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The goal of this research is to examine one of the possible options to continue disarmament process involving all member states of the Big Five. This study represents a vision of potential actions by Russia to engage third countries in the nuclear disarmament process at its subsequent stages, analyses the current state in nuclear sphere. The author develops the key idea, which could serve as a basis for multilateral negotiations. The author takes into account viewpoints of the leading experts in the nuclear field, expressed in the interviews.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

A.G. SAVELYEV	
Multilateral Approach to Nuclear Disarmament	4
V.Z. DVORKIN	
Strategic Stability and Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations (Interview)	13
N.N. DETINOV	
Prospects of Nuclear Arms Control (Interview)	18
V.I. YESIN	
The Role of Nuclear Weapons and Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations (Interview).....	22
A.V. ZAGORSKY	
Radical Reduction of Nuclear Arms Will Strengthen Russia's Security	26

MULTILATERAL APPROACH TO NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL CRISIS

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Today many Russian and foreign experts recognize the existence of a serious crisis in the area of arms control. The need to have other nuclear powers engaged in that process was stated by President of Russia V. Putin in February 2012. He emphasized at the meeting in Sarov that “further steps in nuclear disarmament should be comprehensive in nature, and all nuclear powers should participate in the process.”¹ Later this idea was reiterated in a number of other statements. It should be noted that no real steps have been proposed yet toward implementation of this idea. The main attention of the expert community has been focused as before on further lowering the level of nuclear standoff between Russia and the U.S. The purpose of this work is to examine one of the possible options to continue disarmament process involving all member states of the Big Five. This study represents a vision of potential actions by Russia to engage third countries in the nuclear disarmament process at its subsequent stages.

Many experts believe that the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty may become the last agreement based on the traditional pattern that Russia/USSR and the U.S. have been working out for decades both during and after the end of the Cold War. Having gained momentum in late 1980s – early 1990s the nuclear disarmament process began to “bog down” at the end of the 20th century and by the end of the first decade of the 21st century it probably came to an impasse. This among other things is evidenced by certain “craftiness” of that Treaty whereby all payload of each heavy bomber including long-range nuclear air-launched cruise missiles is counted as one warhead. Only thus Russia and the U.S. managed to demonstrate that they continue the nuclear disarmament process and move on the track to irreversible reduction of stockpiled warheads. Nevertheless, several indicators can lead to a conclusion that Russia and the U.S. have actually reached that quantitative limit of their strategic nuclear arsenals, which they consider as a minimum required for reliable security.

This work is not intended to analyze the current state and development plans for Russia’s and U.S.’ strategic offensive forces (SOF) since such an analysis is present in a number of studies made by Russian and Western researchers. In this study we are interested in the reasons why the parties found themselves in a current almost

¹ Vladimir Putin held in Sarov a “Round table” on National Security Issues. URL: <http://www.1tv.ru/news/polit/199931> + (<http://archive.premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/18248>)

no-way-out situation (in terms of prospects for new agreements). To answer this question particular attention should be paid to the basic principles of strategic relations between the two countries, which lay in the foundation of practically all arrangements in the area of arms control.

It is no secret to anyone that these principles are not consistent with the current character of international relations and more specifically – strategic relations between Russia and the U.S. Already in April 2008 in Sochi the parties adopted the U.S.—Russia Strategic Framework Declaration that declared the fundamental principles of friendship, cooperation, openness and predictability. The Declaration contained the most important statement that Russia and the U.S. “reject the zero-sum thinking of the Cold War” and that the two countries “must move beyond past strategic principles, which focused on the prospect of mutual annihilation, and focus on the very real dangers that confront both our nations.”² The document did not amplify what the parties meant by “past strategic principles”. However, the principle of strategic stability, which exactly is “focused on the prospect of mutual annihilation” – does fall under this definition. It is exactly because the parties followed this principle they found themselves at an impasse in the area of nuclear arms control where they stay now.

The inertia of strategic thinking of the Cold War times keeps the parties on the track of purely military and technical approach to security. The problem narrows down to exclusively one’s own capability to destroy any enemy by a counter-strike under most adverse circumstances. They are understood as a surprise massive strike by the opposing side against strategic offensive arms and their command and control systems. The results of such a strike as well as one’s own response capabilities by the surviving forces are calculated by computer simulation. The results of this calculation underlie the approach of the parties to modernization programs of their offensive and defensive forces and the arms control negotiations.

Naturally, as in any other rule there are exceptions in this case as well. For example, the desire to maintain the quantitative equality with negotiating partner (which can be regarded as a purely political factor) as well as economic considerations may sometimes “outweigh” the arguments in favor of strengthening strategic stability. But the overall military-technical approach to security prevails in most cases when decisions are made by the political leadership of the country. The fact that the pursuit of “strategic stability” concept should have sooner or later lead Russia and the U.S. to an impasse on their way to nuclear disarmament never raised any serious doubts. If the sides stubbornly make their security dependent on the capability of mutual annihilation (to inflict an “unacceptable” or “predetermined” damage) this can mean nothing but the need to maintain a “minimum” required arsenal

² U.S.—Russia Strategic Framework Declaration (April 6, 2008) URL: <http://www.archive.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2008/04/163171.shtml>

of nuclear assets to execute their mission. However, this “required minimum” can mushroom to gigantic dimensions, since relevant estimates give priority to a strategic weapon system that “survived” the “first strike”. Today many experts argue that the New START Treaty has already reached this “required minimum”.

Without going into details let us note that the partisans of “strategic stability” concept suspect that quite a significant part of the SOF of the sides is targeted against each other. This fact is quite important for our further analysis.

It is not only the matter of the SOF number and quality. In order to have total certainty that the “unacceptable damage” was inflicted the “strategic stability” requires also to take into account the strategic defensive forces. Indeed, the ballistic missile defense (BMD) can intercept some part of offensive arms. Therefore, the more efficient is the first strike the fewer assets can be engaged in response. As it follows from this concept, with sufficiently strong defense the weakened retaliation can be fully neutralized by BMD systems.

However, it is not the end of the story. Trying to figure out the “worst case scenario” the adherents to “strategic stability” concept demand that not only the strategic offensive and defensive arms, but also the “high precision weapons” (probably, non-nuclear long range cruise missiles) “strategic-range, non-nuclear offensive weapons”, “space weapons” and many other elements should also be taken into account in the balance of forces. It is believed that all these systems (real or fictional) may be engaged either for delivering a “disarming” strike against Russia or for intercepting the Russian counter-strike weakened by a surprise attack.

Thus, as the U.S. and Russia reduce their SOF the strategic stability situation increasingly exacerbates. This concept without explaining the motives that may “prompt” one of the sides to launch a massive strike on its opponent dictates the need not only to stop the process of nuclear disarmament but potentially extend the arms race to other areas. Moreover, the military-technical approach to security fuels greater suspicion with regard to military activities of the opposing side that considers them primarily from the viewpoint of increasing potential for “unpunished” first strike. All this cannot but affect the overall climate of the two nuclear superpowers’ political relations and, as a consequence, the entire world. As a product of the Cold War the “strategic stability” concept is an attempt to bring the world back to its “comfortable” state of confrontation. Therefore, this concept has practically “exhausted” its positive resource and transformed from an incentive for further reduction of nuclear weapons into a serious impediment to further progress in this area. It seems that these circumstances raise an increasingly acute problem of how to abandon such an approach in the strategic relations between Russia and the U.S and replace the concept of “strategic stability” by a more adequate basis to continue Russian-American dialogue.

COMMON BASIS FOR MULTILATERAL NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS

Referring to potential participation of the third nuclear powers in nuclear arms control negotiations already at subsequent stages it is necessary to propose a common basis for these negotiations that would meet the interests of each of the participants. Based on the experience of the U.S.—USSR/Russia negotiations such a basis at different stages was provided by the predictability of the development of the two sides' strategic potentials, achieving equality in these potentials, strengthening of strategic stability, and reduction of accumulated nuclear arsenals. Generally, practically always it was the matter of strengthening security by imposing various quantitative and qualitative limitations on both offensive and defensive strategic potentials of the two countries.

It is obvious that with a multilateral approach to nuclear arms control negotiations not all of the abovementioned principles can be regarded as such a basis. Thus, reaching equality between the strategic arsenals of all five participants in that process at its initial stages is in our view absolutely unacceptable, at least for the two most important "players" – Russia and the U.S. Accordingly, any SOF reductions by the third countries would be unacceptable for them in a situation of the overwhelming numerical superiority in these weapons of the two leading states in this area. The existing incomparability between the nuclear arsenals of Britain, France and China with the arsenals of the U.S. and Russia is exactly one of the main reasons of their refusal to join in the nuclear disarmament process. This argument should "work" at least until an approximate parity is reached on that parameter among all members of the "Big Nuclear Five", – i.e. until the U.S. and Russia reduce their stockpiled nuclear weapons to the level of these countries.

As to the issues associated with the task of strengthening strategic stability, it seems that this principle is inapplicable to multilateral negotiations not only from the political but the military-technical viewpoint as well. Politically it can hardly be expected that Britain, France and especially China will accept the rules of the "game" set out by the U.S. and Russia (USSR) over the decades of negotiation. In this "game" the sides alternately act as potential aggressor (launch the first strike) and as a victim (retaliate). Based on respective estimates, as it has been already noted, the conclusion is made on the state of "strategic stability" in their relations. Russia and the U.S. appear to "get accustomed" to such rules of the "game". But it is hard to imagine that the third nuclear powers would even notionally agree to act as potential aggressor or victim of such virtual aggression. In any case the Chinese representatives keep on repeating that they absolutely rule out any possibility of a massive nuclear strike on China by any country.

Another no less important issue that requires unambiguous interpretation in estimating the results of potential “nuclear strikes” is the answer to: who is against whom? It seems that it is practically impossible to agree on that issue. Even France, being a full member of NATO, would hardly agree to abandon its officially stated independent nuclear policy albeit for the sake of virtual estimates of “strategic stability”. If as a pure notion NATO nuclear members were on one side where Russia and China would be? Will they act together or each for oneself in this strategic game? Or it would be correct from the viewpoint of strategic stability to assess the worst option: “all against Russia” or “all against China”? Such attempts to determine strategic stability as the basis for negotiation cannot be considered otherwise than absurd.

As to the least “provocative” idea from the above list – the idea of greater predictability – serious problems may arise with its implementation as well. It should be noted first of all that under this scenario confidence and predictability instead of nuclear weapons reductions can be the only issue for discussion. More specifically – it is the issue of providing exhaustive information on quantitative and qualitative composition of strategic nuclear forces and plans of their development for the near future. Along with this an issue will be probably raised on imposing an obligation for each party, except Russia and the U.S., not to build up these forces above certain thresholds, i.e. establishing specific limits that would be different for each party. It seems unlikely that the five nuclear powers will reach an understanding on the above issues, let alone start consultations and negotiations based on such terms.

Thus, the following conclusion can be made: the traditional approaches to nuclear arms control that contributed to success at bilateral negotiations can hardly be applied to multilateral solution of the problem. It is necessary to seek and justify the new solutions and new foundations upon which a system of strengthening international security could be built with participation of the main nuclear powers of the world.

MULTILATERAL NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT THROUGH THE REDUCTION OF THE FIRST STRIKE POTENTIAL

Any nuclear arms control negotiations can be called successful if as a result of relevant arrangements the security of participants is increased. From the viewpoint of international agreements in this field the military-technical rather than political aspect should be understood as increased security. In other words the threat reduction should be regarded as reduced capacity of each side to launch a surprise first strike, and, accordingly – reduced incentives to launch such an attack. In this respect the author is ready to agree with the central idea of the advocates of strengthening strategic stability with some substantial exceptions.

Such an approach based on the “strategic stability” concept pays the main attention to the preservation and strengthening of retaliation strike potential. It is an issue of making one’s own forces “survivable” and “less attractive” for a hypothetical first “disarming” strike. Meanwhile if a significant part of those forces does not meet the “survivability” criteria (for example, land-based ICBMs deployed in silo launchers) that represent “attractive” targets (if these ICBMs contain multiple warheads) then the way out of this situation is to maintain their high combat readiness. In other words presumably these systems can be launched before the nuclear RVs of the potential enemy would reach their targets, i.e. on missile attack warning. The concept of “launch on warning” is considered to be highly risky due to a limited time for making a relevant decision, and, as a consequence possible fatal miscalculation in giving an order to launch such a strike. This issue has been examined in many Russian and foreign research works and there is no need to dwell on it in more detail. It is enough just to mention that several experts suggest to abandon this concept by reducing ICBMs’ combat readiness on mutual basis with the U.S.

In our approach to security problem we suggest to focus our main attention on the first strike weapons systems which (for Russia and the U.S.) are the intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). Naturally it can be argued that these systems serve exactly as the means of the first “disabling” strike. However, there are no doubts that precisely the ICBMs are best suited for this purpose. Unlike the submarine launched ballistic missiles the attack with ICBMs is much easier to coordinate. Their accuracy is sufficiently high to destroy such hardened facilities as silo launchers. And without any doubt they themselves are the primary targets for the first strike of a potential enemy. The MIRVed systems (ICBMs with independently targeted re-entry vehicles) are as well “attractive” targets for an attack. Therefore, from the viewpoint of security these weapons systems, especially, silo-based ICBMs with multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles cannot unequivocally be considered as “stabilizing” even by all standards of “strategic stability”.

As it has been already noted the Russian and US SOF are mainly targeted against each other. And this mainly concerns the ICBMs. Thus in our view the following question is in order: will the security of the sides increase if these weapons systems are totally eliminated? It should be emphasized however that the author is not suggesting elimination of only Russian and American ICBMs. It is a matter of elaborating a multilateral agreement with participation of all nuclear powers that establishes a total ban on land-based ballistic missiles with a range in excess of 500 km. Such an idea as it seems is fully consistent with the Russian proposal to give an international and universal character to the Treaty on the elimination of intermediate- and shorter-range missiles (INF Treaty). This idea at least does not contradict the security interests of all nuclear powers, including China, even if this security level is assessed by “strategic security” criteria.

As a basis of a new approach to the issue of multilateral nuclear disarmament we propose the principle of “real security” which would not make the security of states dependent on their capacity to annihilate each other but literally ensure mutual security of the sides. This can be achieved by consistent elimination of strategic (and other) nuclear weapons targeted against each other. Unlike the existing nuclear arms control policy based on phased reduction of nuclear warheads the idea of “quality” disarmament is proposed – precisely, the primary elimination of the most dangerous delivery vehicles of this type of weapons. Undoubtedly, this should strengthen both the security and confidence among the parties. Russia and the U.S. have already got such an experience. In 1987 the parties signed the INF Treaty of indefinite duration that envisaged total elimination of intermediate- and shorter-range ballistic missiles. It is generally recognized that this agreement served to significant strengthening of European security and building confidence among countries despite the fact that the USSR had to eliminate much more systems than the U.S. We believe that this experience can well be expanded globally.

DIFFICULTIES OF IMPLEMENTATION AND POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES OF A NEW APPROACH

The approach to multilateral negotiations in the area of nuclear disarmament proposed in this work may confront serious difficulties. The overcoming of thinking stereotypes that developed over the last decades regarding the role and place of the nuclear arms in ensuring national security may become the main problem. Besides the decommissioning of ICBMs (which, as it is believed, always constituted the basis of Russia’s strategic forces) may cause rejection in the significant part of expert community and representatives of military-political leadership. By and large there is a widely spread opinion in Russia that further reductions of nuclear weapons will affect the country’s security. This is complicated by the general distrust toward U.S. plans and intents regarding the armed forces modernization; certain disappointment with the efficiency of arms control; and the conviction that the issue of security at the current stage can be addressed exclusively by military-technical measures. It seems that the defense-industrial complex, which strongly pushes forward major SOF programs, has a lot to do with such an assessment.

It is absolutely obvious that the persistence of these stereotypes of thinking can hardly strengthen real security. Even in the times of bitter confrontation with the West the Soviet leaders had an opportunity to ascertain that negotiations can address this problem much more efficiently. Therefore, if Russia is concerned that the third nuclear powers continue to stay outside the legal framework of arms control (which has been repeatedly stated by the Russian leadership) this issue should be resolved exactly by political means.

Naturally, if the new approach to security proposed in this work is accepted it would be necessary to solve a whole range of important foreign and domestic issues. First of all it will be necessary to convince the United States that the era of bilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations is coming to an end (or is already over) and that we should refocus our attention on a wider approach to this problem. Russia and the U.S. will continue the reductions of their nuclear arsenals, albeit in the framework of multilateral agreements. The parties to these agreements will also take certain obligations regarding the non-increase of the number of nuclear weapons and significant quality limitations. The total ban on land-based ballistic missiles with a range in excess of 500 km will be one of such limitations at the initial stages.

Significant difficulties can be expected in getting the third nuclear powers involved in arms control negotiations. However, in our view this problem may fully become clear not earlier than Russia and the U.S. jointly formulate a relevant proposal to them. It seems counter-productive to argue that these countries will refuse to participate in the new format of negotiations as an objection to the new approach. All depends on how this approach is justified and what advantages it may give to all potential participants. Especially it should be noted that the third countries will have to carefully weigh up not only their considerations against participating in the multilateral negotiations but the consequences of their potential refusal. Quite possibly, if the issues of a new multilateral agreement are discussed on substance, it will be necessary also to elaborate a common position regarding other states that have in service or are developing the long-range ballistic missiles. This primarily concerns the states that possess nuclear weapons. Naturally this will require additional time and serious efforts by all countries of the "Big Five".

There is a large list of domestic problems to be discussed and resolved if the idea of multilateral elimination is accepted for all land-based long-range ballistic missiles. These problems are – how to overcome the resistance of a part of the "military industrial lobby"; to make serious changes in the structure of the armed forces and the doctrine documents; and to carry out serious structural transformations in the defense-industrial complex, and several other matters. All this in the view of the author should become the subject of separate examination and discussions.

When any political decision is made both the difficulties and potential advantages of its implementation should be taken into account. It is absolutely clear that there cannot be ideal solutions and there are always skeptics and opponents to new approaches. In our view, however, if the positive effect of a decision significantly outweighs its negative consequences then such a decision can be made. To this effect let us try and assess how the proposed idea can meet Russia's interests.

First of all, in our view, the elimination of the land-based segment of strategic forces will lead to the real strengthening of national security since it will significantly reduce the threat of a first "disarming"

strike. Russia itself will also be denied this potential but this is exactly the effect to be achieved since it fully neutralizes the illusion of possible "victory" in the nuclear war.

The proposed approach opens the way to practical implementation of a number of Russian initiatives that have not yet received international support, such as giving the INF Treaty the universal and international character, as well as participation of the third nuclear powers in the disarmament negotiations already at the subsequent stages of that process. If this approach is implemented this will increase the predictability and openness of the armed forces development of the third countries, primarily China, whose programs of nuclear forces build-up cause increasing concern.

An active foreign policy stance taken on one of the most topical international issues will undoubtedly contribute to increased authority and prestige of Russia in the world, improve the overall international climate and give a new impetus to the nuclear disarmament process.

POTENTIAL STAGES OF IMPLEMENTATION

It is absolutely obvious that the implementation of the idea proposed in this work may require significant time. It has been outlined here only in general terms. As far as detailed concept development is concerned it will be necessary to study the issues associated with the entire spectrum of problems that affect security. In particular, special attention should be given to naval strategic forces of all five nuclear powers. It is quite possible that this component will also require certain limitations or the "rules of conduct". It is necessary to continue the dialogue or multilateral consultations on issues of future plans for missile defense systems, tactical nuclear weapons and other components of national and international security. If mutual understanding is reached with regard to land-based long-range ballistic missiles all these issues could be resolved in a much more constructive way than in the absence of real prospects that the nuclear disarmament process will be continued.

In our view the dialogue on the problem under consideration should start between Russia and the U.S. first at the expert level and later with participation of official representatives of the two countries. If mutual understanding is reached this forum may be enlarged to include the representatives of all five nuclear powers. Justified recommendations for governments could be worked out during such contacts. These recommendations should as much as possible take into account all aspects of the problem so that in the end the leaders of the "Big Five" could make a correct decision and together move forward on the way of nuclear disarmament.

STRATEGIC STABILITY AND MULTILATERAL NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS

Interview with Vladimir Dvorkin,

Major-General, Ret., Professor, Chief researcher of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Technical Sciences

A. Savelyev: Today, in the opinion of many experts the period of stagnation has began in the area of nuclear disarmament. To put it bluntly it is an impasse. In any case it is not yet clear how and in which format we can move further. I have my own explanation why we got stuck in that impasse. I believe it is important to determine the reason for stagnation so as to find the way out of this situation and move forward. In my opinion we have come to that impasse because after the end of the Cold War we continued to be guided by the concept of strategic stability in our strategic relations, primarily with the U.S. This means that as in the past we condition our security on our capability to destroy any opponent by a retaliation strike under the worst conditions. This dictates the need to maintain sufficiently powerful strategic forces and drastically limits the potential for their reduction. Are you ready to accept this conclusion?

V. Dvorkin: I agree with that view but I would expand on this topic. I believe that nowadays the strategic stability in its traditional understanding has become obsolete as an approach to the issue of security. And, generally speaking, the concept "strategic" has become quite a "trite" expression among us. Therefore, first, it is necessary to change terminology and refer to global, trans-regional and regional stability. However, it is not only the case for the change of terms. It is necessary to range the destabilizing factors. With regard to global stability – it is nuclear terrorism and proliferation of nuclear and missile weapons. This threat is quite real. And, if as a result of "conventional" terrorist acts the rights and freedoms of citizens have been already drastically limited, it can be just imagined how the nuclear terrorist act can affect the entire system of global politics – both domestic and international. Potential militarization of outer space can be also rated among destabilizing factors. Despite the fact that today the outer space is actively used for military purposes so far there haven't been any serious indicators that the weapons might be placed there. At present the efforts are undertaken to prevent the placement of weapons in outer space. Namely – these are the assets that destroy the targets in outer space, on the land, in air and sea. Moreover, this also involves the deployment of weapons on the land, in air and sea, able to destroy the space objects. At present the U.S., Russia and China possess certain limited capabilities in this area. And, there is a serious chance to agree on these issues before it is too late. The ethnic and religious conflicts are another threat.

A. Savelyev: Did I understand you correctly that if the strategic stability in its traditional understanding is undermined it will not have such serious consequences as the disruption of stability caused by the factors you mentioned?

V. Dvorkin: I would not say that stability in its traditional sense would be undermined anyhow – it cannot happen as a result of traditional destabilizing factors like missile defense and others. However, the new factors that I mentioned can destroy global and regional stability.

A. Savelyev: Nevertheless, let us get back to the issue of the principles of strategic relations. There is a Russian-American statement on this issue. Thus, the U.S.—Russia Strategic Framework Declaration made on 6 April, 2008, in Sochi upon the results of Russia—U.S. negotiations proclaimed the fundamental principles of friendship, cooperation, openness and predictability. It contained a statement that Russia and the U.S. “reject the zero-sum thinking of the Cold War” and that the two countries “must move beyond past strategic principles, which focused on the prospect of mutual annihilation, and focus on the very real dangers that confront both our nations”. In my view strategic stability is exactly one of the most important principles of the Cold War times, which cannot remain as the basis that determines Russian-American strategic relations. Nevertheless, Russia continues to insist on the need to strengthen it, which also includes the building up of its strategic forces.

V. Dvorkin: Strategic stability in traditional perception indeed continues to preserve the nuclear standoff. Therefore, I would make the main emphasis on the need to transform the mutual nuclear deterrence of the U.S. and Russia. Of course as long as nuclear weapons continue to exist the nuclear deterrence will remain. Nevertheless, the policy of nuclear deterrence itself should not be the basis of strategic relations between the major democratic countries.

A. Savelyev: I absolutely agree with you. I think however that it is not enough just to abandon this principle. Something should be offered in exchange.

V. Dvorkin: This is why I propose to regard stability in a new way at the abovementioned three levels with the list of destabilizing factors for each of the levels.

A. Savelyev: Perhaps in parallel with your proposal another option should be examined – reduction of real threat for each side in its military-technical dimension? A phased elimination of assets aimed at each other could be proposed as such an approach. It could begin with intercontinental ballistic missiles. In fact these weapons systems are primarily targeted in such a way.

V. Dvorkin: Is it moving towards nuclear weapon free world?

A. Savelyev: It can be one of the first steps.

V. Dvorkin: Recently the Cartwright initiative was launched, which was repeated in Obama’s proposals and which proposes to unilaterally (if Russia refuses) eliminate all U.S. ICBMs as well as tactical nu-

clear weapons – to reduce all systems to 900 warheads, i.e. to keep only sea-launched ballistic missile (SLBMs) and Air Force. However, it is not only the problem of ICBMs. The fact is that the SLBMs are also aimed at each other.

A. Savelyev: I'd like to clarify my idea. It seems to me that such an approach opens a possibility to hold negotiations on a multilateral basis. Moreover, the qualitative instead of quantitative approach will be their cornerstone. If at the first stage the issue of elimination of Russia and the U.S.' ICBMs is raised, France and the UK, since they do not possess these systems and do not intend to have them should become our main allies in this regard. What remains is China. This country does not like to stay in isolation on major international security issues, which may move it toward participation in such negotiations. All this in my view holds out a hope that the Russian idea of giving the INF Treaty a universal and international character will turn into reality. Naturally this will not be an INF treaty as such. It is a case of a new treaty that prohibits the development, testing and deployment of any land-based ballistic missiles with a range in excess of 500 km.

V. Dvorkin: What is the difference between ICBMs and SLBMs?

A. Savelyev: I believe that these systems (ICBMs) are more dangerous. The decision to use them is taken within a very short time and is irreversible.

V. Dvorkin: But our SSBNs at their bases are also on combat alert. And the order to launch can also be transmitted and executed immediately. The SSBNs at sea out of port can also receive an order to launch. Such an order is also irreversible as for ICBMs. Therefore, a different issue should be discussed. This is the idea of abandoning the concept of retaliation counter strike, i.e. the launch on warning. We have been dealing with this issue for a very long time – since mid-1990s. The idea is to reduce the level of combat readiness of strategic forces. All this can be controlled. It is not the case of reducing the combat readiness of all ICBMs and SLBMs – since it is a prospect for a distant future. However, at the initial stages the readiness of some part of these forces could be reduced by 20 per cent; 30 per cent; 50 per cent.

A. Savelyev: I think that we can move in that direction as an intermediate solution. But why shouldn't we think about elimination of these systems?

V. Dvorkin: The Americans incline to that option. And, it seems that they are ready to carry out unilateral reductions even if Russia decides not to follow that path. However, we will not do it until the missile defense issue is solved.

A. Savelyev: There are different opinions regarding missile defense. However, in this case it is not the political reaction to such a proposal that worries me but the validity of this idea from the viewpoint of strengthening security. And, this has to do with multilateral rather than bilateral security.

V. Dvorkin: In my view without radical transformation of nuclear deterrence model it is impossible to achieve any positive result.

These theoretical arguments have nothing to do with real politics. If theoretically all ICBMs are eliminated while keeping the SLBMs the entire existing model will remain in place.

A. Savelyev: But this is only the first step. The issue of eliminating also the SLBMs' may be raised at the next stage.

V. Dvorkin: What about the air force?

A. Savelyev: It will also be a topic but at later stages.

V. Dvorkin: So, is this a "Global Zero"?

A. Savelyev: It's a case of implementing our nuclear disarmament policy in practice and making the INF Treaty global in nature. I understand that this is possible but it will require much time and efforts.

V. Dvorkin: It would be possible to attract other countries if Russia and the U.S., even preserving 1000 warheads each, kept half of them on reduced combat readiness. This would bring them closer to the arsenals of Britain, France and China. Then, the dialogue could be started with these countries, primarily the British and French.

A. Savelyev: But this could be done already now by proposing them to sign some kind of a declaration of intentions. I believe that in such a case it is enough to receive an obligation from these countries not to develop, test or deploy the land-based ballistic missiles with a range in excess of 500 km in exchange of an obligation of Russia, the U.S. and China to eliminate all these systems within the agreed timeframe.

V. Dvorkin: I think that irrespective of the type of arms it would be possible to reduce the combat readiness of the existing nuclear arsenals. For example – to keep only 300 combat ready warheads for each side would be comparable with the arsenals of the third nuclear states. This could be the beginning. But first it is necessary to propose to these countries to exchange data on the state of the nuclear forces. In so doing the third countries could be required to accept at least a part of notification measures and the obligations not to build-up their nuclear arsenals. A wide range of such measures could be proposed. But this will not be enough for China. Something more substantial should be proposed to it. For example if China agrees to these measures the U.S. will not reinforce its missile defense in the Asia-Pacific region.

A. Savelyev: I'm not referring now to the reaction to such a proposal that could be expected. There were even more fantastic ideas but they became a reality. For example – total elimination and prohibition of intermediate- and shorter-range missiles by the U.S. and USSR. Indeed, up to a certain time no one believed that the "zero option" will be implemented.

V. Dvorkin: The leadership of the USSR should have been scared much before this option was accepted. The country's leadership waived, when Pershing missiles were deployed in Europe – that could reach Moscow within 8–10 minutes with high-precision, earth penetrating warheads. They accepted an unequal treaty to remove that threat.

A. Savelyev: Nevertheless, it created a certain precedent that in my opinion allows us to say that total elimination of that or another category of strategic weapons, by the way very dangerous from the viewpoint of potential counterforce strike, is still possible.

V. Dvorkin: When the reductions reach the level of about 1000 warheads the counterforce strike makes no more sense. Such a strike can be used only during an armed conflict that already began. For example if the enemy began to destroy the strategic forces of his opponent with high-precision weapons. Then the ICBMs can be used in the counterforce strike. Therefore, I propose the idea of controlled phasing out of missile launch on warning. And, this can be verified through the system of lowering the level of combat readiness.

A. Savelyev: However, even if your idea is accepted this means that we will continue to keep to the old concept of security based on mutually assured destruction. This means that we will still stay in this vicious circle.

V. Dvorkin: Yes, the concept is still valid but the reliance on it should gradually subside. The Americans have long been saying that the concept of launch under attack is pure theory for them. Their security is ensured mainly by nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) on combat patrol at sea out of port.

A. Savelyev: In my view we must move the dialogue on nuclear disarmament into a multilateral dimension, which is also consistent with our official policy. My idea is mainly focused on seeking the ways to attract the third countries, primarily China, to negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

V. Dvorkin: I don't think that China will agree so fast. The Chinese see the time differently and think in terms of centuries instead of years. They have some concerns, particularly regarding the missile defense; but, on the whole, it will not be so easy to persuade them.

A. Savelyev: The U.S. and Russia's ICBMs can "reduce to zero" the Chinese retaliation potential. Therefore, the elimination of these systems will be to China's advantage. Even more so, because according to its declarations China has opted exclusively for response actions in the use of nuclear weapons. Moreover if the efficiency of the first strike decreases, the retaliation potential grows thus weakening the role of missile defense. By and large I make two assumptions. First, all problems cannot be solved immediately. One cannot expect too much from partners either. Second, in any strategy it is necessary to determine a point where the main efforts should apply – a key link. It seems to me that in terms of ensuring reliable security the solution of the ICBMs' issue is exactly that link. From this point the entire process can begin. In any case this issue needs to be carefully examined.

V. Dvorkin: It should be borne in mind that the proposal to eliminate ICBMs will provoke an extremely negative reaction in Russia.

A. Savelyev: I believe that if there is a wish to achieve any success at negotiations there should be something "in one's heart" together with the readiness to make compromises. Indeed, basically it is not the issue of

increased security rather than missiles. Thus, if the elimination of these missiles increases security, why shouldn't we use that chance? I also believe that the principle of strategic stability cannot be used for multilateral negotiations. Therefore, I propose a different principle: phased elimination of nuclear weapons systems targeted at each other.

V. Dvorkin: The strategic stability as we have already discussed is based on mutual nuclear deterrence. The departure from that principle and discontinuation of nuclear deterrence might begin on a stage-by-stage basis not from elimination of ICBMs but instead by the adoption of already existing draft executive agreement not to use the launch under attack.

A. Savelyev: As I understand, you are not yet prepared to support the idea of total elimination of ICBMs?

V. Dvorkin: No, I'm not.

The discussion has been organized by Alexander Savelyev, Head of Strategic Research Division of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Political Sciences.

PROSPECTS OF NUCLEAR ARMS CONTROL

Interview with Nikolay Detinov,

Lt. General, Ret., former high-ranking official of the Central Committee of the CPSU and Military-Industrial Commission under the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Member of USSR delegations at the INF and START I talks with the U.S., directly involved in the drafting of the Soviet position at the SALT I, ABM, SALT II, INF and START in 1969–1991

A. Savelyev: Nikolay Nikolayevich, it is no one's secret that these are not the best times for our relations with the U.S. nowadays. In any case this is true for nuclear arms control. The U.S. believes that the parameters of future agreements should include tactical nuclear weapons as well. Russia perceives it as an attempt to make it disarm unilaterally. Meanwhile, our official approach is that the third nuclear powers that so far have abstained from participation should be involved in negotiations. Do you believe that the way out of this situation can be found?

N. Detinov: Looking at the current situation from historical perspective, there were even worse times in our relations with the U.S. Thus the first talks on strategic offensive weapons – SOF (SALT I) began in 1969 on the background of the Vietnam War escalation, the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia and overall deterioration of the international climate. Nevertheless, the need to engage in these negotiations in order to strengthen security and predictability in the relations between our two countries outweighed the objections of skeptics who

rejected the way of negotiations or advanced additional conditions for these negotiations to begin. A no less bitter situation arose in the first half of the 1980s when the U.S., having called the USSR the “Evil Empire” started to deploy intermediate-range missiles in Europe. Then the USSR withdrew from all negotiations with the U.S. in full feeling that the two sides broke off “mortally” and for long. However, the talks began anew quite soon and achieved significant success. By the way these talks resumed even before M.S. Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee.

A. Savelyev: As I understand it in late 1960s and mid-1980s the two sides came to a conclusion that real security is practically impossible to achieve unilaterally. It seems to me that the situation now in many respects is similar to the Reagan times. There is a rather widely shared view that we do not need any negotiations at all with the U.S. and the agreements that we already have – is quite enough. The U.S. will go for new arrangements only if they are to its advantage. The U.S. is not going to reckon with Russia’s interests. The skepticism in Russia on that issue is quite large and there are statesmen and experts whose mood is quite pessimistic. Besides, Russia has announced the rearmament plans of strategic forces, including development and deployment of a new MIRVed ICBM, which is often called a “heavy” missile.

N. Detinov: I have no doubts that we have to continue the negotiating process. It is impossible to win the nuclear arms race or the nuclear war even if one of the sides has an ABM system. All attempts to attain any superiority by developing and deploying new strategic weapon systems are useless. Indeed, any action in building up and upgrading strategic forces will inevitably be answered. A new stage of arms race can start and I do not see any positive prospects there. The only way to strengthen security – is negotiations and achievement of mutually advantageous agreements. It is absolutely clear that neither the U.S. nor Russia can acquire the first strike potential.

A. Savelyev: I don’t quite understand why should they attempt to acquire the first strike potential and to develop a “dense” missile defense to defeat a retaliation strike from Russia? Why do they spend enormous amounts for this? Perhaps it’s time to use common sense and agree on something rather than suspect each other of the worst intents?

N. Detinov: I think that in the existing situation Russia is the most interested in negotiating with the U.S. in order to establish normal and predictable economic, political and strategic relations. Moreover, politically we do not have antagonistic differences such as existed in the past. I think that at present the U.S. fears us and our unpredictability.

A. Savelyev: It seems to me that this suspicion is due in no small measure to the principle of strategic stability, which dictates the need to maintain powerful strategic weapons systems, parity and the bal-

ance of forces. If this balance is broken the U.S. might attack or at least try to blackmail us. I see it as a kind of paranoia. Why should we permanently live in that fear? It is known, though, that to some beliefs – security is the child of fear.

N. Detinov: I believe that to some degree we have come over the stage when it was considered correct to be in a state of the “balance of fear”. Both the U.S. and Russia have understood already that we need to search for a different basis for our strategic relations. In my view, the only way out of this situation – is not to intimidate each other but to look for mutually acceptable solutions.

A. Savelyev: What would be your reaction to the idea of eliminating all nuclear weapons that are or earlier were targeted against each other?

N. Detinov: I like this idea. I think that many in the U.S. will welcome it. Naturally the skeptics will say that it is impossible to check against whom specifically is aimed that or another weapons system but I think that on the whole such an idea will be supported in the U.S. at different levels.

A. Savelyev: I agree that such verification is practically impossible. We know however that for example most of Russian and American ICBMs are targeted against each other. And, as I think, precisely these systems may become the topic for discussion that can be addressed today. Will it be worse if we eliminate these systems on a mutual basis?

N. Detinov: It will be better if the two sides eliminate them, but the question of the third countries remains.

A. Savelyev: What prevents us from proposing to third countries to join the initiative?

N. Detinov: I think we should propose it.

A. Savelyev: This may be the case for changing the basic approach to the problem of further reductions of nuclear arms. More precisely – to move forward not so much in numerical reductions of nuclear warheads but in qualitative terms – elimination of all land-based ballistic missiles with a range in excess of 500 km. Moreover such an agreement should be proposed not only to the United States but to all other nuclear powers of the “Big Five” – Britain, France and China.

N. Detinov: I consider this idea to be very productive. It helps to move from bilateral to multilateral approach in nuclear disarmament negotiations. I believe that these issues should be discussed on a multilateral basis. At least we will have the idea of potential reaction of the third countries to the prospects of multilateral talks. After that its will become clear whether we can reach a real understanding. Besides, 500 km is not necessarily the limit. Perhaps we will be able to agree even on a shorter range. The involvement of these countries in negotiations may reduce the degree of uncertainty, which has always

had a negative impact on the achievement of bilateral agreements between the USSR and the U.S. and now – Russia and the U.S.

A. Savelyev: In this connection it should be recalled that these five nuclear powers have official obligations to other countries to pursue negotiations on effective measures relating to cessation of the arms race with the ultimate goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons. This has been recorded in the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Therefore, such a step must play a positive role in strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

N. Detinov: The multilateral negotiations look more promising than the continuation of a dialogue only between Russia and the U.S. This is because the more progress we make in nuclear weapons' reduction the more influence will be exerted by the arsenals of the third nuclear powers on the international security. The shift to multilateral negotiations looks much more promising in this regard. Up to this day there has not been a Five-Party discussion of this problem.

A. Savelyev: Such an approach as I think is also consistent with our official position, which is based on the assumption that the third nuclear powers as well, and not only Russia and the U.S., should participate in further steps of nuclear disarmament. Do you believe that the abovementioned idea can become the basis for negotiations?

N. Detinov: It seems to me that it's quite possible. If it were Russia that proposed such an approach it would be a 'big plus' for us. It would be so even if we did not agree on anything later. However, such a step would be a big diplomatic advantage for Russia.

A. Savelyev: I agree, but it seems that in order to make such a step it is necessary to provide relevant justification. In fact almost certainly there will be a lot of opponents to it who will express skepticism on many aspects of this approach.

N. Detinov: Yes, this is so, but all these opponents and skeptics themselves cannot propose anything constructive. Criticizing and having doubts is the easiest way. I believe they don't think much about the consequences of our passivity in this area. To complicate the matter not only will the wasteful arms race continue but in fact the risk of war will also grow.

A. Savelyev: In any case, I believe that the constructive criticisms if they are constructive should be taken into account. Therefore, any new ideas should be discussed with recognized experts. I'm very grateful that you agreed to share your views on this issue.

N. Detinov: I think that it would be very useful to realize the idea of Five-Party discussions of the abovementioned issues. However, naturally, there is a rather small probability that we will be able to agree within a short time on all the aspects of the problem. Nevertheless, the very fact of such a discussion would be quite useful and it could

become a preface to substantial negotiations. Therefore, I fully support this idea. The bilateral approach to security issues has run its course. Instead of talks at the beginning let it be some kind of exchange of opinions, discussions and debates at individual forums. And it would be a correct step to make if especially Russia launched such an initiative.

The discussion has been organized by Alexander Savelyev, Head of Strategic Research Division of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Political Sciences.

THE ROLE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND MULTILATERAL DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS

Interview with Viktor Yesin,

Col. General, Ret., Adviser to the Commander of Strategic Rocket Forces of the Russian Federation

A. Savelyev: Victor Ivanovich, today many in Russia believe that we are at an impasse on the issues of further steps in the area of nuclear disarmament. At the same time the lack of new ideas is clearly felt in this area. One should not forget that Russia as other nuclear powers of the “Big Five” has obligations to the international community to pursue negotiations in this area with the ultimate goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons. It seems to me that from the viewpoint of the prospects of negotiations the ideas of the U.S. do not look quite consistent. Thus, during the elaboration of the 2010 New START Treaty the U.S. tried to convince us that it should primarily be the issue of deployed strategic warheads, i.e. the warheads installed on delivery vehicles and ready for immediate use. Finally Russia agreed with this argument despite certain suspicions that the undeployed warheads can be put back on the delivery vehicles. This agreement in my view was due to the fact that from the security viewpoint it is precisely the deployed warheads and deployed delivery vehicles that should be subject to limitations in the first place. However, now the U.S. has changed its position to include all warheads: both deployed and undeployed, both strategic and tactical, practically placing all of them on the same footing. In my view such an approach cannot be regarded as justified. For example, the Russian tactical nuclear weapons do not in any way pose a threat to the U.S., while similar U.S. weapons systems deployed in Europe can reach the territory of the RF and from this viewpoint are strategic for us. This is why this approach is not quite clear to me. Do we want to purely mechanically reduce the number of nuclear weapons or should we however make

security the cornerstone issue? In my view any arms control negotiations should lead first to strengthening security, and second – to reductions. At the same time security is not at all a bilateral issue. The nuclear arsenals of the third countries can also pose certain threat. Besides, their development and modernization are not limited anyhow. Neither Britain, nor France, nor China is a party to disarmament negotiations and existing agreements in this area. The arguments of these countries are well known – all of them are based on the fact of significant superiority in the size of nuclear arsenals of Russia and the U.S. over these countries. However, from the viewpoint of security, as I believe, the “size” is not essential. As a minimum we would like to have predictability regarding the development prospects of the third countries’ arsenals. As a maximum – there is a need to get them involved in specific negotiations and to sign an agreement that increases security of each of these countries – but this time already on a multilateral basis. What can be done to interest these countries to participate in the nuclear disarmament process precisely from the viewpoint of strengthening security under the indispensable condition of further reductions of the levels of Russian and American arsenals? I think it may be the issue of an international treaty that puts a ban on the development, testing and deployments of land-based ballistic missiles with a range in excess of 500 km. This approach can be based on a phased elimination of all nuclear weapons systems that are targeted (or might be targeted) against each other. Such an approach can in my view replace the existing concept of strategic stability, which is based on the assumption that security of each of the sides depends on their ability to destroy each other. This is an old approach, which in my view has already outlived itself. As to ICBMs to which I’m referring it is necessary to answer the question whether these weapons systems indeed are vital for our security? I would like to hear your opinion.

V. Yesin: I agree that we need to search for the way out of this impasse where the nuclear states, which have obligations before the international community under Article VI of the NPT, have found themselves. I believe that various options may be proposed. However, in your option, if we remove the land-based component of strategic nuclear forces, the naval and air force components will remain intact. Immediately the disbalance with the U.S. comes to surface. And, it is very difficult to agree in a situation of disbalance. The naval component is the basis of SNF for the U.S. while for Russia it is the land-based component. Unfortunately the Russian naval forces are substantially inferior to the U.S. Navy, primarily – in combat survivability. Along with that the U.S. has a geographic advantage and nothing can be done with it. The U.S. air force has a significant superiority. Thus, the “exchange” will be inadequate both for Russia and the U.S. Therefore, politically it is hardly feasible. I fully agree

with you that the nuclear strategic arms are not the battlefield weapons. It is a political means and a means of deterrence.

A. Savelyev: I'm referring first of all not to the political decisions and the political role of nuclear weapons, but their military "value" from the viewpoint of their influence on security. Let me stress once again that nobody proposes to start immediate elimination of ICBMs. It is an issue of assessment of the possibility to adopt a new approach to nuclear disarmament that envisages participation of at least all five "official" nuclear powers and before Russia and the U.S. reduce their arsenals to the level of Britain, France and China. I'm trying to propose the basis for multilateral negotiations that in my view could be acceptable for all parties, and which would not undermine the basis of their security.

V. Yesin: I think that Russia has not yet prepared to such a radical solution. Let me repeat though that the research in various ways to continue nuclear disarmament process is quite important. The uniformity of thinking on that issue can only be harmful.

A. Savelyev: And how do you see the process to continue?

V. Yesin: I believe that so far we have been relying mainly on nuclear weapons to ensure our security. The time is required for political and military leadership to change the opinion in this regard. Therefore, I'm for gradual steps. As to elimination of land-based component of strategic nuclear forces – the issue of naval and air force components should be addressed at the same time. For example, to limit SSBNs' patrolling areas, to reduce their number down to approximately equal levels, and to resolve the issue of strategic aviation. In addition to that, we are seriously concerned with the problem of missile defense, long-range high-accuracy weapons and a number of other problems.

A. Savelyev: This means that in the future as well we will still be bound to build our security policy on the basis of the established stereotypes of the Cold War looking at each other as "potential enemies" and avoiding by all means to break the nuclear balance. This is exactly the impasse that we have talked about. Do we really fear that they will attack us and launch a nuclear strike?

V. Yesin: I think that no one can seriously consider such a scenario. However our leadership will not allow that the strategic balance is undermined. A certain period of "adaptation" to new realities is required. From this point of view the idea of gradual reduction of the level of SNF combat readiness appeals to me. For example, if we reduce the number of combat-ready systems by 20; 30; 50 per cent then after a certain period of time it will be possible to raise a question of their stage-by-stage elimination.

A. Savelyev: But this approach can be used only in the relations between Russia and the U.S. while I propose to examine the issue of engaging in disarmament negotiations all the "Big Five" countries

already at the next stage and on different foundations than the “strategic stability”. To put it briefly, “confidence, predictability and threat reduction” can become the motto of these negotiations.

V. Yesin: I expressed some doubts regarding your idea not to present it as absolutely untenable. I believe that any ideas have the right to exist. They must be discussed and compared in their strengths and weaknesses in order to elaborate during such discussions well-measured and justified proposals for the political leadership.

A. Savelyev: In my view our military-political leadership attaches too much importance to the role of nuclear weapons in ensuring Russia’s security. The real threats and challenges that we are facing today in most of the cases cannot be parried with the use of these weapons. These are the international terrorism and proliferation of missile-nuclear weapons, let alone economic, environmental and other problems. Most of the experts recognize that there is a very low probability of nuclear conflict between Russia and the U.S. Meanwhile, we spend the main efforts to counter exactly this least probable threat. Taking into account our limited resources as compared to the U.S. and now already China and a number of other countries the efficiency of our defense spending may be lower than a simple difference in the amount of allocations on military purposes in Russia and abroad. In other words we are spending a disproportionately large part of our resources not exactly on what is required under the current circumstances. We are trying to deceive ourselves saying that nuclear weapons supposedly “compensate” our weakness in conventional means and forces. Indeed in the event of the outbreak of armed conflicts or even local hostilities nuclear weapons practically do not play any role. Therefore, I believe that with a clearly defined stable system of nuclear arms control the main priorities in the development of military capability and modernization of the armed forces could be shifted to the area of modern weapons systems and organization of the army that meets the requirements of today and tomorrow; an army that can ensure our security in a guaranteed way without nuclear arms.

V. Yesin: What you are talking about is quite obvious to me. The question is how to create such conditions without detriment to security of the country. Therefore, I repeat that these ideas should become a topic for serious discussion and analysis taking account of all factors that affect responsible decision-making on that extremely important problem.

The discussion has been organized by Alexander Savelyev, Head of Strategic Research Division of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Political Sciences

RADICAL REDUCTION OF NUCLEAR ARMS WILL STRENGTHEN RUSSIA'S SECURITY

Andrey Zagorsky,

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In April 2008, the Presidents of Russia and the United States declared that the time had come to overcome the barriers of the strategic principles of the past, associated with the prospect of mutual annihilation, and focus on the real threats that our countries are facing.¹ Five years have passed and there has not been yet any real progress.

After the signing of a new Strategic Offensive Arms Reduction Treaty in 2010, talk about nuclear disarmament has bogged down in the arguments based on the idea that evolved during the Cold War i.e. that strategic stability rested on the capability of Russia and the United States to “mutually and in a guaranteed manner” annihilate each other. Not only further reductions of nuclear weapons but broader Russia—U.S. relations became hostage to this faulty logic.

With the advancement of modern warfare, maintaining strategic stability – understood as preserving the U.S. and Russia's capability to destroy each other – is becoming an increasingly complex task. Today's bilateral equation of “strategic stability” does not only include the two countries' nuclear arms, but also the existing and theoretically possible future missile defense systems and conventional, i.e. non-nuclear long-range and high-precision weapons, and even the hypothetical deployment of space-based attack systems, to name but a few. The picture becomes even more complex when you factor in the nuclear arsenals of third countries, such as China, the UK, France, and sometimes even India and Pakistan.

As the traditional strategic stability equation evolves and grows more complicated, it becomes harder, perhaps even impossible, to calculate the formula for further nuclear reductions by Russia and the United States. The goal of deep reductions of the nuclear weapons arsenals and that of maintaining Russia and the United States' capacity for mutual assured destruction involve irreconcilable differences. There is a growing feeling that the capacity for further reductions has been exhausted, if not reached its limit, should we follow the former logic of maintaining strategic stability. It would be a grave error to assume that further nuclear arms reductions, especially given the advances made in modern weapons developments, are incompatible with the strengthening of Russia's security.

¹ The Declaration that set out a framework of strategic cooperation between the United States and Russia; Sochi, April 2008. URL: <http://www.archive/kremlin/ru/text/docs/2008/04/163171/shtml>

Russia and the U.S. can come out of this deadlock if they return to the task set by the Presidents in 2008 – renouncing the “strategic principles” of the “Cold War.” Under this imperative ***they could launch an initiative to start the phased elimination of all long-range land-based ballistic missiles in the world.*** As a result, an entire class of nuclear missiles would be destroyed. This initiative, if implemented, would substantially enhance another of Russia’s proposals – to make the 1987 Russia—U.S. Treaty on the Elimination of the Intermediate- and Shorter-range Missiles (INF Treaty) universal. As a first step, ***Russia and the U.S. could set an example to other countries by agreeing to reduce their intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).***

If this proposal is implemented, Russia would not only be able to make a breakthrough and substantially strengthen its relations with the United States. This would mean Russia gets to enhance its own security but also score real progress in numerous areas, such as:

- Retaking its position as global leader in strengthening international security;
- Defusing the debate about a raft of sensitive issues, including U.S. global missile defense;
- Making the first step toward expanding the dialogue on nuclear arms reduction and engaging nuclear powers, including China in it;
- Enhancing the prospects for strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime during the 2015 NPT Review Conference;
- Retaining significant (increasingly hard to obtain) budget funds;
- Promoting other Russian initiatives on international security, including proposals to make understandings with the United States on the elimination of intermediate- and shorter-range missiles universal;
- Helping secure progress in other areas of arms control, particularly on issues related to conventional arms control in Europe.

“STRATEGIC STABILITY” DEADLOCK

The understanding of strategic stability that formed over the last two decades of the Cold War was based on the assumption that the “opposing sides,” i.e. the U.S. and Russia, were preparing to launch a massive nuclear strike against each other’s strategic offensive weapons and command systems. Under those circumstances, the decisive role in maintaining strategic stability or deterring the opposite side was to ensure the survival of one’s own nuclear forces, guaranteeing the imminent annihilation of the aggressor by a “response” retaliation strike.

The parties’ approach to building their offensive and defensive forces, and negotiations on their reduction and limitation, have long been rooted in the simulation of potential first-strike and retaliatory strike scenarios. During the Cold War, this led to a situation in which

the Soviet and U.S. strategic nuclear forces were preparing to launch a retaliation attack before their missiles could be destroyed by a massive strike from the opposing side. The mechanism of this “mutually assured destruction,” which was actually automatic, left the two countries’ leaders with no time to assess the situation and make a well thought-through political decision. Space- or land-based early warning missile attack signals were supposed to trigger the retaliation strike. There were just a few minutes between the detection of an enemy missile launch and the command to retaliate.

During the Cold War, this logic saw U.S. and Russian national security become a hostage to technical failure. An accidental or unauthorized launch of the systems involved, or any failure in the early warning systems, could set off a chain reaction and lead to an irreparable result – the mutual guaranteed annihilation of Russia and the U.S. There were situations in which, even during the years of close cooperation, technical failure took the two countries to the brink of trading nuclear strikes, despite the will of the Russian and U.S. leadership, whereas the number of nuclear warheads remaining in the possession of Russia and the United States was not that important. What mattered was to launch the machinery of retaliation in time.

No other nuclear state has ever made its political decision-making process over the use of nuclear weapons dependent on the technology. Until the 1970s, the United States and the USSR based their policy of mutual nuclear deterrence on different principles: they were not pursuing a goal of automatic mutual annihilation. Why then is it believed to be an absolute truth that they should maintain this mutually assured destruction (MAD) capability today?

There are no ‘ifs’ in history. There is no point in debating whether this MAD policy was the best possible option for maintaining strategic stability between the USSR and the United States during the Cold War, or whether there was a more reasonable alternative. With the end of the Cold War, when the two sides believe that the probability of nuclear confrontation between them is negligible, it is increasingly dangerous to rely on MAD, which is not just a relic of the past. Policies that are hostage to this erroneous logic find it increasingly difficult to break this vicious circle.

Today, Russia and the United States are no longer engaged in a global struggle based on the principle of “who will beat whom.” So, from the point of view of national security, cocking the nuclear gun against one’s opponent’s temple, ready to fire it at the slightest suspicious move, is now both meaningless and unproductive. This represents an even greater risk when the development of modern non-nuclear military technologies can trigger a “retaliation” strike if the early warning systems send an alarm signal in response to a missile

launch (not necessarily nuclear) by another side, quite apart from accidental or unauthorized launches.

All this raises a question not only about the number of nuclear weapons Russia and the U.S. really need, but also about the very principle of accounting for them. Neither Russia nor the U.S. today requires MAD potential, although it is clear that they continue to deem it necessary to maintain a limited mutual nuclear deterrence potential for quite a while.

ABANDONING THE INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILES

It is not that easy to dismantle the mechanisms of mutually assured destruction, in part due to the inertia of the military and technical thinking. In recent decades a great many useful ideas have been proposed and discussed regarding the steps that need to be taken in order to gradually abandon this principle and dismantle its material basis. One of these proposals involves the verified reduction in the level of combat readiness of the two countries' strategic nuclear systems, which has been carefully developed by Russian and American experts and politicians. This would allow the two sides not only to disarm the trigger but also to put the safety-lock on and gradually move away from planning this automatic massive response strike.

We believe it is possible to make a meaningful step forward toward abandoning the logic of mutual assured annihilation in our relations with the United States, including radical reduction, and ideally the total elimination of ICBMs and reaching agreement among all nuclear countries on the elimination and comprehensive ban on the development, testing and deployment of long-range ballistic missiles.

The rationale behind this decision is easy to understand. In fact, land-based ballistic missiles (chiefly the heavy MIRVed missiles), are considered the most likely first strike weapon. They are more vulnerable than SLBMs and, therefore, they are supposed to be launched before another side destroys them (whether by nuclear or non-nuclear weapons). For the same reason, it is precisely the ICBMs that "attract" the first strike from the opposing side and force it to calculate the options for their destruction and/or neutralization using missile defense systems.

The radical reduction and ultimate elimination of U.S. and Russian ICBMs will help reverse this rationale. The systems that most destabilize the mutual strategic equation will be eliminated. There will be no more need to plan the first strike against the ICBM deployment sites and launch retaliatory strikes immediately after receiving the signal from one's own early warning systems.

As long as Russia and the U.S. do not rule out the need to maintain a reasonable potential for mutual nuclear deterrence at reduced

levels without preparing for mutually assured destruction, the task of deterrence could be fulfilled by strategic sea-based systems. These systems are the least vulnerable to the first strike and serve as a guarantee that Russia and the U.S. will maintain sufficient leverage in the last resort if they return to confrontation (which is highly improbable).

The radical reduction and elimination of ICBMs would help mitigate the missile defense issue in the strategic balance between Russia and the U.S. since the two sides would abandon the missiles that the missile defense systems would intercept.

This decision would also help avoid the potential development of non-nuclear long-range high precision systems which could theoretically be used to strike the ICBM silo launchers, as these targets would no longer exist.

This would help disentangle the problems that continue to complicate and overburden the strategic stability equation and prevent further nuclear arms reductions. This will only contribute to Russia's security.

As a result, the Russian government will be able to save a significant part of its budget. Indeed, maintaining strategic nuclear forces at the numeric levels agreed upon with the U.S. under the New START Treaty implies the deployment of new ICBMs rather than the old decommissioned ICBMs. An important part of the modernization program – the development of a new heavy ICBM with multiple reentry vehicles – seems more than an arguable decision, even in the context of a traditional definition of strategic stability in Russian-American relations. The case in point is that these missiles are the most destabilizing factor in mutual balance, and due to their vulnerability they can be used primarily as a first strike weapon against the enemy.

The agreement on radical reduction and the global elimination of long-range nuclear missiles would allow Russia to spare the enormous resources spent on developing, deploying and eliminating such missiles.

OTHER NUCLEAR POWERS

Today, when Russia and the U.S. possess more than 90 percent of all the world's nuclear arsenals, it would be a dangerous illusion to expect other nuclear countries to agree to negotiate to reduce or limit their potentials. It is important to recognize that Russia and the U.S. have a way to go in dealing with "their backlog" to continue bilateral nuclear arms reductions. The question is different: how can we address these reductions in a way that incentivizes other nuclear powers and engage them in a relevant dialogue and later eventual negotiations?

Together with the announcement of the plans relating to the radical reduction of ICBMs in the two countries, the Presidents of Russia and the U.S. could propose to other nuclear countries to start a dia-

logue on a potential global ban on and elimination of long-range ballistic missiles at a later stage. This issue can be raised for discussion within the framework of the regular meetings of the “big five” – nuclear powers and permanent members of the UN Security Council (Russia, the United States, the UK, China and France).

The three other permanent members of the UNSC should not be expected to give a positive answer immediately. However, the idea of abandoning land-based ballistic missiles should not pose a problem for France or Britain, since they do not possess these weapons. Even if they are not currently prepared to engage in substantial negotiations and make the relevant treaty commitments, they could respond positively to a Russian-American initiative. They could, for example, declare that they do not possess land-based ballistic missiles or plans to deploy them.

The four nuclear powers’ positive response to the idea of abandoning the ICBMs could not but influence China’s leadership position, if it turns out to be the only member of the “big five” that rejects the idea. This would lend a momentum that could help launch a dialogue among the five nuclear powers at the initial stage, bearing in mind that a more specific understanding would be reached in the future.

A declaration by Russia and the United States regarding their readiness to start a radical reduction and, in the longer term, the total elimination of ICBMs would substantially reinforce the arguments in favor of the Russian initiative to make the 1987 Treaty on the Elimination of Intermediate- and Shorter-Range Missiles universal.

The broader initiative proposed by Russia and the U.S. on the further reduction of their nuclear forces, with the prospect of engaging other nuclear powers in this process, would significantly strengthen the position of the proponents of a nuclear non-proliferation regime at the forthcoming NPT Review Conference.

Broadly, this initiative would strengthen the national security of both Russia and the U.S., and would also enhance Russian-American joint efforts in areas that are crucially important to them, while also making a significant contribution to strengthening international security more broadly.

THERE ARE NO IDEAL SOLUTIONS

This proposal may spark criticism in Russia and abroad. That is only natural. There are no ideal solutions. The game of nuclear war brinkmanship between Russia and the U.S. was itself not an ideal solution (nor is it one today). The critical discussion of the idea of the radical reduction and elimination of long-range land-based ballistic missiles will help compare the strengths and weaknesses in Russia’s nuclear policy and to examine this proposal more thoroughly to compensate for its potential shortfalls.

Russian International Affairs Council

