

## WHERE DO WE STAND IN THE FIELD OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT: WHAT IS NEXT AFTER THE NEW STRATEGIC ARMS REDUCTION TREATY (START)

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**ABSTRACT** The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) agreement, without any doubt, has started a new debate on whether the international community has finally entered a renaissance in the field of disarmament after a long period of stalemate. In this regard, the New START agreement, together with the New York Nuclear Safety Summit of 2010 and the NPT Review Conference of 2010, seems to be creating a rather positive atmosphere. Yet, if one examines the discussions that took place at the US and the Russian parliament's before and after the ratification of the New START, he/she will come to the conclusion that the progress on nuclear disarmament, at the levels of both strategic and non-strategic weapons, will not be an easy one. The situation will remain unchanged unless certain contentious military issues between Washington and Moscow are somehow resolved. In this regard, the next round of the New START agreement will be crucial. This situation will not only affect the future of the US and the Russian militaries' relationships to one another, but it will also change the balance of relations among the nuclear "haves" and "have-nots" of the NPT Treaty. It is, therefore, expected that the NPT's two tracks, namely disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, will be affected either in a positive or negative way in the future, depending on the evolution of the post-New START era. Within this perspective, the possibility that US and Russia will implement new disarmament agreements has gained utmost importance in the aftermath of the New START for the future implications of the US President Barack Obama's "Global Zero Policy".

The future of the nuclear disarmament negotiations on both strategic and non-strategic weapons already seems to be deadlocked due to the conditional pledges that were made at the presidential level in the US and Russia during the ratification processes. For instance, the US Congress

gave allowance for the ratification of the START upon two conditions: first, the missile defense issue was to be exempt from the context of the agreement; and, second, the US Administration was to start the next round of tactical nuclear reduction negotiations with the Russians



no longer than one year after the ratification of the New START agreement. Likewise, the Russians conditioned further cuts in their nuclear arsenal - either strategic or non-strategic - upon the principle that the respective countries would take their overall military balances into account. Both Washington and Moscow currently maintain different viewpoints on how to realize the further cuts in their nuclear weapons arsenals. It is an imminent necessity that the two sides start finding ways of resolving the basic contentious points between them, which are known to be the main barriers before the realization of any future nuclear disarmament agreement.

As asserted by the non-nuclear states of the NPT Treaty, Americans and the Russians would be considered as trustful partners in the NPT if and only if they have managed to solve their military problems on nuclear disarmament with both among the other nuclear states of the nuclear club and the non-nuclear states. It is assumed that the five nuclear states will not face problems in assuring the nuclear have-nots of the NPT Treaty, if their desired conditions are fulfilled in the merits of the new strengthened non-proliferation measures. According to the Western nuclear states, if the newly implemented nuclear non-proliferation measures are accepted by the non-nuclear states of the NPT Treaty, then this would be beneficial in terms of preventing the

outbreak of new nuclear states in different parts of the world. Hence, this would boost the realization of nuclear disarmament around globe.

Today, the issues of ballistic missile defense, tactical weapons and conventional weapons instability stand as some of the most important and problematic issues for Americans and Russians to tackle. The type of approach that will adopt by the two sides in order to solve the long-time problems will have important systematic impacts on the global strategic military balances of the five nuclear states. This may also affect the fragile balances in certain regions where agents or states are not able to exempt themselves from the certain conditions. In this policy brief I therefore intend to examine certain contentious points of military issues that might be expected to arise between the Moscow and the Washington administrations in the aftermath of the New

START agreement. Relevant assessments might be beneficial in terms of analyzing the potential outcomes of the next round of the New START agreement. Under the current circumstances, the future of the strategic and non-strategic military balance between the US and Russia will not be exempt from the future military procurement preferences of the two sides. In this regards, eminent military experts and strategists continue to warn both Washington and Moscow that they should

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### **How Can the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Fissile Missile Cut Treaty (FMCT) Affect the Post-New START Environment?**

According to the non-nuclear states of the NPT, there is a direct correlation between the fields of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. For a long time, the nuclear states of the NPT did not meet their responsibilities in the field of disarmament despite the pledges they gave back in the 1970s, in accordance with the basic tenants of the NPT. In this regards, today the five nuclear states' leading role is very crucial for the future progresses of both the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Fissile Missile Cut of Treaty (FMCT).

Within this framework, the current impasse on the FMCT at Conference on Disarmament (CD) can only be by-passed via some of the leading nuclear states' alternative initiatives, such as organizing a diplomatic conference outside of the CD format, etc. However, such an opportunity appears to have been missed during the NPT Review Conference in 2010. Countries such as Pakistan and China, and to a certain extent Iran, have put forward their specific reasons for rejecting the FMCT under the umbrella of the CD related to their obvious security concerns. The international community, of course, has the right to question the reasons behind these states' objections. However, in order to accelerate the global impact of

the FMCT, some kind of "dialogue" needs to be started so that the factors that lay behind these states' concerns can be determined. This way, the international community might assure them in dealing with the issue in other ways, even if the community would not be able to persuade the relevant states on stopping the convention of FMCT under the CD. In this regard, much responsibility lies with the Western nuclear states, which is especially the case for the US. Herein, it would be useful to briefly go over the main reasons that lay behind China and Pakistan's rejection of the convention of the FMCT under the CD framework.

In the case of Pakistan, the government in Islamabad has already explained its reasons for hindering the FMCT's convening under CD conference, namely the 2005 US-India nuclear technology exchange agreement. The nuclear suppliers group's special treatment of the New Delhi government via the US-India deal has received the utmost attention of the non-nuclear states of the NPT. The Indian government has been criticized on the grounds that it signed this privileged nuclear technology exchange agreement with the USA, even though the country was not part of the NPT. In this regard, India has been accused of creating a "double standard" in a world in which the relationship between the states that are outside of the NPT and the ones that are part of it is already controversial. In the aftermath of the US-Indian nuclear technology exchange deal, Pakistan is concerned of a situation in which Islamabad might find itself lagging behind New Delhi in the nuclear realm due to the favorable nuclear technology transfers to India. According to the Pakistani officials, this situation, if not handled carefully, might trigger to a new arms race in the



future, in which the two sides might find themselves engaged in.

China also rejected the convention of FMCT under the CD framework due to the Chinese officials' belief that the international community was not taking the current and evolving military balance between the USA, Russia and herself into account. The government in Peking believes that the future make-up of the US-Soviet missile defense system would be crucial in the determination of this balance. Furthermore, it is concerned about the development of a potential American national missile defense system in the future. The country officials know that this would have an utmost effect on the credibility of Chinese nuclear retaliatory capability. For this reason, Chinese government believes that the current and future US Administrations should demonstrate a great care while dealing with the nuclear defense-offense military balances, which is already the fragile issue of the century. If the worst scenario becomes a reality in the future and the US mishandles the defense-offense equation in favor of implying its unrestrained missile defense plans against Russia and China, then the world community will be revisiting a new nuclear arms race between not only solely the USA and the Soviet Union but with the inclusion of a new actor, China. If such a nuclear arms race scenario cannot be avoided due to the mishandling of the

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missile defense issue among the three of the five nuclear states, then there is high probability that the credibility of "the nuclear fives" in the field of nuclear disarmament would be lost, despite President Obama's 2009 pledge for creating the conditions for the nuclear free world. This outcome would then negatively affect the fragile balance between the two tracks of the NPT Treaty, i.e. nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The US Administration, in the face of Pakistan's, China's and some other countries' objections of convening the FMCT conference under the umbrella of the CD, should take the lead and organize a new conference that would limit the countries' fissile materials that are present

in the CD framework. Since there are objections to the FMCT Conference under the auspices of the CD, the idea of convening an alternative conference that could be limiting the fissile material out of the CD framework, definitely gains importance and immanency.

Similar to the FMCT, the current deadlock in the CTBT is also gaining the utmost

priority. However, the CTBT issue between the haves and have-nots of the NPT Treaty remains to be stuck in the status quo, unless progress is achieved on other related military matters between the USA and Russia Federation, including the tactical weapons reduction talks, the FMCT Treaty, the missile defense issue,



and the current conventional weapons imbalance.

In today's conditions, issues of safeguarding, maintaining the conditions of the nuclear safety, as well as preventing the spread of new proliferate states all around the world gains utmost importance for the five nuclear states of the NPT Treaty. Therefore, the ratification of the CTBT Treaty is now becoming an urgent requirement in order to build the necessary "trust" between the haves and have-nots of the Treaty. Although the Obama Administration has continued to support the realization of the Treaty's ratification by the US Senate since the beginning of its term, the Republicans have continuously blocked the CTBT's ratification. The Republicans have been against the ratification of the Treaty since 1999, arguing that it lacks enforcement capabilities and that it is not capable enough to detect nuclear explosions in advance. The Obama administration finds the Republicans' opposition as groundless, pointing out the fact that the US no longer needs to repeat its nuclear tests in order to maintain its nuclear deterrent credibility, according to the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) Life Extension Program. As asserted by many American nuclear scientists, today the ratification of the CTBT is not only for the benefit of the international community but also for the benefit of Americans since the refurbishments of the American nuclear warheads have already been realized by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).

It is widely accepted that the ratification of the CTBT would be the facilitating factor to enhance the continuing efforts of the international community for attaining the conditions for the widespread nuclear disarmament in the world. With the help of this Treaty, the international

community could better position itself to limit the already developed or nascent nuclear powers, such as Iran and Pakistan, which aim to further strengthen their nuclear capabilities. Even if the ratification of the CTBT agreement could not immediately stop the nuclear proliferating states' current incentives to test their nuclear capabilities, it would at least slow them down. In this regard, the CTBT can be seen as a necessary break. Therefore, the US, as the signatory country in the CTBT (though it has not ratified the treaty as of the present), should initiate a worldwide campaign in order to promote the ratification of the CTBT all around the globe, including herself. The US, until she ratifies the CTBT, could at least display herself as the precedent country that is not practicing nuclear tests for the last two decades due to her unilateral nuclear moratorium, and hence serve as a model for the international community to follow until the members of the community ratify the Treaty.

### **The Challenge of the Missile Defense Issue before the Nuclear Disarmament Idea**

It would be useful to examine the missile defense issue, which stands as one of the potential barriers ahead of the nuclear disarmament initiatives between the nuclear powers of today, such as the US and the Russian Federation. This debatable missile defense issue between Moscow and Washington seemed to be purposely avoided in the aftermath of the Lisbon NATO Summit. Yet, in reality, this issue is destined to become very problematic if the two sides cannot reach an agreement before the last phase of the NATO-US Missile Defense Deployment Plans, which are scheduled to be deployed



after 2020. Depending on the final US decision for the 2020 deployments, the current military balance between the US and Russia, which is based on a defense-offense equation, has the prospects of either triggering a new arms race or of boosting the ongoing efforts in the fields of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It is for this reason that prominent security analysts continue

advising the Americans and the Russians with regards to the issue of strategic nuclear defense-offense relationship, and advise them that they should try benefitting from the lessons learned from the Cold War years. In this regard, both sides are encouraged to benefit from the window of opportunity created at the NATO's Lisbon Summit, where the Allies have decided to

initiate the NATO-Russian Federation cooperation on the issue of missile defense. It is hoped that both Washington and Moscow would utmost benefit from this new cooperation process, and, at some point, they would be able to create a common awareness on this highly debatable and problematic issue on missile defense. In order to initiate such cooperation, governments in Moscow and Washington are recommended to benefit from the various Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) that are already available in their hands. With the initiation of the CBMs, Russians, after a certain level of cooperation, will hopefully come to the conclusion that the US sponsored idea of Western originated missile defense

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systems were not initiated against the Russian's strategic deterrent capabilities. However, according to the complaints from the Russian side, the enduring problems about the US-NATO missile defense system has continued up until now as the Westerners could not give clear answers regarding Moscow's insisting demands to learn what the system would be comprised of. Although it

has been stated at the NATO's Lisbon Summit that the Alliance would cooperate with the Russians on the missile defense system, Russian President Medvedev made it public that they would not be able to guarantee the future pace of these negotiations before ensuring Moscow's equal stance on the project. Consequently, the Russian offer, which proposed a joint missile defense

system for Europe, has been rejected on the grounds that no one else other than NATO could be responsible for the security of the Alliance. In fact, the missile defense issue was already mentioned in NATO's Strategic Concept of 2010 as one of the key elements for the collective defense of the Alliance. It is therefore not difficult at this point to perceive the valid reasons behind NATO's objections to the Russian offer of having a joint missile defense for the Alliance's European security. Currently, Russians, for their part, want to know how the US preference would be developed concerning the 4th stage of missile defense system's deployments around the vicinity of the Russian territories in Europe and beyond, which



are the future planned deployments of the SM-3 II B's. According to the current Russian view, if this kind of future missile defense deployments cannot be restrained, it would result in affecting Moscow's strategic nuclear deterrent in a negative way. Therefore, the international community desires to see the US and Russia cooperating on this highly debatable issue before it is too late to do so. In this regard, the governments in Washington and Moscow have already taken some incremental steps, believing that these initiatives would help accelerate the "trust" that is urgently needed between the two sides for giving a boost to the current nuclear disarmament and arms control processes. For instance, there have been initiatives between the two sides, such as early warning data exchange in missile defense and cooperation in threat assessment of ballistic missiles, which have already been put into action. These steps, in order to defend against common regional threats, could certainly be extended into other areas, including research and development, missile defense testing, modeling and simulations, missile defense exercises and analyses of alternative U.S.-Russian missile defense architectures. In addition to these incremental steps that have been launched to improve the relations between the two sides on the missile defense issue, the US, being the initiator of the missile defense project, has the right to know certain answers for basic questions that are related to the matter before deciding on how this project would be developed at the final stage. The following are the questions to which the current and the future American governments need to know their answers before they can make their decision regarding the fourth plan of missile defense deployments: first and foremost, the US should learn whether the ground

based missiles of SM-3 II B's, which is the missile defense system that is projected to be deployed in the immediate vicinity of the Russian Federation, would be capable of stopping the incoming potential ballistic missile threats; and secondly, the US needs to decide whether it is worth it and in the interest of Washington to deploy unrestraint missile defense systems in the face of likely losses that could be incurred in the offense-defense equation due to the Russians' possible retaliatory responses in the field of deployment of strategic offensive missiles. It is true that the present and future US governments need to know the right answers to the above mentioned questions before they can make their final decision on the issue of missile defense. As a result, it would be useful to give some clues about the probable events that could occur in the aftermath of the possible unrestraint US missile defense deployments. These are the following:

- (i) First, if the US decides to station unrestraint missile defense systems in the future, then the international community will encounter a new nuclear arms race due to the newly arising imbalance in the defense-offense missile equation between the US and the Russian Federation. Consequently, it would be illogical to expect from the Russians to cut down their own both strategic and the sub-strategic nuclear arsenal in the next round of the New START agreement. If this undesired arms race turns out to be a reality in the future, then it will stand as one of the main obstacles for the President Obama's "zero nuclear policy" implication.
- (ii) Secondly, if the US and the Russian Federation cannot avoid overcoming problems that are related to the missile defense issue, then there is a high probability that a new arms race – both in



offensive and defensive tracks – will break out in the future. This would, of course, negatively affect the image of five nuclear states' efforts in creating a positive picture in the field of nuclear disarmament against the acquisitions that are coming from the non-nuclear states. When such a nuclear arms race becomes reality, then the efforts of nuclear states, in assuring the non-nuclear states to accept the additional measures in the field of nuclear non-proliferation, will also become a highly remote occurrence. Moreover, it is expected that such an outcome would also negatively affect the future of the WMD free zone convention of the Middle East Conference and its aftermath, which is stipulated in the conclusion of the NPT Review Conference of 2012. Due to the mentioned reasons; the US Administration should give serious thought about finding different ways of treatment for the issue, although the missile defense issue is exempted from the context of the New START agreement despite the continuing Congressional opposition. In this regard, Cold War experiences (e.g. 1974 ABM Treaty's limitations) could be useful in terms of finding different numerical ratio formulations for the offense and defense capabilities of Moscow and Washington. With the help of this newly found numerical equation, the two sides may be able to prevent a new arms race from becoming a reality in the future. Currently, US nuclear capabilities are not yet considered to be hindering the Russian strategic nuclear deterrent capabilities.

**All in all, in the aftermath of New START Treaty, despite the US calls for realizing the further cuts in tactical nuclear weapons with Russia, there seems no chance of realizing this without somehow solving the current and future problematic issues that are already mentioned between the two sides, which are the issues of missile defense and the current imbalance in conventional weapons.**

The US and the Russian Federation, in the aftermath of the New START agreement, are expected to take new serious initiatives in order to realize the further cuts in their sub-strategic forces, in accordance with the international community's disarmament expectations. Up until now, the pleas of the US government in order to start negotiations on tactical nuclear weapons have been rejected due to Moscow's concerns on how Washington's current and future military procurements may develop on the grounds that these developments may harm the Russian strategic stability in compared to its near and beyond neighbor's military capabilities. In this regard, the future American military procurements, including the future of the US missile defense issue, the possible US deployments in outer space and the growing disparity in conventional arms between Russia and NATO, are thought to be main problems standing ahead of Moscow's security interests. All in all, in the aftermath of New START Treaty, despite the US calls for realizing the further cuts in tactical nuclear weapons with Russia, there seems no chance of realizing this without somehow solving the current and future problematic issues that are already mentioned between the two sides, which are the issues of missile defense and the current imbalance in conventional weapons.





Contrary to common knowledge, the US and Russia are not the only actors of the tactical weapons story. The US allies within NATO also take their parts in this complex picture. In this regard, the Americans stand in the determination of the new “extended deterrence” towards the Washington’s allies in NATO, which was already forwarded to them during the Cold War days, and in which the tactical weapons visibility would be re-positioned or compensated if there was any will to do so gets important. Before the New START agreement, the government in Moscow has already conditioned the future reductions in tactical nuclear weapons on Russian territory upon the withdrawal of the US tactical weapons from the NATO countries’ territories in Europe. Herein, certain NATO countries’ preferences get into the picture, which further complicates the future reductions of tactical weapons between US/NATO and Russia. Even though the mentioned weapons are said to be obsolete in their current forms, according to the military sense, different proponents have valid reasons for using them either as a political bargaining chip or for assuring the US means of security guarantee, both militarily, politically and psychologically. In this regard, the tactical nuclear weapons of NATO were kept in their stations in the aftermath of the acceptance of the NATO’s Strategic Concept of 2010, despite the certain Allies’ demands for their withdrawal.

### Concluding Remarks

It has been two years since the launch of President Obama’s nuclear disarmament initiatives. The balance sheet of nuclear disarmament between the US and the Russian Federation is still not a promising one, even after the New START agreement has been signed between the two. The

international community still has to live with residual nuclear weapons, which number as many as 19,000 worldwide and which are mostly held by the two signatories of START. It is known that this amount is much more than required for the deterrence of a possible nuclear attack. President Obama’s recent initiatives in this area include his intention to reduce the number and the role of the nuclear weapons in the US nuclear strategy; his idea of securing the nuclear material within four years (for which he was given a boost during the Nuclear Summit of 2010 in New York); his expressed determination for the revitalization of the NPT Treaty again during the 2010 NPT Review Conference; and certainly the influential role he has displayed before and during the signing of the New START agreement are important. However, all this can only be evaluated as “preliminary steps” in the field of nuclear disarmament. And while these US initiatives can be perceived as breakthrough after a long stalemate in the field of nuclear disarmament, they still continue to fall short of meeting the main prerequisites of President Obama’s very ambitious “zero nuclear policy.”

Under the current conditions, the international community seems to be expecting little action either from Washington or from Moscow to initiate substantial cuts in their nuclear inventories in the aftermath of the New START agreement before solving their mutually controversial military issues. In this regard, there are serious publications available that provide roadmaps for the US and the Russian Federation on how far they could numerically exceed below the already set limit of 1,550 nuclear warheads, which is set according to the New START agreement. This is certainly with the condition of maintaining their



nuclear deterrent capabilities that are composed of a mixture of strategic-sub-strategic weapons and deployed-non-deployed warheads. Surely, the existence of the problematic military issues between the two sides makes the future of nuclear disarmament talks more complex than ever. If the contentious military issues between the two states of the five nuclear states remain unsolved, then there is a high probability that the future track of nuclear disarmament and the pace of non-proliferation will be affected in a negative way, at both the global and the regional levels.

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