



UDC 327:355.02(73)(470+571)''20''
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22182/spm.7042020.7>
Review article

Serbian Political Thought
No. 4/2020, Year XXVII,
Vol. 70
pp. 123-149

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CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES REGARDING THE EXTENSION OF THE “NEW START” TREATY: CAN THE USA AND RUSSIA PRESERVE EXISTING STRATEGIC ARMS CONTROL?***

Abstract

Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on measures for further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms (“New START”) is the last pillar of the arms control regime on which the end of the Cold War and the new world order rested. Its expiration on 5 February 2021 is a top security challenge and indicates a possible new strategic arms race. However, can the United States and Russia still preserve the existing strategic arms control by extending the Treaty for another five years? What are the prospects, the opportunities and obstacles for this extension? What are the most pressing issues USA and Russia face with in order to preserve strategic arms control and are they willing to do so? In order to answer to these research questions author analyses several key issues that are of paramount importance for extension of the New START: nuclear modernization processes, invention of new weapons and emergence of new warfare domains; transparency and verification and broader confidence building

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*** The paper presents findings of a study developed as a part of the research project “Serbia and challenges in international relations in 2020”, financed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, and conducted by Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade.

measures; missile defence and prompt global strike; tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and Asia; general US-Russia relations which include question of democratic capacity; and broader influence of this Treaty on nuclear non-proliferation regime. By using content and discourse analysis author concludes that, although it is obvious that the extension of the New START would be primarily in favour of Russia and that the USA has not much to gain, the character of strategic stability in the Third Nuclear Age gives reasons to believe that the New START will be extended for another five years.

Keywords: strategic stability, New START Treaty, arms control, strategic arms, non-proliferation, international security

STRATEGIC STABILITY IN THE THIRD NUCLEAR AGE

Today's world order is characterised by the crisis of its main principles based on liberal paradigm, international institutions and multilateralism in general, including strategic stability and arms control regime. If we apply analogy with Thomas Kuhn's observations on resolving the paradigm crisis and scientific revolutions, crises of contemporary world order can be resolved in one of the three ways: by resolving the crisis while maintaining the same order, by transformation of the order or reform, or by revolution, which is a complete change of order (Кун 1974). Transferred to our topic, question that arises is: Will the strategic arms control survive in present form, be transformed in the way to preserve some of the old characteristic and include new, or completely changed with some new form of strategic stability and arms control that is no longer bilateral in nature?

The concept of strategic stability evolved into one of the pillars of the Cold War, but backslid with its end. The concept was reformed after the emergence of new security threats and, generally, less attention paid to the nuclear weapons in national security and defence strategies of the United States and Russia at the beginning of 1990s. However, with the renewed confrontation of the two powers, beginning of modernization of their nuclear arsenals, adoption of nuclear strategies where nuclear triads occupies significant place and nuclear policies that lower the threshold

for the use of nuclear weapons in regional conflicts, the Cold War concept of strategic stability revived.

According to these changes of the concept of strategic stability some authors define separate epochs. For example, “Nuclear Matters Handbook 2020” distinguishes three different periods in this regard: the First, Second and Third Nuclear Age. First Nuclear Age covers the period from 1945, when the first atomic bomb was used, until 1991, when the United States conducted the last test of nuclear bomb. The Second Nuclear Age began in 1992 when major threats became asymmetric in the form of nuclear terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and lasts until 2018, when China and Russia as nuclear states has again become the main threat to the United States. The “return of great power competition” and the revival of American nuclear weapons production is considered the Third Nuclear Age (Nuclear Matters Handbook 2020, 9).

The instruments of strategic stability evolved through the Cold War in the way to include not only deterrence, but also international treaties and specific relations among two superpowers and the rest (parity/disparity element). Gerson (Gerson 2013, 5) describes that “the threat of surprise attack was the catalyst to the line of thinking that ultimately led to the concept of strategic stability.” First, the primary concern was to survive the first strike and be able to retaliate, which led to the development of concept of deterrence. The so-called Killian Report¹ published in 1955, for example, did not provide solution for the problem of vulnerability of US nuclear forces or a surprise attack through the international treaty, but only through unilateral measures that USA should conduct in order to strengthen its defences and deterrence. This included planning of pre-emptive nuclear attack, strengthening early warning system and reducing the vulnerability of nuclear forces (18). However, the President Eisenhower proposed an agreement with the Soviet Union almost immediately after this Report, in mid-1955, to allow the facilities to be photographed (Treaty on Open Skies was signed in 1992)² and supported mutual assurances

- 1) Named after Dr. James Killian, the President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and a chief science advisor to Eisenhower.
- 2) Treaty on Open Skies allows state parties to conduct unarmed aerial surveillance flights over the entire territory of its participants and collect data (video, photogra-

that neither side would conduct the first nuclear strike (19). Two years after the Killian Report, in 1957, the Guitar Report³ called for an agreement with the Soviets on limiting nuclear weapons and an agreement on arms control (21). At that moment, the notion of strategic stability, understood as taking measures to avoid the nuclear danger, including nuclear war between two superpowers, began to include, in addition to deterrence, the concept of arms control through international treaties.

Before any agreement among the two powers could be reached, it was necessary to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which is why The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons - NPT (1968) had to be signed first, and only then all other strategic arms control agreements were negotiated. Two superpowers ensured that they achieved a central place in nuclear weapons possession with significant disparity with others. This moment is also captured by Kroenig (Kroenig 2019, 92-93) who writes that the First nuclear age had two very different models of strategic stability - first was the “well-known model between the United States and the Soviet Union of mutual vulnerability, secure second-strike capabilities, and rough parity in capabilities” and a second model which is one of large asymmetries of the USA and USSR arsenals compared to other nuclear states.

After NPT entered into force, the international strategic arms control regime was formed on the basis of several treaties - the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty - ABM (1972), the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty - INF (1987), Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty - CFE (1990) and finally the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty - START (1991). This international regime set the stage for the end of the Cold War and beginning of the Second

phy) of military facilities, activities and forces in order to ensure that neither side is preparing for the attack (primary concern of USA and USSR in the moment when this idea was proposed by the President Eisenhower was how to avoid first nuclear strike). Collected data by observation flight is available to all state parties. USA announced withdrawal from the Treaty in May 2020 due to the alleged Russian violations and non-compliance and contrary to the European allies support of the Treaty. Russia is also considering the withdrawal since the NATO members, parties of the Treaty, can share imagery with USA which would no longer be part of the Treaty.

- 3) Named after H. Rowen Gaither, first chairman of the Gaither committee that was tasked by the President Eisenhower to create strategy of US response to possible first nuclear strike.

Nuclear Age, where the USA and Russia were no longer perceived as enemies. Main security challenges became general instability and asymmetric threats which required the transformation or even complete change of the very concept of strategic stability in order to include not only the bilateral relationship between the United States and Russia, but also other actors, common threats, new types of weapons and warfare domains. Trenin, for example, states that the United States and Russia defined strategic stability in 1990 as the absence of incentives for any country to carry out its first nuclear strike, but that this has now changed due to changes in the geopolitical, technological and psychological environment, which demanded the extension of the concept of strategic stability (Trenin 2019). In 2016, International Security Advisory Board (International Security Advisory Board 2016, 9) proposed that the term “strategic stability” should be replaced with the phrase or “the organizing principle”: “agreed characteristics and practices of states possessing nuclear weapons so as to reduce the risks of war, especially war with a risk of escalation to the potential use of nuclear weapons.”

However, this change did not happen primarily because the new ballistic missile threats of “rough nations”, enlargement of NATO, the crisis in the post-Soviet space, and the rise of China, brought the new confrontation of great powers. With this new strategic environment, that can be called the Third Nuclear Age the term “strategic stability” survived and even strengthened. Rakesh Sood (Sood 2019, 14) for example describes the difference between three ages in the following way: “If Cold War and global annihilation defined the First Nuclear Age and heightened proliferation risks and global terrorism defined the post-Cold War Second Nuclear Age, then in present times, political confrontation among major powers has made a comeback, even as terrorist groups keep up the pressure in seeking access to WMD technologies.” In this way the concept of strategic stability in the Third Nuclear Age is a combination of the renewed USA-Russia competition supplemented with the post-Cold War meaning that includes new actors, such as rising China, and asymmetric threats such as global terrorism. This means that the strategic arms control in the Third Nuclear Age will not stay the same nor completely replaced but transformed or reformed by extension.

Deterrence, strategic arms control and parity/disparity principle are still the main elements for preserving strategic stability. Without the “effective functioning of managing mechanisms - mechanisms for cooperation and making agreements between key actors on acceptable behaviour and ways of resolving conflicts” there is no stability of the world order (Костић 2019, 79-80). Thus, arms control agreements are one of the three essential parts of strategic stability and without them stability is no longer possible. Today, the crisis of multilateralism is a crisis of the basic pillars on which the Cold War ended causing the instability of liberal and rule-based world order. The demise of the ABMT, INFT, the Open Skies Agreement and CFE Treaty makes the New START Treaty even more important. Its extension or termination represents a turning point in relations between the two largest nuclear powers and has great impact on other states and general proliferation matter. Without this formal international legal framework, the world will definitely stay without consensual control of nuclear weapons, both in terms of number and in terms of one type of weapon that is controlled.

There are numerous debates about the future of the New START, and the most important ones are taking place within the United States and Russia, while other nuclear powers are inclined to support its extension for another five years on the existing bilateral basis. In 2017 the US President Donald Trump called the New START a “bad deal” and conditioned its extension with including China in strategic arms negotiations (Hitchens 2019). However, this position was softened in the middle of 2020 when Trump said that bilateral structure of strategic arms control should be preserved by taking the US-Russia common position and making the framework which would later include China (The White House 2020). On the other side, Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed unconditional support for the extension of the New START (Arms Control Association 2020), although from the very beginning and entry into force of the Treaty, Russia threatened to leave it primarily because of the deployment of the US national missile defence in Europe. In the next paragraphs of the paper we will examine what are the prospects, the opportunities and obstacles for this extension and what are the most pressing issues for the USA and Russia regarding the extension of the New START Treaty.

CONTENTIOUS ISSUES RELATED TO THE EXTENSION OF THE “NEW START” TREATY

Contentious issues relevant to the extension of the New START Treaty in the USA and Russia are the modernization of their nuclear forces and the inclusion of new weapons and warfare domains; issues of transparency and verification; missile defence and prompt global strike; general US-Russian relations and the issue of democratic capacity; and the impact on the general non-proliferation regime. According to each of this criteria we will try to draw a conclusion on the impact it has to the extension of the New START Treaty.

The process of modernization of nuclear weapons of the USA and Russia, new weapons and the warfare domains

As for the issue of modernization, in the United States it has so far been inextricably linked to the support to the arms control agreements. Proponents of the New START Treaty emphasize the importance of the extension of the Treaty for the modernization of the United States nuclear weapons and defence in general in order to gain wide support of both Republicans and Democrats. Regarding the possible extension of the New START, one of the arguments of the supporters of the extension is that by not extending the Treaty it would be the first time that nuclear modernization in US is conducted in the absence of arms control agreement, which undermines relations with Russia and gives a bad signal to non-nuclear weapon states. Being the last to embark on the process of modernization of nuclear arsenal United States had an insight into others processes of defence modernization. It is estimated, for example, that by the beginning of 2020, Russia has recapitalized about 76% of the strategic nuclear forces (Richard 2020).

One of the greatest influences on the US nuclear modernization programme has had alleged Russian nuclear doctrine after the conflict in Ukraine, the so called “escalate to de-escalate” doctrine. As the USA interprets it, by adopting this doctrine Russia lowered the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons in regional conflicts (Nuclear Posture Review 2018, 30). Another significant

influence was made by the invention of new Russian strategic weapons - *Avangard*, *Sarmat*, *Tsirkon*, *Poseidon*, *Burevestnik*, *Kinzhal*, *Barguzin* and *Rubezh* (Congressional Research Service 2020, 20-27). New Russian doctrine and capabilities has led Trump administration not only to adopt plans for modernization of the existing nuclear arsenal, but also to pursue new possibilities and capabilities, primarily low-yield nuclear weapons. In the process of modernization, the US will, also, replace *Ohio* class submarines with a new *Columbia* class by 2031, the existing *Minuteman III* ground based weapon system with a new *Ground Based Strategic Deterrent* system starting in 2028, the new *B-21 Raider* bomber will be introduced and *B61-12* bombs, as well as long-range weapon (*Long-Range Stand Off Weapon*). Infrastructure, facilities, and the command, control and communication system (NC3) will be improved, where the use of artificial intelligence is an issue of special importance. By 2024, it is estimated that the cost of nuclear weapons modernization will be about 7% of the total defence budget, and the peak will be reached in the late 2020s and early 2030s, when the largest allocations for the modernization of nuclear weapons are expected (Reif, Bugos 2020a)⁴.

Modernization processes in Russia and the United States have raised two important questions – one regarding the new types of weapons and warfare domains and other on nuclear testing. Regarding new types of weapons, Article 5 of the Treaty allows the modernization, with the new types of armament and their inclusion under the Treaty being discussed at the Bilateral Consultative Commission. Russia's new long-range nuclear systems, which are likely to be deployed by 2026, the *Avangard* hypersonic missile and the *Sarmat* heavy ICBM are included under the restrictions of the New START. The *Avangarde* has already been shown to the US inspectors as part of the verification process of the New START, and the same will be done with *Sarmat* when it is deployed (Vaddi 2019). As for the new warfare domains, during the modernization process,

4) In the period between 2001 and 2017, no more than 4% of the budget of the US Department of Defense was allocated for the nuclear arsenal (Reif, Sanders-Zakre 2019, 4). Between fiscal years 2018 and 2028, the United States is projected to spend about \$ 500 billion on maintaining and replacing nuclear forces, which is an increase of about 23% over Obama's planned budget for the same purpose (Reif, Bugos 2020b).

both sides have increasingly talked about the importance of air and space forces. Air and space forces, as a separate branch of Russian Armed Forces, were established on 1 August 2015 (Russian Aerospace Forces or VKS), while the separate Space Command in the United States was re-established after 17 years on 29 August 2019. According to Professor Milinović this new emphasises on space domain and space weapons could make nuclear triad a “nuclear quartet”, which could also lead to armaments revolution (Novosti 2020). In July 2020, the United States accused Russia of testing a device, a “new space weapon” that could be used against other satellites in orbit (RTS 2020). On the other side, the United States is currently working on sensors that would be installed in space that could monitor ballistic and hypersonic missiles (hypersonic and ballistic tracking space sensor (HBTSS)) (H.R. 6395 2020, 18-19). General John Raymond (Raymond 2020) commander of the United States Space Command, describes the importance of space domain for the USA, in the following way: “We are the best in the world in space today... We can no longer consider our superiority in space as a given, if deterrence fails we must be prepared to fight for superiority in space” referring to the China’s and Russia’s building-up and modernization of their space capabilities. Regarding nuclear testing, the United States has accused Russia of testing low-yield nuclear weapons, which is, according to the USA, violation of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) that Russia ratified, but Russia and the CTBT deny this (BBC 2019). Also, some in the United States during the George W. Bush presidency believed that the refusal to modernize US nuclear weapons necessarily requires a return to underground testing of existing arsenals in order to prove its credibility (Grossman 2008). Trump’s mention of the possibility of nuclear testing (Hudson, Sonne 2020) is, thus, directed at those in the United States who oppose the modernization of nuclear weapons since the alternative could be renewed nuclear testing.

Regarding the extension of the New START, modernization process of nuclear forces in the USA have two consequences. First, having in mind the importance of the balance between modernization programmes and arms control agreements in the USA administration it is highly likely that the New START treaty could be extended. But, on the other hand, if the USA wants to

develop some new weapons, it does not want to include under any provision, limitations or verification by Russia, then it will not go for the extension. In this case, unlike the Russian modernization program which has been conducted under the conditions of the New START Treaty, the United States may conduct its own modernization without strategic arms control agreement. That will leave Russia without possibility to inspect or verify new US system and capabilities and further contribute to the growth of tensions, lack of confidence, and new arms race.

Transparency and verification

Transparency, in terms of policies (intentions) and resources (capabilities), is an essential part of arms control agreement and important confidence building measure. Conducting nuclear or military build-up in an opaque manner is usually seen as security threat especially by one's neighbours, which is why the USA at first conditioned the extension of the New START by involving China into the negotiations. Without inclusion of China in the strategic and nuclear arms control negotiations it is no longer possible to conduct further bilateral reductions of strategic offensive arms of the USA and Russia, since it would disrupt the parity/disparity element of strategic stability. Having in mind the importance of transparency, the United States has envisaged in the draft defence budget for 2021 (H.R. 6395 2020, 4)⁵ the creation of a „, federally funded research and development center to produce an open source analysis of foreign nuclear programs, to be made available on the internet.” The research refers specifically to China, North Korea and Russia respectively, and the Research Centre itself would have its own website where all data would be publicly available. As Republican Congressman Michael Turner (Turner 2020) explained, these centre and research are needed in order to uncover and make public data on other states, since the data on US forces are publicly available, and to enable a national and global debate on nuclear weapons issues.

Regarding verification, according to the New START Treaty, it comprises the creation of a comprehensive database, notifications,

5) More details on what would be contained in such research can be found on the Summary of the FY21 National Defense Authorization Bill, 2020, pp. 13-14.

unique identifying numbers for all delivery vehicles (deployed and non-deployed delivery systems) and on-site inspections. On-site inspections is one of the most important reasons for concluding the Treaty, and still are the main argument of the proponents of the extension of the Treaty. Without it, the argument goes, it would be very difficult to determine the real situation on the ground, to have an insight into the deployment of forces and the doctrine of the use of nuclear weapons of both sides. This would then lead to the need to strengthen “national technical means”, that is, intelligence means and capacities in order to determine what could be more easily determined through the implementation of the Treaty. The US Army is the greater proponent of this line of thinking which is why it mostly support the extension of the New START Treaty.

The criticism of the extension of the Treaty refers to the new way of counting warheads where heavy bombers count as one warhead, as well as to the exclusion of rail-mobile launchers of ICBMs since the doubt occurred whether they would, if any of the Treaty parties develop it again, fall under the limitations of the Treaty (Treaty Doc. 111–5 2010, 86). The negotiators explained that if these systems reappear, since at the moment of negotiation of the New START neither side had it, they would fall under the regime provided by the Treaty (97-98). This issue has gained new importance with the claims that Russia has again developed rail-mobile launchers of ICBMs called *Barguzin* (Kristensen, Korda 2019, 73). Other critics of the New START in the USA included the abolition of the permanent US observation mission at Votkinsk, a facility where Russia produces ICBMs (*Yars*, *Topol M*, *Iskander* and *Bulava*) (Treaty Doc. 111–5 2010, 98). This is due to the fact that a similar Russian mission previously ceased to exist in the United States due to the termination of production of ICBMs in Utah. Instead, notifications are scheduled within 48 hours before any new weapon leaves Votkinsk.

Criticism also existed regarding telemetry since it was excluded from the New START, but negotiators answered that this happened because the strength of weapons was no longer measured under the new Treaty and there was no limit to the strength of warheads. Still, the notifications of up to five ballistic missile launches a year remained. There is also controversy over whether

the New START really reduces warheads by one-third compared to the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) since strategic bombers count as one warhead no matter how many warheads they actually carry. One of the criticisms was also that Russia had already had fewer launchers than the Treaty limit and, unlike the USA, it had no additional security obligations towards more than 30 allies (99). Here, however, it is forgotten that Russia also created a system of collective defence, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and needs to prove credibility in defending its allies.⁶

Today, a special question arises about how to perform verification in space as well as in cyberspace domains. This is why the new round of negotiations is needed in order to improve strategic arms control. Still, preservation of existing verification measures on bilateral level for another five years is one of the strongest argument for the New START extension.

Missile defence and prompt global strike

The issue of missile defence has so far caused a lot of attention and problems on both sides, and forced them to give unilateral statements during the signing of the Treaty in 2010. On the Russian insistence, Preamble of the Treaty contains a special relationship between strategic offensive and strategic defensive arms, which some in the United States, mostly members of the Republican Party, see as a limitation on the possibility of deploying US national missile defence. Actually, the only thing that is prohibited by the Treaty is the conversion of strategic offensive arms launchers into missile interceptor launchers and vice versa, and the reason for introducing that provision is that the United States had already converted five such launchers in Vandenberg for missile defence in 2002. However, representatives of their armed forces, as well as the then Minister of Defence Robert Gates, stated that this is

6) The agreement on collective security around which the CSTO was formed contains a provision on collective defence, which is called into question, for example, in the event of a conflict that some members would have, such as the current one between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Armenia, as a member of the CSTO, enjoys this protection, while Turkey, which does not have its own nuclear weapons, supports Azerbaijan. Russia and Armenia also have an agreement according to which Russia guarantees Armenian territorial integrity and supply it with modern military equipment.

no longer the US plan, since the conversion is very expensive and inefficient, although faster, while building a new missile defence launchers is cheaper than converting existing ones (108). This is especially important issue because converted launchers are then exempted from the limitations provided by the New START Treaty. Since 2028, however, Russia is accusing United States for violation of this provision by calling into question irreversibility of the conversion of launchers on some submarines and heavy bombers (Trevithick 2019).

The deployment of the USA/NATO missile defence is also connected with Russia's constant demands that NATO's expansion to the East must not include the expansion of NATO's military infrastructure to the territory of the new eastern member states, such as Poland and Romania, near the Russian borders, as well as the deployment of a significant number of foreign troops on the territories of these countries. Because of these Russian fears, the representatives of the USA constantly repeated that the missile defence system in Europe is not directed against Russia's strategic offensive capabilities, but aims at preventing limited missile attacks by Iran or North Korea. Also, they stress that this missile defence system cannot be effective against Russian massive attack, but only against a limited-range attack (short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, but also a smaller number of long-range ballistic missiles). Also, US experts state that even if the fourth phase of the European Phased Adaptive Approach - EPAA is deployed it cannot endanger Russian deterrence because the interceptors are small and slower than the Russian intercontinental missiles, as well as that they cannot reach Russian silos with nuclear weapons. However, the first 10 interceptors that were deployed in Poland were 12 times larger than the interceptors later installed (108). Besides, during the public hearing on the ratification of the New START Senator John F. Kerry said: "This treaty does not, and will not, constrain missile defence in any meaningful way. The United States will continue to develop and deploy defences, as we choose to, against possible attack from states like North Korea and Iran, and, were we to choose to, even against the potential of an attack from Russia or some other country." (392). Still, this should be seen in light of the need for Obama's administration to assure Republicans that national missile defence will not be constrained in any way, and to

gain support and ratification by the end of 2010 (Collina 2011). On the other hand, these assurances on non-limitation of US missile defence gave Russia a special incentive to develop new types of weapons that would be able to bypass or break through this missile defence. Russia has threatened numerous countermeasures if the United States continues to deploy its national missile defence - from withdrawing from the Treaty, through the termination of cooperation on the issues of Iran and Afghanistan, to a new arms race. Taking these warnings seriously President Obama gave up deploying the last phase of the EPAA in 2013, which today undermines the support of the members of the Republican Party for the extension of the Treaty. Having in mind that Russia has developed new types of weapons that it claims can pass through the US/NATO missile defence or bypass it, the US missile defence is no longer an obstacle for Russia to extend the validity of the Treaty.

In addition to the connection between strategic offensive and strategic defensive weapons that the Preamble of the New START contains, there is also a connection between a prompt global strike and strategic stability. It states that the parties are aware of the impact of conventionally armed ICBMs and SLBMs on strategic stability (New START 2010, 2). The connection also worried some Republican congressmen in the USA and was significant point of contention due to the concern that it would mean limiting the planned Prompt Global Strike system. However, conventionally armed ICBMs and SLBMs fall under the New START regime, which raises the specific issue of appropriate combination of nuclear and conventionally armed ICBMs (if a prompt global strike is based on them) in order to be within the Treaty limits. This is another reason why further reduction of strategic weapons would be problematic, especially for the USA, but there are possibilities that this limitation can be overcome by building a completely new system for prompt global strike that would not be based on ballistic missiles and use launchers that fall under the New START limits.

US-Russia relationship and the issue of democratic capacity

Improvement of relations between the USA and Russia should enable transparency, predictability and stability, and thus greater security for both sides leading to the extension of the Trea-

ty. However, there are those who believe that the mere existence of the Treaty represents a proof not of good US-Russia relations but continuation of the Cold War practice. Instead, two parties should conclude multilateral treaty which includes cooperation against common threats. Proponents of the preserving bilateral character of the strategic arms control argument that the USA and Russia still possess more than 90% of all nuclear weapons, which is why the continuation of the Treaty on the bilateral basis is still relevant today not only for these two countries, but for the whole international community. Only by continuation of the New START Treaty or agreement on some other new treaty or package of treaties between the USA and Russia the concept of strategic stability can be widened to include new actors.

Another obstacle to the continued validity of the New START Treaty, which is increasingly mentioned in relation to Russia and China, is the lack of their democratic capacity. According to Robert Joseph, the democratic changes in Russia in the 1990s were supposed to enable the establishment of a relationship based on cooperation in combating common threats and enemies such as nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation management, and not to serve Russia to preserve its superpower status and parity with the United States, making nuclear weapons the basic currency of their relationship (Treaty Doc. 111–5 2010, 358). Eric S. Edelman (362) states that the Clinton's, G.W. Bush's and Obama's administrations based their policies on the hope and expectation that a democratizing Russia would become a "normal country", "an active proponent of a new and stable world order, a partner with the United States in NATO in seeking peace and stability, and a Europe whole and free, and also in resolving conflicts and dangers in Southwest Asia, Northeast Asia, and elsewhere."⁷ The very existence of such a Treaty, Edelman states, is a relic of the past and an indicator of the decline and not the progress of relationship with Russia, because the United States does not have such agreements with "normal" countries such as France or Great Britain (366). However, this same author states that in the conditions of the growing authoritarianism of Russia and the conflicts in its

7) Edelman's prepared statement submitted for the Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations of the United States Senate states "partner with the U.S. and NATO in seeking peace and stability" (Treaty Doc. 111–5 2010, 366).

neighbourhood, reaching such an agreement becomes “inevitable” (366). Also, for example, US delegation to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly (DiNanno 2019) declared: “For the first time in history, the international community confronts two large autocratic powers with global reach and ambition – armed with nuclear weapons. We can no longer ignore the reality that Russia and China are determined to undermine the liberal democratic order established in the wake of the Second World War and upon which the United Nations was founded... The key and growing difference among them is between democratically-oriented states who are accountable to their publics and undemocratic regimes focused on challenging the existing rules-based order.” Growing accusations of Russia for not compliance with the treaties on arms control served Trump’s administration to withdraw from several of them. Responding to it Russia also made a long list of US violation of arms control agreements (MID 2018), but did not acted upon them as US did and still offers the possibility of extending the only one remaining – the New START. But, in light of these US attitudes, it is unlikely that the New START Treaty will be extended.

Tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and Asia

The fact that the New START Treaty does not cover Russian tactical weapons is one of the main objections in the USA to its extension. This objection was especially highlighted by the US allies in Europe and East Asia after the crisis in Ukraine in 2014. Allegedly, on the occasion of the crisis in Ukraine, Russia adopted the doctrine “escalate to de-escalate”, which envisages lowering the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons, primarily tactical, in regional conflicts. Officially, as response the United States is developing a new option of low-yield tactical nuclear weapons for its submarines. However, any use of nuclear weapons, according to Russia, would lead to mass retaliation (Tass 2018).

Immediately after the ratification of the New START, the Obama administration announced the beginning of negotiations with Russia on tactical nuclear weapons in order to mitigate the large disparity. At a public hearing in Congress on the ratification of the New START, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reiterated allegations from the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, that, in addition to

strategic offensive weapons, the United States will seek to include non-strategic and non-deployed nuclear weapons in future negotiations, so that Russia increases transparency regarding its non-strategic nuclear capabilities in Europe and relocates these weapons as far as possible from NATO member territory (Treaty Doc. 111–5 2010, 123). Also, in November 2018, Member of Congress Liz Cheney and Senator Tom Cotton submitted a Bill entitled “Stop Russian Nuclear Aggression”. This document (Cheney 2018:5-6) proposed prohibition of the allocation of funds for fiscal 2019 and the next fiscal year for the purpose of extending the implementation of the New START beyond 2021, unless the President certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that extending the New START Treaty is in the national security interest of the United States and the Russian Federation has agreed to include all covered Russian systems under the limits set by the New START Treaty and entered into an agreement on tactical nuclear weapons stockpiles in a verifiable manner. However, this did not happen because Russia believes that previous to any discussion on Russian tactical nuclear weapons all American tactical weapons must be withdrawn from Europe on the basis of the national principle i.e. that each nuclear state should deploy its nuclear forces only on its territory, which was also the position of the former Soviet Union (Welt 2015, 11). The national principle is also contained in the New START Treaty regarding the deployment of strategic offensive arms.

One of the attempts to start solving this issue was the Russian proposal for multilateral moratorium on deployment of tactical missiles. In his letter of 18 September 2019, Russian President Putin expressed his commitment not to deploy medium-range and short-range surface-to-air missiles in Europe and other regions (Asia-Pacific) as long as the United States refrains from doing the same (Arms Control Association 2020). However, nor the United States or NATO accepted this proposal for a moratorium and Russia stated that it would consider any deployment of these missiles near its borders as strategic (Reif, Bugos 2020b). Other proposal, is the latest US proposal to freeze the whole nuclear arsenals of USA and Russia, including tactical nuclear weapons, as part of the negotiations on the extension of the New START, but this proposal is unacceptable for Russia, which proposes unconditional extension for five years (Defense One 2020).

Regarding the influence of the issue of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe on the possibility of extension of the New START it should be noted that during the unification of Germany, the USSR supported the presence of the US troops in Europe as a guarantor of stability. Similarly, today's presence of the USA nuclear weapons in Europe could be seen as stabilizer since it removes incentives for some European countries or the EU to develop its own nuclear weapons. Still, whether the United States would use nuclear weapons in the event of a nuclear attack on a European ally and thus risk the escalation of the conflict to a possible mutually assured destruction, is a question that some Europeans fear. Today, the USA administration under the President Trump has more negative attitude towards Germany allegedly due to the insufficient allocation of funds for NATO and unbalanced burden sharing of costs for the security provided to the Germany (Euronews, 2018). But, essentially, the real cause is strengthening of relationship between Germany and Russia, especially on the issues of energy security and the North Stream 2. This accelerated the question of possible relocation of US troops, including nuclear weapons, from Germany closer to the Russian borders for example, in Poland, the Baltic states or Romania, which would definitively terminate all agreements between Russia and NATO on non-deployment of nuclear weapons further to the East. On the other side, nowadays, Russia is, also, accused for development and deployment of missile system, the 9M729, "which violates the INF Treaty, and poses significant risks to Euro-Atlantic security" (NATO 2019). If we apply analogy with the conclusion of the START Treaty, which was possible only after the conclusion of the INF Treaty, the extension of the New START Treaty would be possible only after the conclusion of agreement or some kind of political arrangements on the issue of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.

Consequences of the New START on the broader non-proliferation regime

Officially, the United States policy regarding nuclear weapons has always been guided by the principle of non-proliferation. This also characterized the period after the Cold War, when Washington treated the issue of nuclear weapons differently from the issue of

the collapse of the Soviet Union. While it recognized the newly independent states of the former USSR, guided by the principle of self-determination, the USA insisted on centralization of nuclear weapons and command under the Russian control and helped nuclear weapons transfer from Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Belarus to Russia. During that period, the parity of the two sides continued to be maintained, with very small nuclear forces of third countries and some degree of proliferation (India, Pakistan, for example). Under the pretext of having very small nuclear forces in relation to the two superpowers, China, the United Kingdom and France were never part of the negotiations on strategic arms control and limitation of nuclear forces. These states repeat the argument today. But the US Defence Intelligence claims that the China's nuclear arsenal will at least double in size over the next decade (FAS 2019). At Trump's insistence that China should become part of the negotiations on the extension of the New START Treaty, Russia stated that it will not influence China to come to the negotiating table, and if China is to be part of the strategic arms negotiations, France and the United Kingdom should be too (WSJ 2020). Still, some author states that these are not comparable examples since, unlike China, UK and France are not increasing their nuclear capabilities in a non-transparent way and by threatening their neighbours (Santoro 2020, 11).

As for the impact of the extension of the New START Treaty on the general non-proliferation regime established by the NPT, a lot of authors and officials believe that it is crucial for maintaining this regime. Further limitations and reductions of nuclear arms of two main possessors sets an example and prove their commitment to nuclear disarmament envisioned by the Article VI of the NPT. United States is also calling China to participate in the negotiations of nuclear arms control in accordance with Article VI of the NPT i.e. in a "good faith" as nuclear state recognised as such under the NPT (Heritage Foundation 2020).

Regarding the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons there is an ongoing discussion on what has more negative impact on nuclear proliferation - failure to reach an agreement with Russia or that agreement on further reduction of nuclear weapons can be seen as sign of weakness and reduction of the United States security guaranties to its allies. More often mentioned concern is that

reducing US nuclear arsenal further could, also, be an invitation for the US adversaries to attack them or “rush into parity”. Opposite argument is that exactly the US withdrawal from the arms control agreements could have opposite effect and motivate other countries to develop weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons as self-defence measures against US aggression, especially in terms of internal regime changes (Valdai Club 2012). Even this criterion does not provide sufficient guarantees that the USA will finally accept to extend the New START Treaty.

CONCLUSION: CAN THE US AND RUSSIA PRESERVE STRATEGIC ARMS CONTROL?

Although it is obvious from the analysis of the controversial issues regarding the extension of the New START Treaty that the extension of the Treaty would be primarily in favour of Russia, and that USA does not have much to gain, the character of strategic stability in the Third Nuclear Age, leads to the conclusion that there are reasons to believe that the New START Treaty will be extended for at least some period of time. The Third Nuclear Age is characterized by the crisis of multilateralism and the return of the confrontation of great powers, but also by the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that could fall into the hands of terrorists. Therefore, strategic stability in the Third Nuclear Age is best seen as combination of the Cold War and post-Cold War concept, with the US-Russia relationship still in the centre but complemented with new actors, weapons and warfare domains, at a time when both countries agree.

On initial negotiations on strategic stability and arms control between the United States and Russia in 2019 in Vienna and Geneva the representatives of two countries discussed prospects of arms control, space security and hypersonic weapons, as well as a possible extension of the New START through a more comprehensive agreement covering additional types of weapons and including China (Reif, Bugos 2020c). In January 2020, another round of the US-Russia strategic dialogue was held in Vienna, on the topics of nuclear stockpiles and strategy, the crisis and stability of the arms race, the role and future of arms control, including

the importance of moving beyond a bilateral format (Reif, Bugos 2020d). During 2020, these talks continue through working groups on a bilateral basis, with the possible inclusion of China at some point after the United States and Russia reach a common position on the framework for future multilateralization of nuclear (strategic and/or tactical) arms control negotiations. Since the Obama administration, in which Joseph Biden served as vice president, negotiated the New START Treaty it is worth mentioning that in the event of his victory at the US presidential election at the end of 2020, the extension of the New START is more certain (Nagle, Donato 2019).

Finally, resolving some of the controversial issues we have written about in this paper remains crucial for the future of strategic arms control and even the broader concept of strategic stability. The Third Nuclear Age requires the inclusion of new actors, weapons and the domains of warfare in the negotiations on the control of strategic weapons, but in essence, it will still remain concentrated around the two main possessors of nuclear weapons, the USA and Russia. Further reduction of their strategic and nuclear arsenals would not be possible in the event of either horizontal or vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons, because the US-Russia parity and large disparity with third nuclear states, along with deterrence and bilateral control of strategic weapons, remain the basis of strategic stability.

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* Manuscript was received on September 10, 2020 and the paper was accepted for publishing on November 22, 2020.