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**MOSCOW, JANUARY 18, 2021. PIR PRESS. PIR Center experts Vladimir Orlov and Sergey Semenov discuss the prospects for the Russian-American dialogue on arms control.**

President Trump`s legacy in arms control resembles smoldering ruins. And the ruins are covered with a dense fog. For the first time since the end of the Cold War Moscow and Washington approached the line, after which the entire system of a treaty-based system preserving the transparency and predictability of Russian and U.S. nuclear arsenals. Being close to such a line is quite sobering. And given that, the major nuclear powers are doomed to resume their work on preserving and renovating the strategic stability architecture.

And what if they fail to do so? Then the other scenario is vertigo over the precipice, with one desperately falling down.

Five weeks did the marathon-like brainstorming of PIR Center and Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies last. What did we hear from the experts close to the upcoming Biden administration? That it is equally important both for Russia and the United States.

Certainly, it is crucial that the New START extension promised by Biden be accompanied by continued consultations on strategic stability. At the same time, we see that the Democratic administration`s openness for dialogue does not imply shifting from some of the longstanding stances. For instance, the US will not forgo demands to cover all the types of nuclear warheads and bring China into arms control. A bipartisan consensus is clearly emerging on these issues, the American military concurring. However, as it seems to us, there is a chance that the Biden administration will approach these issues realistically and will not expect immediate successes. The experts close to the new administration understand that Russia will not exert pressure on China to make Beijing join arms control. But Russia should neither expect that Washington will somehow encourage London and Paris to participate in multilateral arms control.

It is unlikely that Moscow and Washington will manage to conclude some comprehensive agreement.

Instead of a united START IV, a system of strategic equations should be constructed, the elements of which would allow for the participation of 3rd countries. Of importance are mechanisms ensuring predictability of rather than numerical limits on the elements of the security equation: traditional and novel strategic systems, missile defense, medium- and shorter-range missiles.

One of the pillars of such a system could include a common limit on all warheads and separate sub-limits for strategic and non-strategic warheads (deployed as well as those in reserve). Together with the limitations on deployed and non-deployed delivery vehicles it, on the one hand, would allow solving the issue of U.S. upload potential, on the other – to partly assuage the American concerns regarding the Russian non-strategic nuclear arsenal.

Moreover, it would be timely to agree to ban attacks against the objects of critical infrastructure related to nuclear weapons: communications satellites, early warning systems, nuclear command and control.

We do not entertain illusions. If Moscow and Washington do not display flexibility and astuteness now, go deep in debating minor particulars, soon there will be nothing to destroy. The fog will clear away – and we will see only ruins not fit for renovation.

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