

US-Russia Dialogue on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Arms Control: What it Means for Europe and the World

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President Barack Obama's powerful speech in Prague on April 5, 2009 and a series of efforts by the new US Administration are opening new avenues towards practical nuclear disarmament steps and are making the ultimate goal of complete nuclear disarmament and a world free of nuclear weapons more realistic than ever before.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev re-confirmed Russia's commitment to the nuclear disarmament in March 2009 in his address to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Finally, the two Presidents made a historic statement in London on April 1, 2009:

“As leaders of the two largest nuclear weapons states, we agreed to work together to fulfill our obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and demonstrate leadership in reducing the number of nuclear weapons in the world. We committed our two countries to achieving a nuclear free world, while recognizing that this long-term goal will require a new emphasis on arms control and conflict resolution measures, and their full implementation by all concerned nations. We agreed to pursue new and verifiable reductions in our strategic offensive arsenals in a step-by-step process, beginning by replacing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with a new, legally binding treaty”.

President Medvedev developed Russia's position on a nuclear-free-world in his speeches in Helsinki in April and in Amsterdam in June 2009.

In May 2009, the Preparatory Committee (Prepcom) for the 2010 NPT Review Conference closely analyzed Article 6-related (“nuclear disarmament”) issues and, for the first time in almost a decade, discussions on practical ways towards a world without nuclear weapons developed in a favorable, result-oriented atmosphere not overshadowed by reactions of nuclear-weapon states (NWSs).

In other words, in a sharp contrast with the situation only 12 months ago, nuclear disarmament has become the center of the international security agenda in the United States, Russia, as well as globally.

It is even more true when nuclear nonproliferation as a whole is concerned. Nuclear disarmament is only one of three (or some may say – four) pillars of the nuclear nonproliferation regime, the two other universally recognized pillars being nuclear nonproliferation *per se* and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. Finally, there are suggestions, articulated particularly by US experts, to add a fourth pillar: nuclear security. Regardless of how we count these pillars, there is little doubt that all of them are central for the international relations and the global international security agenda today.

Indeed, US-Russia dialogue on arms control is today more dynamic than it has never been in almost two recent decades; in addition, the agenda of autumn 2009 is incredibly rich in arms control- and nonproliferation related issues.

Among them:

- The removal of one of the most significant obstacles towards the progress of strategic arms control.
- President Obama's decision to reconfigure the missile defense plan for Europe and, consequently, not to deploy components of missile defense in Czech Republic and in Poland.
- The final phase of the START replacement treaty in Geneva.
- The Nonproliferation Summit in New York just a few days before we meet here in Paris today, within the UN Security Council meeting and US chairmanship, which led to a unanimous adoption of the UN SC Resolution 1887 on nonproliferation.
- Intensified preparations for the NPT Review Conference, which will be held in New York in May 2010.
- Preparations for the Nuclear Security Summit, to held in April 2010 upon the initiative by President Obama; and
- Last, but not least, the debate over Iran's nuclear program and approaches to it.

The international community currently has a unique window of opportunity to effectively address nuclear disarmament and to fix a number of proliferation-related problems.

United States and Russia bear special responsibility in this regard. First of all, because both are major nuclear "shareholders": more than 95% of nuclear weapons in the world belong to these two nations. Secondly, because both United States and Russia are depositories (together with the U.K.) of the Non-Proliferation Treaty signed in 1968, and both actively supported – and won support to - its indefinite extension in 1995.

Let me start with briefly describing Russia's position on nuclear disarmament before addressing the bilateral US-Russia agenda in this field.

The Russian Federation is unequivocally devoted to the ultimate goal of complete nuclear disarmament. This is Russia's commitment as NPT member, and this is an integral part of the Russian foreign and security policy, reflected accordingly in the National Security Concept adopted in May 2009.

However, Russia does not share romantic visions of the role of nuclear weapons in contemporary world affairs. President Medvedev would probably subscribe to Mr. Obama's words: *Critically important goal... but not in my lifetime!* Russia believes that nuclear disarmament can be achieved through a series of steps leading to less and less weapons in the arsenals of all nations who possess them, both officially and otherwise.

- Multiple steps towards nuclear disarmament have already been launched with START-1 and SORT treaties signed, ratified and under implementation. Throughout the 1990s, Russia made a tremendously hard work on reducing its nuclear arsenal and on concentrating on the nuclear arsenal of the former USSR on its own territory, an extremely sensitive and costly process aggravated by the deep economic and social crisis in Russia of those days.
- The next step should be the signing of the START replacement treaty in December 2009. I will come back to this process later in my presentation.
- If START replacement treaty enters successfully into force at some point in 2010, Russia would be ready to sit again at the table with the United States, with a much more ambitious agenda which would eventually lead to deep cuts in strategic arsenals.
- If this process develops successfully and brings Russia and the United States to the levels below 1,000 strategic warheads on each side, other members of the "nuclear five" – U.K., France, and China – should join in the talks. However, the Action Plan on complete nuclear disarmament should be drafted by the "nuclear five" at an earlier stage.

How quickly this way towards nuclear disarmament should be implemented, from Russia's standpoint? Russia wants to move towards radical nuclear reductions slowly, but surely. Or, if you like, one can say: surely but slowly. It is not about speed of the process; it is about working accurately and hard on implementing each step of this long process.

Russia moves towards lower levels of nuclear arsenals not because the topic is sexy and not because somebody else called upon Russia and others to go in this direction from Prague earlier this year. This move is – and will be in the future – the result only of Russia's own domestic assessments, keeping Russia's national interests in mind, not somebody else's. For Russia, the process of nuclear reduction is a process of a series of actions but not of nice words. In this context, certain steps can be undertaken by Russia unilaterally. At the same time, Russia strongly prefers legally binding arrangements, both bilateral and multilateral, and believes that nuclear disarmament is the homework not for one and even not for two nations, but for all those who possess nuclear arsenals.

Regarding the US-Russian dialogue on nuclear arms reduction, the START replacement treaty negotiations are central to the progress.

At this stage, the situation develops favorably. There is a good chance that the teams of negotiators will be able to present the mutually agreed text of the new treaty for signature to Mr. Medvedev and Mr. Obama already by early December 2009, when START 1 expires.

However, as I see it from Moscow, there has not yet been success in incorporating the US responses to a number of issues, which cause Russia's concern about the draft of a new treaty.

The most complex issue that can become particularly irritant, if it remains unresolved, should the parties begin to work under time pressure (and they have already started being pushed by both presidents who - for their own reasons - need a *success-treaty*), is the so-called upload capability. The numbers of launchers, which should be preserved under the treaty, have not yet been agreed upon. While Russia is ready to go as low as 500 launchers, the United States insist on a number twice – or almost – twice as high. Among other yet unresolved issues is also the issue of inspections and verification.

But imagine that in time for the New Year of 2010 negotiators present their presidents with a new agreement, though not drastically reducing their nuclear arsenals, but signaling that the bilateral relations have achieved a breakthrough. I regard such scenario as a highly probable. And it is not only me who thinks so. One of my friends – a French diplomat – literally placed a bet that *there will be a treaty by December 5, 2009*, and he expects to win.

What comes next, then?

The most interesting process starts afterwards. Precisely at that time, in 2010, Russia and the United States will have to launch really deep negotiations about drastically reducing their nuclear arsenals. At that moment, the negotiators will have to face an entire set of obstacles.

- *First*, to start reducing not only strategic, but also sub-strategic nuclear weapons. Probably, to enable it, the United States should first have to unilaterally withdraw all its tactical nuclear weapons from Europe.
- *Second*, to begin a parallel dialogue on the prevention of deploying weapons in outer space. So far, the US has not demonstrated interest in such a dialogue.
- *Third*, to exclude a situation where nuclear reductions are offset by an increase in conventional strategic systems – that the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev once called "nonequivalent exchanges".
- *Fourth*, to decide at what stage of negotiations on nuclear arms reductions should the United Kingdom, France and China be invited (the latter two would rather prefer not to receive such an invitation at all, because the answer would have to be an impolite refusal). I have listed only the tip of the iceberg of the negotiations. In other words, the agenda of the talks will be so extensive that the delegations will have to settle in Geneva for a long time, probably for years.

In parallel, the Parliaments of our two countries will begin the ratification of the treaty, which, as I have suggested, would be signed in 2009. But we in Russia still remember so many issues which the US senators attempted to link to the entry into force of various previous agreements with Russia; these linkages often are not related to the subject matter of these agreements (the most recent example being the US-Russian 123 Agreement on nuclear energy cooperation and Russia's "aggression" against Georgia). In the case of a new START treaty we have to be prepared for surprises as well. And these will not necessarily be only nice surprises.

But in any case, if we get the new treaty by the end of 2009, it will be an enormous progress. It will signal to Europe, it will signal to the whole world, it will signal to the members of the NPT: Russia and the US are serious about their obligation on nuclear disarmament. They work hard on it, and they manage to achieve tangible results.

If this is the case, it would be critically important if this success story develops further, both in the NPT context but also in the European context. The new treaty should give impulse to new, creative and constructive thinking in Europe about realities of new security architecture on the continent, and about a need to complete reform of such architecture. The Russian proposal on launching the work on a new Security Treaty for Europe expressed by President Medvedev in Evian a year ago is there. It is open for comments and debates. Moreover, joint European efforts on hard security agenda may materialize in less grandiose but more practical measures such as a treaty on conventional forces in Europe (CFE).

Who knows, isn't it time to bury the current CFE Treaty, which could not give fruits and was designed in different geopolitical realities? This CFE is dying as very few nations gave support to it. Still, Europe needs a treaty regulating conventional forces. Isn't it time for writing a new CFE from scratch – if, or course, the Europeans fail to achieve so much needed progress with ratification of the existing adopted CFE Treaty?

Speaking on US-Russian joint nonproliferation agenda I cannot ignore a topic, which is not related to disarmament but clearly affects the core of the nuclear nonproliferation regime. This is Iran, and its controversial nuclear program.

Just a few days ago, on September 9 2009, Iran presented a new package of proposals to the EU 3+3 (France, Great Britain, Germany, China, the United States and Russia), offering international discussions on a variety of global issues including security and nuclear disarmament. However, the nuclear package did not mention Iran's uranium enrichment program, and Iranian officials later made clear that it would not be a part of any future talks with the West.

Earlier this month, France criticized Mohamed El-Baradei for leaving out evidence in his reports that Iran was working on a nuclear weapon. Bernard Kouchner, the French Foreign Minister, said that France had attended a technical briefing that covered this information, but was surprised to find it missing from the recent IAEA report on Iran. Mohamed El-Baradei said there was no concrete evidence that Tehran had an ongoing nuclear weapons program. Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, said at a press conference that El-Baradei possessed high professionalism, rejecting the accusations against him of

hiding some information about the Iranian nuclear program.

We in Russia work very closely with our American partners, as well as with France, Germany, and the U.K. on synchronizing our positions on Iran and our possible reactions in various scenarios. My impression is that our close cooperation with the United States on both threat assessment on Iran and on possible responses is generally working very well. Neither Russia, nor the United States believes that Iran with nuclear weapons will be acceptable. The differences are not on the strategic level, but on the tactical one.

Instead of a new round of sanctions, which have been proposed by some in the United States and in Europe, the level of dialogue with Iran should be increased on a range of security issues, including Iran's nuclear program.

Negotiations with Iran should help build trust, while the new sanctions will most certainly provoke further confrontations and will unlikely bring desired results. Negotiations should be built on two pillars: first - recognition of Iran's right to develop its peaceful nuclear energy program including uranium enrichment; second - recognition by Iran of the right of the international community, through IAEA, to thoroughly monitor Iranian nuclear activities, particularly taking into account Iran's history of non-transparency and at times misleading information about the nature of its program. And crying *wolves* should be avoided - in this case, crying *Iran's nuclear bomb!*

At the same time, close coordination of positions and exchange of information on Iran between the United States, Russia, France, Germany, and other key players remains critically important. In case negotiations fail we should be ready to come up with the new round of sanctions through the UN SC, - and those types of sanctions are real, which bite.

Coming back to the issue of nuclear disarmament, let me conclude by emphasizing the fact (which I have already mentioned above) that the Russia-US leadership in this process of global nuclear disarmament should be supported by other nations and other, multilateral, steps.

- The CTBT should enter into force as soon as possible. Currently, it is hostage to a handful of nations, which can be counted by fingers on the two hands who either have not yet ratified it or even have not yet signed. But the key problem here is the United States. Will President Obama implement his promise to pursue CTBT ratification *aggressively* and at *an early date*? I am not so optimistic here. Without the CTBT in force, development of nuclear weapons will continue being reality.
- The treaty banning production of fissile materials for military purposes should be negotiated soon at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Still, Pakistan blocks the start of real negotiations. This is unacceptable. How can we work on cutting nuclear arms, on the one hand, and witnessing uncontrollable production of fissile materials for military purposes in certain places of the globe?

- United States, Russia, the U.K., France and China should agree on a statement, on the eve of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, prohibiting increasing numbers of their existing nuclear arsenals. It will be easy for some but challenging for others. India should come up with a similar unilateral statement. It would seem that under current conditions when Russia and the United States are on a path for serious cuts in their arsenals, while Britain is seriously thinking about reducing the place of nuclear weapons in its military doctrine, up to their complete elimination, such positioning of the task would be an easy one. However, everyone needs, above all, to make sure that no nuclear-weapon state is increasing its potential – either strategic, or any other.
- United States, Russia, the U.K., France and China should agree on a statement, on the eve of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, prohibiting deployment of nuclear weapons outside national territories of NWSs. The same point should be included into the NPT RevCon Final Document. Today, only one of the nuclear weapon states is not in compliance with this condition. It would be alarming if someone else follows this unconstructive example. Hence, the principle of non-deployment of nuclear weapons beyond the land territory of nuclear weapon states should be established, first informally, and later on legally. A certain time should be given for the complete removal of remaining nuclear weapons outside national territories. I am sure that both the US administration and European nations concerned have matured to accept this timely and long-expected development.
- United States, Russia, the U.K., France and China should work on reducing roles of nuclear weapons and decrease reliance of nuclear weapons in their military doctrines, nuclear posture reviews or other conceptual documents identifying their nuclear strategies.

Following these steps will facilitate the beginning of the dynamic progress of the entire *Nuclear Five* (not one or two states) to the ultimate goal, namely full and unequivocal nuclear disarmament.

2010 is literally saturated with the nuclear agenda. At the start of the year we would hope to see the beginning of multilateral negotiations on an international convention banning the production of fissile materials for weapons purposes. Then, there will be efforts to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in the United States and other countries still outside the treaty. Next, we will have a Nuclear Security Summit initiated by Barack Obama. Finally, the NPT Review Conference will be held in May 2010. At this forum, the level of expectations will be especially highly dependent on the success of US-Russian nuclear arms reductions.

On April 1, 2009, the two presidents announced the commitment of the United States and Russia to move towards a nuclear-free world. The *success-treaty* in 2009 is real. It will be an extremely important but only the first modest step forward. Further steps will require stable, long-year negotiations, steadfast joint overcoming - not jumping over – every obstacle. Excessive haste can only compromise the goal defined by Medvedev and Obama. After all, that was not an April Fool's joke on their part.