



RUSSIA–U.S.: LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP

Russia and the United States have learnt how to deal with each other. And this is in some ways a new experience. During a one-day summit held by President Dmitry Medvedev and President Barack Obama on June 24, 2010, the seventh such meeting in the 17 months since Obama took office, both sides made concrete progress in a number of very important and substantive areas. One of those important areas of Russia–U.S. relations appeared to be the field of nuclear disarmament.

One must say that the past decade has been time wasted for the cause of nuclear disarmament. However, on April 1, 2009, during their first meeting in London, Presidents Medvedev and Obama declared that Russia and the United States would lead the world towards a nuclear-free future. It now turns out that the statement was not a Fools' Day joke. Only five days after the meeting with Dmitry Medvedev, President Barack Obama expounded on his nuclear-weapon-free ideas during a speech in Prague. Both presidents then agreed to launch bilateral talks on further reductions and limitations on strategic offensive weapons. Less than a year on, Obama and Medvedev have agreed that they are happy with the draft of the new treaty, and that it is ready for signing.

The talks themselves were painful, sometimes even excruciating—a clear demonstration that the *reset* of bilateral strategic relations is only progressing in fits and starts. It was the deeply ingrained lack of trust rather than any actual reductions figures that posed the biggest problem. Obama's successful visit to Moscow last July and the U.S. decision last September to abandon plans to station missile defense elements in the Czech Republic and Poland helped to clear the path towards a new deal. But even those moves could not completely *reset* bilateral dialogue and overcome the deep mutual suspicions and mistrust that had accumulated over the years and decades. Another problem is that over the two decades since the signing of the START I treaty, the skills of the negotiators on both sides had become somewhat rusty. But, luckily, the two negotiating teams were led by top professionals in the field, Anatoly Antonov and Rose Gottemoeller.

There were two large practical hurdles on the way towards reaching an agreement. The first was the verification mechanisms—those have become much less cumbersome and expensive compared with the provisions of the START I treaty, which has now fulfilled its purpose and peacefully expired. The second was the linkage between strategic offensive and defensive weapons. Russia insisted that the two should be linked, arguing—quite reasonably, in my view—that even the United States itself has not yet fully defined the true nature and purpose of the missile defense system it is developing (now in a new format). Obamas come and go, but Russia will always have to face the United States as the biggest military power in the world. Predictability of U.S. policy on missile defense is a vital necessity for Russia.

The new treaty addresses both of these concerns, though only very modestly and thus insufficiently in the case of missile defense. This agreement really is a product of a compromise. The alternative was to walk away from a deal in a huff, which was not part of the plan for either the Kremlin or the White House.



The treaty signed on April 8, 2010, has marked the beginning of a *new Prague Disarmament Spring*. The new ceiling of 1,550 deployed warheads represents a reduction of about a third compared with the previous Russian–U.S. agreement, the SORT treaty (which actually looked more like a protocol of intentions than a proper treaty). The new limit on deployed missiles and bombers—700—is less than half of the previous figure. There is also a new ceiling for the combined number of deployed and non-deployed missiles (800 for each side). This approach was quite predictable—in essence, all the bargaining over the fine details never had any real chance of derailing the deal. Neither is the new treaty too radical—the cuts could have been much deeper, and the ceiling for the number of deployed warheads could have been lowered all the way to 1,000 without any damage done to security. But the terms actually agreed can best be described as quite measured and acceptable to both sides (as well as their respective legislatures).

The two countries sent an important signal to the rest of the world: Russia and the United States really are making progress towards nuclear disarmament, not just paying lip-service to it. The deal also came just in time for the NPT Review Conference. That is why the negotiators were in quite a bit of a hurry. And the haste was well worth it—both sides arrived at the NPT Conference with heads held high, with no need to prevaricate about their nuclear intentions. As a result on May 28, 2010 this international forum has adopted the outcome document that is to make a practical contribution to strengthening the NPT regime.

So, from the experts' point of view, Prague 2010 was not an unexpected breakthrough but a long-awaited, well-polished, and rather modest compromise. The most interesting bit is yet to come.

It is not enough simply to sign the treaty—it will then have to enter into force. Russia's previous experience with the U.S. in that respect is not very reassuring: neither SALT II nor, most recently, START II treaties were ratified by the U.S. Congress, in contrast to Soviet (Russian) ratification. There is a saga of the U.S. senators insisting on linking the ratification of various agreements with Russia to other, sometimes completely unrelated things (one example from just two years ago is the deal on cooperation in nuclear energy and the war in the South Caucasus). Of course, the best approach would be a simultaneous ratification in both countries. The fact that President Obama has managed to ram the healthcare reform through the Senate is a proper reason for cautious optimism about his lobbying talents. After all, the new START Treaty should become his first tangible foreign policy trophy.

It would be premature to talk about any further steps towards nuclear disarmament before this agreement enters into force. The International conference held by PIR Center on June 25, 2010 – dedicated to the new START Treaty – demonstrated one more time the significance of the speed of enforcing the new treaty for both countries. Nevertheless, politicians in both Moscow and Washington are already plotting the road map for their next steps.

Sooner or later, Russia and the U.S. will still have to dive deep into negotiations on radical cuts of their nuclear arsenals. And that is where the negotiators will face a veritable obstacle course. First, cuts will have to be made not just in strategic but in sub-strategic weapons as well. The United States will have to begin by unilaterally withdrawing all its tactical nuclear weapons from Europe. There have already been signals that Washington understands this (see the article by the Deputy Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation **Yury Baluyevsky** concerning this point). Second, dialogue will have to be launched on banning the placement of weapons in space. So far, the Americans have demonstrated little appetite for such dialogue. Third, the two sides must not allow the effects of nuclear cuts to be offset by ramping up the numbers of strategic systems armed with conventional warheads—something President Dmitry Medvedev has described as a *nonequivalent exchange*. Fourth, Moscow and Washington will have to decide when to invite the UK, France, and China to join the nuclear reductions talks. Meanwhile, Paris and Beijing would rather prefer not to receive such an invitation at all, so as to avoid the need to disrespectfully decline.

The issues I have listed are only the tip of the iceberg. The agenda will be so massive that the two delegations will have to settle in Geneva for quite some time—possibly for years. But here at least there is no real rush—neither America nor Russia is going to abandon its nuclear arsenal in the next few decades. It is, however, high time to rethink the role of those arsenals, especially in view of the new generation of high-precision non-nuclear weapons that have become available. The U.S. has already made a start here in its new Nuclear Posture Review Report, released only a few days before the signing of the new START treaty.

In order to keep track of the dynamics of the Russian–U.S. strategic dialogue, to understand what is holding back the process and why, the PIR Center has teamed up with the Ploughshares Fund from the United States to set up the Sustainable Partnership with Russia Group (SUPR). This *council of wise men* will hold informal meetings to develop recommendations for the two governments. We hope that this initiative will contribute to further improvement of the U.S.–Russian strategic relations and will help to create a common security vision.

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The nuclear disarmament itself has a varied history. Nevertheless Russia (or the Soviet Union) and the United States always played their determining role. In this issue of our journal we will dive into the history of nuclear disarmament in “Historical Pages”. First of all, there is an article by the Russian leading expert in the sphere of nonproliferation and arms control Ambassador **Roland Timerbaev** on the history of the London Subcommittee of the UN Disarmament Commission (1954–1957). In his article “First Attempts to Move towards Arms Limitation” Ambassador Timerbaev provides his own assessment of how and why the talks at the London Subcommittee ended with no results.

Secondly, the article “Trust Building and Nuclear Disarmament” by **Vladimir Gorbulin** concerning the Ukrainian nuclear disarmament will no doubt attract your attention. In 1994, Ukraine made an important political decision to renounce its strategic nuclear weapons and join the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon state. The author, who was the Secretary of the National Security Council under the Ukrainian President at the time, and who now serves as the Director of the Institute of National Security (Ukraine), took part in the negotiations and knows all the background of the decision made in Kiev.

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What is the future of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)? This is another question we would like to answer on our pages. This question concerns not only the sphere of Russia–U.S. relations, but all of the world society. Being a significant part of the nonproliferation regime this treaty still did not come into force. We addressed this question to the person who knows about the CTBT more than anyone – **Tibor Tóth**, the Executive Secretary of the CTBT Organization. Estimating the possibility of the CTBT ratification by the U.S. and some other countries, the Ambassador also speaks about the current development of the International Monitoring System and a mechanism of on-site inspections.

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A highlight of this issue is the publication of an article by **Bilyana Tsvetkova**, a Bulgarian expert and research assistant at the Small Arms Survey Program (Geneva) on the nuclear security situation in Russia and the possibility of the Russian arsenals to be used by terrorists. The Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in April 2010 demonstrated once again the urgency of addressing the vulnerability of nuclear materials and preventing them from falling into the hands of terrorists. The general opinion since the end of the Cold War has been that the huge Russian nuclear arsenal is one of the possible sources of nuclear weapons and materials sought by terrorists. It is believed that the risk of theft of Russian nuclear materials is especially high. However, the author comes to a different conclusion, providing an in-depth analysis of this view in her article “Disproving a Conventional Wisdom: Why Nuclear Terrorism Originating from Russia is a Myth” for *Security Index*. She offers a number of recommendations for addressing the problem. We invite our readers to join the debate. 

Vladimir Orlov



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