ was that the ABM Treaty is a 'key to strategic stability and an important condition for any future strategic weapons reductions'. Any amendment to the treaty or deployment of additional missile defense systems would undermine any existing disarmament and arms control agreements. Instead, Russia proposed addressing missile threats and missile proliferation through an alternative 'Global Missile and Missile Technologies Non-Proliferation Control System' and stated that it was prepared to consider steps to reduce U.S. and Russian strategic arsenals to 1,500 warheads but only if the ABM Treaty is to stay. Minister Ivanov also underlined the Russian Duma's ratification of the CTBT and START II, which positively influenced the dynamic at the conference.¹⁴

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, while delivering the opening statement,¹⁵ welcomed Russia's recent ratification of START II and CTBT and listed other Article VI-related measures that the U.S. has been undertaking in the recent past. The U.S. statement outright rejected the notion that deployment of the missile defense system will influence strategic stability between Russia and the United States in any way since it's not going to be able to 'degrade the Russian deterrent,' and underscored that the ABM Treaty can be 'easily amended'.

The difference in the perception of that key strategic issue was a serious roadblock to achieving a unified P5 position. However, soon after the opening day of the conference, Ivanov had a meeting with President Clinton and Secretary of State Albright in Washington DC. 'The Foreign Minister and I devoted much of our time to stra-

¹³ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (2000) 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Final Document Volume III Part IV, available at (last accessed: April 24, 2020)<https://unoda-web.s3-accelerate.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/assets/WMD/Nuclear/pdf/finaldocs/2000%20-%20NY%20-%20NPT%20Review%20Conference%20-%20Final%20Document%20Part%20IV.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

¹⁴ Johnson, Rebecca (2000) The NPT Review: Disaster Averted. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, vol. 56, no. 4, pp. 52-57, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2968/056004013> (21 May, 2021).

¹⁵ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (2000) 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Final Document Volume III Part IV, available at <https://unoda-web.s3-accelerate.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/assets/WMD/Nuclear/pdf/finaldocs/2000%20-%20NY%20-%20NPT%20Review%20Conference%20-%20Final%20Document%20Part%20IV.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

tegic arms control,'¹⁶ Albright stated. During the visit, the two sides swiftly reached an agreement on a mutually satisfactory language on the ABM Treaty¹⁷ to use in a joint P5 statement. It read 'preserving and strengthening the ABM Treaty as a cornerstone of strategic stability and as a basis for further reductions of strategic offensive weapons'.¹⁸ The way that the sentence was constructed left enough room for interpretation — for the Russian side it meant the United States would not abrogate the treaty but there was some room left for the U.S. to claim that 'strengthening' does not permit certain modifications. This language also proved valuable later for achieving consensus on the same issue in the conference's final document.

The difference in positions remained unresolved, but to ensure that it would not lead to a deadlock in negotiations and a failure of the conference, Russia and the United States agreed to keep the ABM issue out.¹⁹ By submitting a joint statement, the P5 sent a powerful message to NNWS.

With that, the stage was set for negotiations in the nuclear disarmament subsidiary body. Several compromise drafts based on weakened original NAC proposals were submitted and discussed, but negotiations were stalling. To expedite achieving a consensus, the United States approached the NAC countries and suggested a direct closed NWS-NAC meeting. All P5 members in some capacity insisted that many actions proposed by NAC must be dependent on strategic stability and undiminished security for all²⁰ Russia opposed several provisions in NAC proposals, including the 'unequivocal undertaking', on which its delegation was supported by France, and

¹⁶ Federation of American Scientists (2000) Transcript: Albright, Ivanov Joint Press Briefing at the State Dept, available at (last accessed: April 24, 2020)<https://fas.org/nuke/control/abmt/news/000427-abmt-usia2.htm> (21 May, 2021).

¹⁷ Wulf, Norman (2000) 'Observations From the 2000 NPT Review Conference,' Arms Control Today, available at <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000-11/features/observations-2000-npt-review-conference>.

¹⁸ United Nations (200) 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Final Document Volume 11 Part III, available at (last accessed: April 24, 2020)[https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2000/28%20\(Part%20III\)](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2000/28%20(Part%20III)) (21 May, 2021).

¹⁹ Wulf, Norman (2000) 'Observations From the 2000 NPT Review Conference,' Arms Control Today, available at <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000-11/features/observations-2000-npt-review-conference>.

²⁰ Rauf, Tariq (2000) 'An Unequivocal Success? Implications of the NPT Review Conference,' Arms Control Today, available at <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000-07/features/unequivocal-success-implications-npt-review-conference> (21 May, 2021).

the paragraph on nonstrategic nuclear weapons. It especially vigorously requested the practical disarmament steps to be conditioned on 'strategic stability'. NAC states refused the language on the basis of it having a possibility of being used as an excuse for not following up on the disarmament commitments, while China wasn't willing to subscribe to commitments that had to do with transparency.

A breakthrough moment came when the Russian ambassador Yuri Kapralov declared that his delegation accepted the paper as it is 'in the spirit of compromise'.²¹ That gesture compelled China and France to concede on their own national objections. Eventually, the parties managed to reach a compromise between the initial radical NAC drafts and the "weaker" drafts prepared by the P5. The consensus language was just ambiguous enough to please all sides.²²

The final document that emerged from these negotiations, contained an unprecedented level of nuclear disarmament commitments on part of the NWS. Even though some states remained unsatisfied with the final version, noting that it was noticeably weaker than the original drafts submitted by NAC,²³ it still broke new grounds. Much of the language in the '13 steps'²⁴ was never explicitly or, sometimes, even implicitly acknowledged by the NWS before. One of the most significant first-time commitments was an 'unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament' This marked the strongest political commitment on nuclear abolition by the nuclear-weapon states up to that point and distinctly delinked the goals of nuclear and general and complete disarmament. Further strengthening that language, other strong first-time commitments were calls for a 'principle of irreversibility' in nuclear disarmament and arms control, and for 'increased transparency with regard to ...

²¹ Johnson, Rebecca (2000) *The NPT Review: Disaster Averted*. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, vol. 56, no. 4, pp. 52-57, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2968/056004013> (21 May, 2021).

²² Rauf, Tariq (2000) 'An Unequivocal Success? Implications of the NPT Review Conference,' *Arms Control Today*, available at <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000-07/features/unequivocal-success-implications-npt-review-conference> (21 May, 2021).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (2000) *2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Final Document Volume III Part IV*, available at <https://unoda-web.s3-accelerate.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/assets/WMD/Nuclear/pdf/finaldocs/2000%20-%20NY%20-%20NPT%20Review%20Conference%20-%20Final%20Document%20Part%20IV.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

nuclear weapons capabilities and the implementation of agreements pursuant to Article VI'. The text also addressed tactical nuclear arsenals by calling for 'further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons, based on unilateral initiatives' and imposed a commitment for 'a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies'.

Despite the NPT regime being beset by new nonproliferation-related trouble, growing dissatisfaction on part of the NNWS with the NWS performance on their Article VI obligations since the last review conference, and the discord within the P5, the Conference reached a consensus on a strong forward-looking final document. Smart management of the conference process and constructive engagement between NWS and NAC, set the right framework, but not less significant was ample flexibility on part of both the P5 and the non-aligned negotiators. Interest in the success of the Conference and well-being of the NPT was driving the negotiations. In that regard, both Russian and U.S. concessions on their initial positions and willingness to engage the opponent and look for a compromise proved to be incremental to the success. It is especially remarkable taking into account that this period was marked by a significant chill in the Russia-U.S. relationship and a newly emerging divide in their positions on strategic stability and arms control.

2009–2016. The 'Prague Speech' period

Obama and Medvedev governments drive the abolitionist agenda

The election of President Barack Obama came at the time of public resurgence of the global nuclear disarmament movement. The now famous Wall Street Journal articles²⁵ published by the group of the so-called 'four horsemen' as a result of Hoover Institution's conferences on the nuclear abolition brought the idea of global zero back into the public, political, and academic mainstream.

Abolitionist ideas took form and became the official U.S. policy in 2009 with Obama's famous 'Prague speech'²⁶ in which he stated that

²⁵ Shultz, G.; Perry, W.; Kissinger, H.; Nunn, S. 'Toward a World Without Nuclear Weapons.' Nuclear Threat Initiative, available at https://media.nti.org/pdfs/NSP_op-eds_final_.pdf (21 May, 2021).

²⁶ The White House Office of the Press Secretary (2009) Remarks by President Barack Obama In Prague As Delivered, available at <https://obamawhitehouse>.

America is committed to 'seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons'. His Russian counterpart — President Dmitry Medvedev — was also forthcoming in his statements, affirming that 'our common task consists in undertaking everything to make deadly weapons of mass destruction to become a thing of the past,' stating that Russia will 'steadily move along the path of verifiable and irreversible reductions in nuclear weapons',²⁷ and that it 'makes a substantial contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament'.²⁸ Reaffirming this newly found determination, in September 2009 UN Security Council summit unanimously approved a 'vision of a world without nuclear weapons'.²⁹

At the same time, after the rejuvenated idea of global nuclear disarmament getting official endorsement from the leadership of the two biggest nuclear superpowers and later a major success in the form of the New START treaty, by the end of Obama's presidency the pivot to nuclear disarmament has entered into stagnation once again.

SORT vs. the New START

In 2010 Russia and the United States concluded the New START Treaty³⁰ which established even lower ceilings for the countries' nuclear forces. Despite the significant differences in viewpoints on verification measures and the issue of American ABM systems in Europe, the negotiations were over in just a year.³¹ To better illustrate

archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-prague-delivered (21 May, 2021).

²⁷ RIA (2009) 'Medvedev predstavil v OON vzgljady Rossii na razoruzhenie, PRO i nacizm' [Medvedev Introduced Russia's Views on Disarmament, Missile Defense, and Nazism at the UN], available at (last accessed: August 7, 2019)<https://ria.ru/20090924/186211512.html> (21 May, 2021).

²⁸ Ploughshares Fund (2010) President Medvedev's Message to The Global Zero Summit, (last accessed: August 7, 2019)<https://www.ploughshares.org/issues-analysis/article/president-medvedevs-message-global-zero-summit> (21 May, 2021).

²⁹ UN News (2009) Security Council calls for world free of nuclear weapons during historic summit, available at (last accessed: August 7, 2019)<https://news.un.org/en/story/2009/09/314122-security-council-calls-world-free-nuclear-weapons-during-historic-summit> (21 May, 2021).

³⁰ U.S. Department of State (2010) New START Treaty, available at (last accessed: August 7, 2019)<https://www.state.gov/t/avc/newstart/c44126.htm> (21 May, 2021).

³¹ Baker, P. (2010) Twists and Turns on Way to Arms Pact with Russia, The New York Times, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/27/world/europe/27start.html?pagewanted=all> (21 May, 2021).

the difference in approaches towards disarmament that between Russia and the U.S. and how it manifested in the bilateral arms control process it's worth comparing the New START and the diplomacy that made the treaty possible with the previous major bilateral strategic arms control agreement — the SORT Treaty.

SORT Treaty

The 2002 Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty (SORT or Moscow Treaty) between Russia and the United States obligated the parties to reduce their deployed strategic nuclear forces to 1,700-2,200 warheads. However, the treaty did not include any definitions, counting rules, elimination procedures, or monitoring and verification provisions in its text, instead relying on the START I framework.

At the time, Russia and the U.S. were already in the process of cutting their strategic nuclear forces. Both countries announced their plans for reductions prior to the negotiations. But, coming to the negotiation table, Russia and the United States had very different ideas of what a new agreement on nuclear reductions should look like.

Russia wanted a legally binding treaty modeled after START I, which would retain its basic structure and provisions but make deeper cuts in the nuclear arsenals, while the U.S. looked for an informal agreement or a statement of understanding between the two sides that would simply ascertain the plans for nuclear reductions, without imposing any specific deadlines, elimination provisions, counting rules, or strict and formal verification system.

As a result of negotiations, a compromise was brokered: U.S. conceded on the format of a legally binding treaty, while Russia agreed to forgo the inclusion of specific requirements in the treaty text.

Russian arms control policy stemmed from a traditional outlook on international security and nuclear policy and was driven by the goal of maintaining strategic stability and mutual deterrence with the United States. In addition to that, Russia wanted to address the abrogation of the ABM Treaty and U.S. plans for national missile defense. Therefore, it saw the traditional arms control process based on the principles of irreversibility, predictability and transparency as a best way to proceed with its reductions.

Signing a formal treaty with the U.S. would ensure that the two retain a rough nuclear parity and that the U.S. would continue to

reduce its forces regardless of the next presidential administrations' policy. Finally, signing of a formal treaty would indicate that Russia and the U.S. remained equal partners in the arms control process.

The United States policy towards arms control has changed significantly under the Bush administration. In general, the new administration saw arms control and disarmament treaties as an unnecessary constraint on U.S. nuclear forces. 'Arms control in the U.S. security policy has been completely replaced by a policy of countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and related threats'.³²

The traditional bilateral arms control system was considered outdated. The U.S. claimed that it wanted to move away from the logic of the Cold War and didn't see Russia as an adversary. Therefore, basing its nuclear posture and size of the arsenal around the Russian capabilities was deemed unnecessary.

Instead of being exclusively a tool of mutual deterrence with Russia, nuclear weapons have been repurposed to provide the U.S. military with 'tailored deterrence' options against a new set of adversaries around the world.³³ Hence, The United States wanted to maintain the flexibility to size and structure its nuclear forces however it saw fit which meant that in negotiating SORT, it argued against imposing strict counting and elimination rules and the principle of irreversible reductions.

Compromise was reached because of a convergence of several factors:

- U.S. decided that a formal treaty would help President Vladimir Putin's standing with domestic critics who opposed his policies towards the United States and conceded on the form of the agreement.
- Russia realized that the U.S. was not going to concede on the text of the treaty, because the counting and elimination provisions proposed by Russia went fundamentally against the nuclear posture of the Bush administration.

³² Dyakov, A.S.; Myasnikov, E.V.; Sokov, N.N. (2006) 'The Reduction of Nuclear Weapons and the Control in Russian-American Relations: Status and Prospects,' Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, available at <http://www.armscontrol.ru/pubs/Report-0612.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

³³ Woolf, Amy (2010) 'Nuclear Weapons in U.S. National Security Policy: Past, Present, and Prospects,' Congressional Research Service, available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL34226> (21 May, 2021).

- As the nature of the relationship between the two countries changed after the Cold War and they became 'partners', cooperating 'to advance stability, security, and economic integration,'³⁴ Russia assumed that it would be able to address its concerns about the elimination of non-deployed warheads and missile defenses of the treaty later through the treaty's bilateral consultative commission and other forums.³⁵
- START I remained in force and provided the sides with enough information to ensure verification and predictability.

SORT was a different kind of arms control treaty born out of a unique situation in international security. Traditional arms control treaties were negotiated on a *quid pro quo* basis, where the two sides enjoyed an overall parity of strategic nuclear capabilities and proportionally moved towards gradually lowering those capabilities. The element of confrontation between the two countries created the necessity to use arms control to manage their strategic relationship.

However, in the case of SORT, Russia was negotiating from a much weaker position than its counterpart. Russia's military and economic weakness compared to the United States meant that Russia was going to have to lower its nuclear forces regardless of the result of negotiations, and that the U.S. didn't consider Russia to be a valid strategic threat. Therefore, it had no incentive to accommodate for Russia's point of view in negotiations. As a result, SORT became a treaty that fully endorsed and exemplified Bush's administration nuclear policy as well as reflected the new reality of the Russia-U.S. strategic relationship.

From the perspective of the Russian and U.S. obligations under Article VI of the NPT, the treaty was perceived by the international community as a major step back and was widely criticized by NNWS at the 2005 NPT Review Conference.³⁶ Lack of counting

³⁴ United States Department of State (2002) Text of U.S.-Russia Joint Declaration, available at (last accessed 27 May, 2020) <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/eur/rls/or/2002/10469.htm> (21 May, 2021).

³⁵ Woolf, Amy (2011) 'Nuclear Arms Control: The Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty,' Congressional Research Service, available at <https://fas.org/sqp/crs/nuke/RL31448.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

³⁶ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (2005) 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Final Document Part III, available at (last accessed May 28, 2020) <https://>

rules and definitions, as well as verification provisions 'clearly went against the principles of irreversibility, transparency and verification established by the 2000 Review Conference'. NNWS stressed that 'reductions in deployments and in operational status cannot substitute for irreversible cuts in, and the total elimination of nuclear weapons'.

Moreover, the irreversibility of reductions under the Treaty allowed the U.S. to continue to pursue its nuclear doctrine, under which the role of nuclear weapons was greatly expanded and the threshold for their use significantly lowered. The treaty gave leeway for the Bush administration to pursue new high precision and low-yield nuclear weapons which would be used both to deter and to defeat adversaries. A clear negligence of U.S. obligations under Article VI have served to deepen the divide between nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon states and became one of the primary reasons for the failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

Overall, despite providing a framework for further nuclear cuts, SORT failed to live up to the disarmament expectations which were set by the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences, while as a bilateral arms control treaty it neglected some of the more potent security concerns that Russia had at the time.

New START

In general, the treaty was a product of a different relationship between Russia and the United States. Negotiations on New START and its conclusion were the result of the new U.S. presidential administration's nuclear posture and a cooperative, but pragmatic approach to Russia-U.S. relations. The approach was set in stone with the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review³⁷ and represented a clear departure from the policies of the Bush administration. Apart from reinforcing Obama's Prague speech by underlining the U.S. intentions to continue to move towards global nuclear disarmament, returning to the traditional role of nuclear weapons as a strategic deterrent, and arms control efforts as a way to achieve nonproliferation goals, the review

documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/292/21/PDF/N0829221.pdf (21 May, 2021).

³⁷ U.S. Department of Defense (2010) 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, available at (last accessed: August 7, 2019) https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/NPR/2010_Nuclear_Posture_Review_Report.pdf (21 May, 2021).

charted three major guiding principles for managing the nuclear relationship with Russia:

- The U.S. was committed to maintaining a stable strategic relationship with Russia. At the same time, Russia's nuclear force remained a significant factor in determining the rate and scope of U.S. nuclear reductions;
- Therefore, the U.S. intended to engage with Russia in arms control negotiations to set the stage for deeper, verifiable nuclear reductions;
- The U.S. also intended to pursue high-level, bilateral dialogue on strategic stability, to foster more stable, resilient, and transparent strategic relationship. Through that engagement, U.S. intended to address Russian concerns about U.S. missile defenses and any future conventionally armed long-range ballistic missile systems to prove that they are not intended to affect the strategic balance with Russia.

This approach strongly resonated with Russia because it perfectly supplemented its own worldview:

- For Russia, strategic arms control agreements based on principles of strategic stability, parity in forces, and mutual deterrence was the backbone of its relationship with the U.S. and reaffirmed Russia's image of a global nuclear power.
- At the same time, Russia's sought cuts in its nuclear forces due to financial considerations. To retain strategic stability and parity in these conditions it needed a bilateral legally binding agreement with the U.S..
- Missile defense systems developed by the U.S. and its program of Prompt Global Strike were seen as destabilizing and harmful to strategic stability.

Bush administration's decisions to abandon the traditional idea of strategic stability and deterrence, reject arms control agreements based on parity, and leave the ABM Treaty to develop an extensive system of missile defense, were the most damaging factors that led to a deterioration in the Russia-U.S. arms control process and strategic relationship. Obama administration's nuclear policy seemed to have reversed all of them. The new approach was demonstrated in practice when the U.S. reached out to Russia with a proposal to negotiate a new strategic arms control treaty on the basis of irreversibil-

ity, transparency, and verification, and announced that it decided to forgo its plan for deployment of ABM systems in Poland and Czech Republic, which Russia has continuously labeled as harmful to strategic stability.

In that sense, the New START became a catalyst to improve bilateral relations, functioning as a privileged communication channel, which, because of the paramount strategic interests at stake, was supposed to become an important vehicle for further detente and mutual rapprochement.³⁸

Resolution of the most contentious point in the negotiations^{39, 40}

	U.S.	Russia	New START
Mobile ICBM's	Wanted to retain START sublimit regarding mobile ICBM's	Asked for easing the restrictions on mobile ICBM's since they only affected Russia.	No sublimit on mobile ICBM's
Upload potential	Wanted to retain 'the ability to upload' nuclear warheads	Wanted to limit the upload capability of the U.S. strategic force and pushed for higher limits on launchers	Russia made a concession and agreed to a less restrictive limit on the number of non-deployed delivery vehicles
Telemetry	Wanted full exchange of missile test data (advocated for mostly by Republican U.S. senators)	Argued that unlike U.S., Russia was developing new types of missiles therefore mutual access to missile test data. would greatly favor the U.S. and should be abandoned	The Parties shall exchange telemetric information on an equal number of launches of ICBMs and SLBMs, but on no more than five launches of ICBMs and SLBMs each calendar year. The Parties shall agree on the amount of exchange of such telemetric information

³⁸ Rusman, P. (2010) 'New START, A Preliminary Analysis,' *Journal of Conflict & Security Law*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 557-572, available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26295320> (21 May, 2021).

³⁹ Podvig, Pavel (2011) 'Instrumental influences. Russia and the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review,' *Nonproliferation Review*, Vol.18 No.1, pp.39-50, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700.2011.549170> (21 May, 2021).

⁴⁰ Woolf A. (2021) *The New START Treaty: Central Limits and Key Provisions* Congressional Research Service, available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R41219.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

	U.S.	Russia	New START
ABM systems	Didn't want to impose any limits on U.S. ABM systems	<p>Advocated for a prohibition on the deployment of ABM systems outside of national territories</p> <p>When U.S. rejected, Russia insisted that the Treaty should reflect the link between offensive and defensive strategic systems</p>	<p>Statement in the preamble: Parties recognize the existence of the interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms, that this interrelationship will become more important as strategic nuclear arms are reduced, and that current strategic defensive arms do not undermine the viability and effectiveness of the strategic offensive arms of the parties</p> <p>Parties cannot convert ICBM launchers and SLBM launchers to launchers for missile defense interceptors and vice versa</p>
Conventional long-range ballistic missiles	Wanted to be free to pursue its Prompt Global Strike program	Initially sought to include a provision that would ban the deployment of conventional warheads on strategic ballistic missiles	<p>Statement in the preamble: 'Mindful of the impact of conventionally armed ICBMs and SLBMs on strategic stability'.</p> <p>Included the converted systems in the scope of New START. It counts all strategic delivery systems against nuclear limits, regardless of whether they carry conventional or nuclear warheads</p>

A Call for Further Cuts

In 2013, The Obama administration called on Russia to start negotiations on another arms control agreement. First, with a personal letter to Vladimir Putin and then publicly in Berlin, Barack Obama proposed to:

- Conclude a framework agreement to reduce the New START limits by as much as one-third;⁴¹
- Develop a legally binding executive agreement on transparency measures that would include exchange of information

⁴¹ Calmes, J. 'Obama Asks Russia to Join in Reducing Nuclear Arms,' The New York Times, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/20/world/europe/obama-asks-russia-to-join-in-reducing-nuclear-arms.html> (21 May, 2021).

to confirm that the U.S. ABM systems are not threatening Russia's offensive forces;⁴²

- Discuss possible reductions in nonstrategic nuclear weapons, promising to work with NATO allies to seek bold reductions in both Russian and U.S. tactical weapons in Europe⁴³

Further nuclear reductions proposed by the Obama administration were in line with the goals outlined in the administration's nuclear posture review which called to 'address non-strategic nuclear weapons, together with the non-deployed nuclear weapons of both sides, in any post-New START negotiations with Russia' and followed the Resolution of Advice and Consent to Ratification issued by the U.S. Senate when the New START Treaty was ratified. At the same time, it is reasonable to assume that an executive agreement on transparency measures for the ABM systems was a proposal that pushed the limits of what Obama administration could offer. Any legal treaty on limiting the ABM systems would never be able to pass through the U.S. Senate — the New START Resolution of Advice and Consent to Ratification made it clear that the Capitol Hill didn't view limitations or transparency vis a vis U.S. missile defense as a viable matter for arms control negotiations.⁴⁴

Some analysts posited that for the Obama administration further nuclear reductions were important domestically as they allowed for budgetary savings and would be consistent with the policy of nuclear disarmament that was announced in 2009 and fixed in the nuclear posture review. Since unilateral reductions would be subject to a massive backlash from the U.S. Senate a bilateral agreement with Russia was sought.⁴⁵ But, putting aside possible domestic considerations, in essence, Obama administration's idea was a logical follow-up to the New START. In a situation when Russia-U.S. relationship was beset by political strife, the U.S. appealed to arms control and promised to address some of Russia's strategic concerns to engage in a strategic dialogue that would serve to facilitate cooperation.

⁴² Chernenko, E.; Safronov, I. (2013) 'Doveritel'nye gramoty' [Letters of Credence], Kommersant, available at <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2187951> (21 May, 2021).

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ United States Department of State (2010). New START Treaty: Resolution Of Advice And Consent To Ratification. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/rls/153910.htm>

⁴⁵ Chernenko E. (2013) 'Razoruzhenie, ot kotorogo trudno otkazat'sja' [Disarmament that is hard to resist], Kommersant, available at (last accessed 27 May, 2020) <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2215128> (21 May, 2021).

However, unlike back in 2009, this time Russia wasn't too keen to accept the invitation. Russian officials have stated that:

- Suggested reductions will make Russian and U.S. nuclear arsenals comparable to those of other nuclear weapons states which meant that further reductions will have to be reviewed in a multilateral format.⁴⁶
- Transparency on missile defense is the right first step, but it's not enough. Russia continued to insist on legal guarantees in form of a treaty that the U.S.-NATO missile defense is not directed against the Russian nuclear deterrent.⁴⁷
- Decisions on further nuclear cuts need to take into account many factors affecting strategic stability. Among those factors are missile defense, precision-guided conventional weapons and prompt global strike program, and offensive weapons systems in outer space.⁴⁸

In 2009, when the two sides started their negotiations on New START, the original START was on the verge of expiration, leaving the strategic relationship between the two countries unchecked. In that situation Russia saw it necessary to engage with the U.S. when the new administration signaled its readiness to establish a new arms control regime on mutually beneficial grounds. In 2013, when the basic arms control architecture was already established under New START, and nuclear reductions to the level that Russia considered optimal were guaranteed, its negotiating position became tougher. Russia saw no reason to engage in negotiations without significant benefits on issues that it saw as the main threats to strategic stability.

Fundamentally, the two countries had different goals in further arms control agreements. While Washington has sought to lower the New START limits and to bring nonstrategic nuclear weapons and reserve strategic warheads into the negotiations, Moscow prioritized

⁴⁶ Kimball, D.; Morley, J. (2013) 'Obama Calls for Deeper Nuclear Cuts,' Arms Control Association, available at <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2013-07/news/obama-calls-deeper-nuclear-cuts> (21 May, 2021).

⁴⁷ Chernenko E. Safronov I., Tarasov P. (2013) 'Barak Obama otmenil Vladimira Putina' [Barack Obama cancelled Vladimir Putin], Kommersant, available at <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2250165> (21 May, 2021).

⁴⁸ Chernenko E. (2013) 'Razoruzhenie, ot kotorogo trudno otkazat'sja' [Disarmament that is hard to resist], Kommersant, available at <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2215128> (21 May, 2021).

constraining missile defenses and precision-guided conventional⁴⁹ weapons as well as making progress on its concerns over weapons in space. Russia's apparent unwillingness to enter a new agreement on nuclear reductions on American rules, and further deterioration of Russia-U.S. relations turning into an acute escalation brought by the crisis in Eastern Ukraine and Crimea, turned the possibility of reaching a new arms control agreement to zero.

Nuclear arsenal modernization programs

Another setback was the extensive process of nuclear modernization undertaken by both Russia and the United States.

According to former government officials⁵⁰ Obama's administration had to appropriate substantial additional funding to National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) for the purpose of nuclear modernization to encourage the 'hawks' in the Congress to support the New START treaty. The United States set out to modernize all aspects of the entire nuclear enterprise, including development of new nuclear delivery systems, and life extension and modernization of all its enduring nuclear warhead types and nuclear weapons production facilities.⁵¹

The key decisions to modernize Russian nuclear arsenal were taken in the late 1990s, during the deliberations on the START II Treaty. The modernization program developed at the time focused on maintaining overall numerical parity with the United States and on preserving the industrial base involved in the development and production of nuclear weapons and delivery systems.⁵²

⁴⁹ Pifer, S. (2016) 'The Future of U.S.-Russian Arms Control,' Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, available at <https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/02/26/future-of-u.s.-russian-arms-control-pub-62899> (21 May, 2021).

⁵⁰ Hewitt, K. (2019) 'Experts discuss the politics of New START and strategic nuclear modernization,' Brookings, available at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/01/17/experts-discuss-the-politics-of-new-start-and-strategic-nuclear-modernization/> (21 May, 2021).

⁵¹ Thompson, L. (2015) 'Obama Backs Biggest Nuclear Arms Buildup Since Cold War,' *Forbes*, available at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lorenthompson/2015/12/15/obama-backs-biggest-nuclear-arms-buildup-since-cold-war/?sh=4ffc15242a0f> (21 May, 2021).

⁵² Podvig, Pavel (2018) 'Russia's Current Nuclear Modernization and Arms Control,' *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, 1:2, pp. 256-267, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/25751654.2018.1526629?needAccess=true> (21 May, 2021).

U.S. withdrawal from the ABM treaty and subsequent failure to reach a new agreement with the United States on missile defenses, as well as the inability of creating a joint Russia-U.S./NATO missile defense system in Europe made nuclear modernization a top defense priority for the Russian leadership.⁵³

Russia and the United States in the NPT Review Process in 2010–2015

The two conferences that took place during the 'Prague Speech Period' in 2010 and 2015 are especially indicative of the overall political situation's corrosive influence on the disarmament process. Combination of a multitude of previously mentioned negative factors resulted in two strikingly opposite review conferences.

2010 Review Conference

At the 2010 Review Conference Russia and the United States were acting almost unanimously. The two countries submitted a joint note verbale, underscoring importance of the New START treaty in making steps towards nuclear disarmament.⁵⁴ Their country statements also shared similar language, with both stressing commitment to a vision of a world without nuclear weapons.^{55, 56} The joint nuclear-weapons states' statement at the same time reaffirmed P5's commitment to the fulfillment of their obligations under Article VI of the NPT and 'responsibility to take concrete and credible steps

⁵³ Trenin, Dmitry (2019) 'Russian views of U.S. nuclear modernization,' Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 75:1, pp. 14-18, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00963402.2019.1555991> (21 May, 2021).

⁵⁴ 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (2010), available at http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2010/pdf/npt_conf2010_wp75.pdf (21 May, 2021).

⁵⁵ Statement by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to the 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (2010), available at http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2010/statements/pdf/usa_en.pdf (21 May, 2021).

⁵⁶ Statement by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey A. Ryabkov at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (2010), available at http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2010/statements/pdf/russia_en.pdf (21 May, 2021).

towards irreversible disarmament'.⁵⁷ Both actively refused to commit to more progressive ideas related to disarmament. They have rejected the action point stipulating that the nuclear weapon states should commit to cease the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and to end the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons, objected to a call for the closure of nuclear weapon test sites, and expressed their unwillingness to set benchmarks or timeframes for implementing their obligation under Article VI.

Several goals informed U.S. behavior at the conference. First, there was a strong desire to repair the damage to America's position in the regime and avoid a repeat of the failed 2005 conference. Both were necessary to help to promote and strengthen international support for Obama's new disarmament agenda. In addition, the U.S. was aiming to strengthen the nonproliferation pillar, in particular, to impose stricter export controls and push to universalize the IAEA Safeguards Additional Protocol (AP), while avoiding any new radical disarmament commitments.⁵⁸ That goal was largely shared by Russia. The Russian delegation supported the U.S. when it came to the disarmament pillar, especially strongly opposing any references made to the elimination of the nonstrategic nuclear weapons.⁵⁹

The conclusion of New START played a huge role. The new treaty was fully compliant with Russian and U.S. obligations under Article VI, and with the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences decisions. Reductions under the treaty were irreversible, verifiable and transparent and it set out a goal of deep cuts in both nations' arsenals. Conclusion of the Treaty created favorable conditions for the Conference and facilitated willingness on part of the NNWS to work towards consensus on further steps towards nuclear

⁵⁷ Statement by the People's Republic of China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America to the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference (2010), available at http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2010/statements/pdf/russia5_en.pdf (21 May, 2021).

⁵⁸ Miller, S. (2010) 'A Deeply Fractured Regime: Assessing the 2010 NPT Review Conference,' *The International Spectator*, vol. 45 no. 3, pp. 19-26, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2010.519549> (21 May, 2021).

⁵⁹ Orlov, Vladimir (2010) 'Opjat' trojka' [Grade Three, Again], available at <http://www.pircenter.org/media/content/files/11/13663840220.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

disarmament.⁶⁰ Many of the states expressed a sense of optimism which they had ascribed to the signing of New START, with some delegations calling it a new window of opportunity for bilateral and multilateral negotiations to strengthen the three pillars of the Treaty.

Ultimately, the disarmament commitments contained within the final document were comparatively unambitious, which in the opinion of some experts, shows that the nuclear-weapon states were not yet ready for strong commitments to back up their pro-disarmament rhetoric.⁶¹ Most analysts conclude that the 64-Point Action Plan didn't advance the disarmament agenda and even took some steps backward compared with the 2000 'thirteen steps'.⁶² Measures prescribed by the action plan were wrapped in 'soft language'⁶³ representing the lowest common denominator of an agreement.

However, while revealing clearly evident differences between the nuclear and non-nuclear state parties on disarmament issues, the 2010 final document brought a valuable political success that strengthened the validity of the NPT. It was a testament to the value of a coordinated and well-prepared P5 position, Russia-U.S. cooperation and ability to make necessary concessions and successfully look for compromise on both sides. At the same time, success at the 2010 Review Conference created even more obligations for NWS, while it was obvious that their disarmament agenda wasn't as ambitious as the action plan itself.

⁶⁰ Sagan, S.; Vaynman, J. (2011) 'Lessons Learned from the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review,' *Nonproliferation Review* Vol. 18 No 1, pp. 237-262, available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700.2011.549183> (21 May, 2021).

⁶¹ Acheson, R. (2010) 'Beyond the 2010 NPT Review Conference: What's next for nuclear disarmament?' *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 66, no. 6, pp. 77-87, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0096340210387040> (21 May, 2021).

⁶² Orlov, Vladimir (2014) 'Est' li budushhee u DNJaO. Zametki v preddverii Obzornoj konferencii 2015 g.' [Is there a future for NPT? Notes on the eve of 2015 Review Conference], *Security Index*, №4 (111), pp. 27-48, available at <http://www.pircenter.org/media/content/files/12/14095839880.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

⁶³ Müller, H. (2014) *The NPT Review Conferences*, in *The Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime at a Crossroads*, Institute for National Security Studies, available at [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/180773/memo137%20\(5\)_May%2020.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/180773/memo137%20(5)_May%2020.pdf) (21 May, 2021).

2015 Review Conference

Following the breakdown in Russia-U.S. relations amid the Ukrainian conflict, the 2015 NPT Review Conference was overshadowed by tough, relentless confrontation between Russia and the United States. The two countries publicly exchanged severe accusations with the U.S. blaming Russia for violating the INF Treaty as well as the Budapest Memorandum while Russia accusing the United States and NATO countries of undermining the NPT by pursuing the 'nuclear sharing' policy. Dissatisfied with the slow progress in disarmament, a growing group of 'disarmament radicals' actively confronted the NWS, demonstrating a growing rift amongst the state-parties.⁶⁴

Despite the differences on many other talking points, the general attitude towards global disarmament was the same in both countries: it would only be possible after significant changes in the global security environment.

Joint P5 statement⁶⁵ reaffirmed that only 'incremental, step-by-step approach taking into account all the factors that could affect global strategic stability' is the only practical option for making progress towards nuclear disarmament.

U.S. statement⁶⁶ and working paper⁶⁷ went into some detail on measures needed to achieve global zero. The statement, for example, emphasized the 'need to change the notion of how we see security' to proceed with disarmament and that progress towards nuclear abolition is also about the steps that we 'take to develop, innovate, to build a more peaceful world'.

⁶⁴ Orlov, Vladimir (2015) 'The Glass Menagerie of Non-Proliferation,' Russia in Global Affairs, available at <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The-Glass-Menagerie-of-Non-Proliferation-17708> (21 May, 2021).

⁶⁵ Statement by the People's Republic Of China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America to the 2015 Treaty On The Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Review Conference (2015), available at http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/revcon2015/statements/30April_UKJoint.pdf (21 May, 2021).

⁶⁶ Remarks at the 2015 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference John Kerry Secretary of State (2015), available at http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2015/statements/pdf/U.S._en.pdf (21 May, 2021).

⁶⁷ Implementing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: Disarmament. Working paper submitted by the United States of America (2015), available at <https://undocs.org/NPT/CONF.2015/WP.44> (21 May, 2021).

The Russian statement⁶⁸ underscored that advancement towards 'nuclear zero' was only possible through the involvement of all nuclear-weapon-capable States without exception. Such a requirement is obviously quite unrealistic in the foreseeable future considering the existence of states outside of the NPT and the fact that Russia and the U.S. still hold, by far, the largest arsenals among the NWS — a fact that other P5 members are quick to point out every time the question of reduction of their own national arsenals comes up.

The 2015 NPT Review Conference ended without the adoption of a final document, largely due to the failure to agree on provisions regarding the WMD-free zone in the Middle East. However, growing tensions between nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon states as well the decline of the disarmament agenda in Moscow and Washington were evident throughout.

Conclusion

Despite the renewed interest in global zero and subsequent commitments by Moscow and Washington to bring forth global nuclear disarmament, cuts to the existing stockpiles were seen as underwhelming by disarmament activists and some NNWS while no other new concrete measures or clear obligations have been undertaken. Deterioration of the bilateral relationship spilled over into the NPT review process, further splitting the NWS and NNWS over the issue of disarmament. It clearly demonstrated that a whole array of significant strategic issues was hidden behind the nuclear disarmament commitments. Ultimately, further reliance on nuclear weapons as fundamental aspects of national security strategies, ongoing nuclear forces modernization, and further rapid deterioration of cooperative relationship ended the notion of possibility to make progress towards global zero through bilateral arms control in any foreseeable future.

⁶⁸ Statement by Mikhail I. Uliyanov Acting Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation at the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (General debate) (2015), available at http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/revcon2015/statements/27April_Russia.pdf (21 May, 2021).

2016–2021. The Trump Administration

Changes in nuclear disarmament rhetoric

Since 2016 when Donald Trump became the president of the United States, the strategic relationship and arms control process between Moscow and the Washington, sullied by the conflicts of interest in Ukraine and Syria, as well as the issue of alleged Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, has been severely damaged. The Trump administration has clearly demonstrated that nuclear disarmament had no part its foreign policy, even in theory. Russia, in the state of severe confrontation with the United States, has also dropped its 'previously bold rhetoric.

Through official statements and papers, U.S. has postulated its new outlook on disarmament and arms control: The current geo-strategic environment is characterized by a return of great power competition. Blame was placed on Russian and Chinese nuclear programs. The Trump administration officials claimed that the U.S. was not going to engage in arms control for arms control's sake – arms control must reinforce national security and be verifiable and enforceable. The U.S. was not going to allow itself to fall behind in capabilities and was willing to 'ruthlessly and effectively' compete to provide incentives for its adversaries to negotiate.

On the Russian side, the abolitionist rhetoric, once prominent in the short period after the 2009 Prague speech, has disappeared from the official discourse. On the contrary, Russian president Vladimir Putin has stated that 'nuclear weapons are a factor for world peace and security⁶⁹ as well as repeatedly outlined strengthening of Russia's nuclear forces as a policy priority'. 'We believe that such initiatives [global disarmament] are at least premature,' said Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Ryabkov. 'The movement towards nuclear disarmament must be balanced and phased'.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia (2016) 'Zasedanie Mezhdunarodnogo diskussionnogo kluba "Valdaj" [Meeting of the Valdai international discussion club],' available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53151> (21 May, 2021).

⁷⁰ RIAC (2018) 'Rossija schitaet prezhdevremennym nachinat' process vseobshchego jadernogo razoruzhenija' [Russia considers it premature to begin the process of global nuclear disarmament], available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/rossiya-schitaet-prezhdevremennym-nachinat-protsess-vseobshchego-yadernogo-razoruzheniya-podrobnee-n/> (21 May, 2021).

Russia also continued to pursue its nuclear forces modernization and announced the development of a new generation of strategic nuclear delivery systems of which only two can potentially be accountable under New START.^{71 72}

'Next-Generation Arms Control'

The 2018 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review exemplified the Trump administration's attitude towards the possibility of nuclear disarmament.⁷³ The document among other points:

- Did not call for any reductions of the U.S. nuclear arsenal;
- Unequivocally rejected the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty;
- Lowered the nuclear use threshold to first use in case of 'significant non-nuclear strategic attacks';
- Proposed to develop two new types of low-yield weapons;
- Promoted the fundamental role and vital necessity for national security of nuclear weapons as a deterrence tool.

The U.S. nuclear posture under Trump was not concerned with questions of disarmament-focused arms control and operated under drastically different assumptions about the U.S. nuclear arsenal than the Obama administration-era document, significantly increasing the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security.

Former Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation Christopher Ford stated that the disarmament policy discourse in the post-Cold War years has turned into a 'moralistic, identity-political policy focus that posits disarmament can be pursued without any reference to security'. Comparing disarmament advocates who call for the preservation of the existing arms control

⁷¹ Kristensen, H.; Korda M. (2019) 'Russian nuclear forces, 2019,' Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 75:2, pp. 73-84, available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00963402.2019.1580891> (21 May, 2021).

⁷² Reif, K. (2018) 'New Russian Weapons Raise Arms Race Fears,' Arms Control Association, available at <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-04/news/new-russian-weapons-raise-arms-race-fears> (21 May, 2021).

⁷³ Baklitsky, Andrey (2018) 'The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review and Russia's Position,' Express Analysis. Trialogue Club International, available at <http://www.pircenter.org/media/content/files/9/15186203240.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

architecture to madmen, Ford indicated that the U.S. intends to promote 'arms control for adults' instead.⁷⁴

The new vision of that 'adult' approach practiced by the Trump administration was further elaborated on in a paper published by the Office of the Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security:⁷⁵

- The primary challenge facing arms control today, according to State Department, is the need to rein in Russian and Chinese nuclear build-ups. It is therefore imperative that both Russia and China engage the United States in trilateral arms control negotiations.
- If Russia and China don't engage in a trilateral arms control framework proposed by the U.S., the Pentagon might re-examine its force posture planning and make needed changes to prevent a strategic mismatch.
- There is a need for competitive strategy against great-power challengers, Russia and China. Arms control agreements therefore must advance U.S. strategic interests.
- The next generation of arms control will have to address the Russian nonstrategic nuclear arsenal and new types of Russian strategic systems
- Meanwhile, the U.S. is working to restructure global disarmament discourse in a more constructive security-informed direction with the CEND initiative.

In essence, the U.S. rejected the idea of bilateral engagement with Russia in favor of a new trilateral arms control framework involving China. But the new arms control framework proposed by the United States failed to gain traction. China has strongly rejected the notion that it might join to discuss its nuclear weapons in a trilateral format. In China's view, the sizes of Russian and U.S. stockpiles were too disproportionate in relation to its own arsenal. Russia supported China by stating that Russia and the U.S. first have to proceed in a

⁷⁴ Ford, C. (2020) 'The Politics of Arms Control: Getting Beyond Post-Cold War Pathologies and Finding Security in a Competitive Environment,' United States Department of State, available at <https://2017-2021.state.gov/the-psychopolitics-of-arms-control/index.html> (21 May, 2021).

⁷⁵ Ford, C. (2020) U.S. Priorities for "Next-Generation Arms Control," United States Department of State, available at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/T-paper-series-1-Arms-Control-Final-1-508.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

bilateral mode since they possess the overwhelming share of nuclear weapons.

Effects of the new policy could be felt in how the Trump administration handled the issue of extending New START and in its decision to abandon the INF Treaty.⁷⁶

Russia had been repeatedly stating on the official level that it is not interested in an arms race and was ready to extend New START immediately, without any preconditions. At the same time, Russia argued, extending the treaty could give time to develop a new, possibly multilateral, strategic arms control system.⁷⁷

However, the U.S. kept postponing the extension. The Trump administration claimed that it needed to evaluate the New START question in the broader context of how to get to the future vision of a trilateral arms control agreement that includes both Russia and China, but also brings in Russia's nonstrategic nuclear weapons.⁷⁸ The document was finally extended only after Joseph Biden took office in 2021.

2018 and 2019 NPT Preparatory Committees

The disarmament agenda at the 2018 and 2019 Preparatory Committees for the 2020 NPT Review Conference was mostly formed under the influence of two factors:

- The pressure on the P5 from the NNWS intensified significantly with the signing of the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2017;
- The confrontation between Russia and the United States was spilling over into the arms control sphere.

⁷⁶ Nuclear threat Initiative (2019) Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty), available at <https://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/treaty-between-the-united-states-of-america-and-the-union-of-soviet-socialist-republics-on-the-elimination-of-their-intermediate-range-and-shorter-range-missiles/> (21 May, 2021).

⁷⁷ TASS (2020) 'Dmitrij Medvedev k 10-letiju SNV-3: neprodlenie dogovora budet imet' ser'eznye posledstvija' [Dmitry Medvedev on the 10th anniversary of New START: Not renewing the treaty will have grave consequences], available at <https://tass.ru/opinions/8184511> (21 May, 2021).

⁷⁸ PBS (2020) 'State Dept. official on Trump's vision for nuclear arms control,' available at <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/state-dept-official-on-trumps-vision-for-nuclear-arms-control> (21 May, 2021).

These two factors constituted the main points of convergence in the two countries' statements. The first one united them in the face of the pressure from the NNWS while the second one demonstrated deep strategic insecurities sabotaging the disarmament process.

In this environment, United States presented its new approach towards the idea of global disarmament in a working paper entitled *Creating Conditions for Nuclear Disarmament (CCND)*.⁷⁹ Washington expanded upon the idea in 2019 submitting another paper⁸⁰ which specified operationalization of the new approach (redubbed CEND – *Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament*). Russia presented a working paper outlining its own views on disarmament in 2019.⁸¹

In both papers, as well as the countries' statements, we can find clear points of convergence on the issue of disarmament. Both Russia and the U.S.^{82, 83} emphasized that:

- Unconditional nuclear abolition is a premature and disorienting affair;
- TPNW threatens the NPT regime and does not move the world closer to disarmament;
- A step-by-step approach that takes into account 'strategic realities' and 'underlying security issues' is therefore needed;
- There is a causal link between the international security environment and advancements in disarmament.

⁷⁹ *Creating the Conditions for Nuclear Disarmament (CCND)* (2020) Working paper submitted by the United States of America, available at <https://undocs.org/NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.30> (21 May, 2021).

⁸⁰ *Operationalizing the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) Initiative* (2020), available at <https://undocs.org/NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.43> (21 May, 2021).

⁸¹ Nuclear disarmament. Working paper submitted by the Russian Federation (2020), available at <https://undocs.org/NPT/CONF.2020/PC.III/WP.6> (21 May, 2021).

⁸² Statement by Director General Vladimir Yermakov Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation at the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (2018), available at http://statements.unmeetings.org/media2/18559211/russia-printer_20180424_105255.pdf (21 May, 2021).

⁸³ Statement by Vadim Smirnov Deputy Director of the Department for Nonproliferation and Arms Control Deputy Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation at the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (2018) <http://statements.unmeetings.org/media2/18559498/russia-e-cluster-1-statement-russia-eng.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

Russian paper listed unrestricted deployment of a global missile defense system, development of non-nuclear high precision strategic offensive weapons, prospects for placement of offensive systems in space, worsening prospects for the CTBT, and NATO's practice of 'nuclear sharing' among the strategic realities hampering the advent of disarmament. The United States, in a similar context, condemned alleged violations of the existing treaty regimes by Russia.

A complete lack of restraint in inflammatory rhetoric and an overall inability of the P5 states to come to a consensus on critical issues is another trend manifested during the PrepComs. Despite meeting in 2018 and 2019 the P5 did not manage to produce a joint statement. According to Andrey Baklitsky, discussions at the P5 meetings 'quickly turn into skirmishes between representatives of China and the U.S. over the newly proposed trilateral arms control negotiations'.⁸⁴

At the PrepComs Russia and the U.S. clashed incessantly over issues that have no relation to the matters at hand at the NPT. Their conflicts on Syria, Ukraine, and Russia's alleged use of chemical weapons derailed the negotiations more than once. The U.S. openly blamed Russia for the breakdown of the INF Treaty while Russia responded by blaming the United States back.

Both the 2018 and 2019 PrepComs revealed a growing divide between the nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon states-parties. On the final day of the 2018 PrepCom, many NNWS delegations expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of any willingness of NWS to engage with the TPNW and the wider humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapon.⁸⁵ The 2019 PrepCom in turn failed to adopt a common set of recommendations for the Tenth NPT Review Conference. The disagreement was over recommendations that called for 'the need for a legally-binding norm to prohibit nuclear weapons' and recognized 'the support of many states for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and its complementarity with the NPT'.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Baklitsky, Andrey (2020) 'Perspektivy formata "jadernoj pjatjorki"' [Prospects for the Nuclear Five Format], PIR Center, available at <https://www.pircenter.org/blog/view/id/394> (21 May, 2021).

⁸⁵ Reaching Critical Will (2018) NPT News in Review, Vol. 15, No. 6, available at (last accessed: August 7, 2019) <https://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/NIR2018/NIR15.6.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

⁸⁶ Sanders-Zakre, Alicia (2019) 'NPT Looks Ahead to 2020 Review Conference Without Consensus Recommendations,' Arms Control Association, available at (last accessed: August 7, 2019) <https://www.armscontrol.org/blog/2019-05-10/reporting-2019-npt-prepcom> (21 May, 2021).

Conclusion

In the 2016-2020 period the positions of both countries' political establishments on moving towards disarmament have effectively snapped back to the Cold War's tensest periods. Nuclear weapons were regarded as inseparable elements of national security, modernization and strengthening — a necessity. Discussion on further nuclear disarmament stumbled into a deadlock. At the same time, bilateral engagement on issues of arms control under the Trump administration consisted mostly of mutual accusations while a few remaining channels of communication on questions of strategic stability and arms control failed to yield tangible results.

Looking ahead and lessons learned

In today's international climate, complete nuclear disarmament might seem to some to be nothing more than a naïve, idealistic delusion, supported and perpetuated by dovish NGOs and activist groups in tandem with vocal but ultimately powerless groupings of non-nuclear-weapon states. Attempts to enforce the vision of complete nuclear disarmament such as the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons are sharply criticized by the five nuclear-weapon states.

The stalling arms control mechanism and virtually all forms of productive dialogue between the two largest nuclear weapon states and drivers of arms control in the past, Russia and the United States have significantly deteriorated. In no small part as a consequence of the Trump administration's controversial nuclear policy⁸⁷, the once robust arms control architecture has been left extremely fragile after a series of significant setbacks and the international nuclear nonproliferation regime is being put under massive strain⁸⁸.

The extension of the New START Treaty and the 2021 Geneva summit between Russia and the United States have opened up a real opportunity for the two countries to achieve restoration and further advancement of the bilateral arms control process which can produce

⁸⁷ <https://www.globalzero.org/blundering-toward-nuclear-chaos-2020/>

⁸⁸ Sarah Bidgood, Trump Accidentally Just Triggered Global Nuclear Proliferation, 2019, Foreign Policy URL:<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/02/21/trump-accidentally-just-triggered-global-nuclear-proliferation/>

a positive dynamic in the movement towards fulfilling the nuclear weapon states' disarmament obligations under the NPT. Facilitating further change will require the two nuclear superpowers to snap out of the deeply adversarial logic which governs their relationship, limiting its influence in the area of nuclear cooperation

Case studies presented in this and the preceding chapter provide us with a number of key takeaways:

Arms control process is dependent on both strategic and political factors

Arms control, while effectively reducing the number of weapons, is still part of the strategy that relies on nuclear weapons as its foundation. Therefore, it is fickle and dependent on strategic deliberations of countries' governments. As long as further reductions are not strategically viable, it stalls and crumbles.

But success in arms control depends on both strategic and political factors that are at the same time intertwined and influence each other. Russian and U.S. strategic thinking and threat perception in the early years of the Cold War prevented them from arriving at agreements to cap the rapidly speeding up arms race. Their strategic perception of nuclear weapons as tools of absolute war was informed, first and foremost, by the political perception of each other as a natural enemy which could not be trusted.

In the case of New START and further nuclear cuts proposed by the Obama administration in 2013, decisions undertaken by Russia and the U.S. had strategic considerations behind them, but ultimately were political in nature: On U.S. part, New START was in an equal measure both a nuclear arms control tool and an attempt to pursue rapprochement with Russia. Any serious arms control negotiation must be preceded by amelioration of the relationship which can be achieved by sustained direct dialogue and implementation of confidence-building measures.

A resilient backchannel dialogue between decision-makers in Moscow and Washington

Arms control negotiations are an arduous and complex affair, especially now, taking into account the development of new types of destabilizing strategic and conventional weapons. A backchannel

system greatly aided in developing consensus during SALT negotiations, when an arms control architecture had to be developed from scratch. It also demonstrated its usefulness during deliberations on the NPT, when the prime negotiators would occasionally discuss points of contention outside of the official meetings. Another example would be the 'walk in the woods' during the Reagan-Gorbachev negotiations on INF between Paul Nitze and Yuri Kvitinsky. If those practices were established into a constant support line akin to the Kissinger-Dobrynin channel, it would significantly facilitate arms control negotiations in the future.

Nuclear weapons perception as a guarantee of security has to change

Any progress toward nuclear disarmament would require the five NWS to revise their security policies. When it comes to Russia and the United States, the adversarial relationship creates more demand for nuclear weapons, feeding on the existing external insecurities of the two countries which inhibit the disarmament process. In the past, global shift in Soviet strategic thinking allowed for radical advancements on nuclear abolition; The Soviet Union saw nuclear weapons as a detriment to global security, not its guarantor, which significantly moved the disarmament process forward.

Moral norms and public pressure may influence leadership's personal agenda.

Leadership's personal attitude towards the bomb plays a huge role in advancing disarmament. It is important to try to cultivate moral norms that would make it more likely for the leadership to remain under pressure from the public or change their personal views on the matter. Both Gorbachev and Reagan held abolitionist beliefs which significantly helped to achieve swift progress on the disarmament negotiations. Today, the notion of nuclear weapons as an inevitable reality became so normalized that both Russia and the United States see it fit to allude to possible deployment of their arsenals, and in the case of the U.S., lower the usage threshold in nuclear doctrine. Those attitudes remove political will from the disarmament equation and threaten the progress achieved so far.

Political will means flexibility in negotiation

Political will, born from the combination of changes in strategic thinking and primacy of abolitionist attitudes, is a great aide in solving any differences that can occur between the states during disarmament talks. Vested interest in disarmament creates flexibility which is a necessary component of successful negotiations on questions of strategic importance.

Negotiations on the INF treaty and the NPT itself, for example, were all beset by numerous disagreements between the parties that required reaching a compromise on a variety of contentious issues. However, the political resolve on part of the governments has allowed the negotiators to have a lot more room for compromise.

Personal relationships between the negotiators matter

Negotiations, while based on tangible strategic and tactical planning, are still conducted by people. As the examples of negotiations on the New START treaty and drafting of the NPT have demonstrated, close personal relationships between the negotiators inspire creativity and beget initiative leading to a swift and effective compromise even when the overall relationship between the two countries is not exceptionally positive. Russian head negotiator of New START Anatoly Antonov recalls:

You'll see that when we finished our negotiations with the United States, we agreed with Rose Gottemoeller that we had a lot of issues to be discussed between the United States and Russia. I remember that last day when we were sitting together, and (...) we were almost crying because we spent the whole year together. And then you'll see that even without instruction from Moscow, I proposed to continue our strategic dialogue regardless mandate we fulfilled.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Antonov, A. (2019) 2019 Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference. The Future of U.S.-Russia Arms Control, available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/ceipfiles/pdf/NPC19-FutureUSRussiaArmsControl.pdf> (21 May, 2021).

Russia-U.S. cooperation during the NPT Review Conferences is an important element of success

On most of the issues related to Article VI, Russia and the United States have always had very similar positions. They usually found themselves on one side of the argument against the more disarmament-minded non-nuclear-weapon states. Taking into account the centrality of their roles in the treaty and influence over their allies, Russia and the U.S. represent a powerful negotiating force. Ultimately, the conferences that saw a high level of preparation and an undeviating pursuit of a joint position between Russia and the United States — whether in bilateral format, or as part of the P5 — saw the highest degree of successful resolutions of contentious issues during negotiations.

Cooperation between the nuclear weapons states and the NPT groupings is necessary

With the emergence of a wide variety of groups of states in place of traditional regional groupings of the Cold War the ability to meaningfully engage with them is becoming one of the most important factors of success for a Review Conference. Middleman groupings and groupings that largely align with the NWS help to build consensus with the more radically minded states parties. Ultimately, while the review conferences operate on the rule of consensus, smaller states don't go against their groups and are not likely to create issues in forging a unilateral agreement.

Diplomatic engagement outside of the NPT is extremely beneficial

The example of the 1995 Review Conference has shown that another important part of building the consensus are diplomatic campaigns outside of the conference negotiations. With a concrete, clear goal for the conference and a well-developed set of convincing arguments Russia and the U.S. can start building a consensus long before the start of the conference through direct bilateral diplomatic engagements, as well as multilateral forums dedicated to agenda items on which the agreement is being sought.

Rhetoric on NPT Article VI has to be backed up by concrete actions

The fact remains that one of the most efficient ways to ensure a successful review conference is having an ongoing bilateral, or other, process that would demonstrate that Russia and the U.S. are not coming to the conference to try to talk their way out of fulfilling Article VI obligations to disarm. A tangible result on disarmament, no matter how small, is a perfect foundation for a position that has the potential to lead to a consensus.

High-level engagement creates an environment that is more conducive to results

Examples of Obama and Clinton's administration's handling of the Article VI issues' rhetoric, as it relates to the success of the NPT Review Conferences of 1995 and 2010, have shown that involvement of the highest levels of the government facilitates an environment more conducive to reaching an agreement. A political campaign which promotes ideas of disarmament in general and progress on specific issues such as CTBT or the threat of nuclear terrorism clearly signals the importance of the NPT itself and the importance of a review conference's success.

In conclusion, the lessons of nuclear diplomacy outlined in the study clearly demonstrate that despite the current stalemate in the arms control process, Russia and the United States have the power to turn the situation around. Most of the conditions and tools that facilitated a positive dynamic on questions of strategic cooperation and disarmament in the past are still in place or can be brought back provided there is a political intent. By drawing lessons from history, the two nuclear superpowers have the potential to be, as they have several times in the past, at the forefront of the movement towards global zero.