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The New START Treaty: Contain the black elephant

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The New Start Treaty: Containing the black elephant.

Abstract:

The New START Strategic Nuclear Arms Reduction Treaty, signed between Russia and the US, has allowed the containment of the weaponry included in this category for a decade. After several disagreements about its renewal, one of the new US administration first actions is going to be how to tackle this problem. The different security perception between the Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific theatres leads Americans, Russians, and Chinese to raise very unequal positions on the treaty future. For Europe, which has been badly affected by the termination of INF Treaty, this situation further increases a return risk to an European nuclear theatre. Meanwhile, new negotiation ways and possibilities are opening for a balance situation return. However, the European continent must be prepared to ensure its security.

Keywords:

New START, INF, global powers, European nuclear theatre, talks

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El Tratado New START: Contener al elefante negro

Resumen:

El Tratado New START sobre reducción de armas nucleares estratégicas, firmado entre Rusia y EE. UU., ha permitido durante una década la contención del armamento incluido en esta categoría. Después de una serie de desencuentros para su renovación, una de las primeras acciones de la nueva administración estadounidense va a ser cómo enfrentarse a este problema. La diferente percepción de la seguridad entre los teatros euroatlántico y asiático-pacífico hace que estadounidenses, rusos y chinos planteen posturas muy desiguales en cuanto al futuro del tratado. Para Europa, muy perjudicada por la finalización del Tratado INF, esta situación incrementa aún más el riesgo de la vuelta a un teatro nuclear europeo. Entretanto, se abren nuevas vías de negociación y posibilidades para la vuelta a una situación de equilibrio. No obstante, el continente europeo debe estar preparado para garantizar su seguridad.

Palabras clave:

New START, INF, potencias globales, teatro nuclear europeo, negociaciones

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Introduction

We could define a 'black elephant' as a high-impact phenomenon that occurs before our very eyes but that for some reason, mainly psychological, we are not willing to see. This type of event is highly probable and often predicted in different studies over time. However, when they do occur, they are usually classified as 'black swans' because we have not known or have not wanted to see the evolution of events¹.

In this case, the possibility of a new nuclear escalation is getting ever closer, while multilateral agendas show the idyllic path of a route to the disappearance of nuclear weapons in the world.

However, this could be further from the truth. Whereas in multinational forums, many countries that do not have this type of weaponry give no option to any solution other than total disarmament, powers with nuclear capabilities are preparing to defend their interests by using this type of weapon.

The imminent birth of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 22 January is proof of this. Following Nicaragua's ratification of the treaty, the 50 states required for its entry into force has been reached, of which none is nuclear. UN Secretary General António Guterres has declared that this will be the culmination of a global movement to raise awareness of the catastrophe that would be caused by the use of this type of weapon².

Meanwhile, the opposite route began almost two decades ago with US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty prohibiting anti-ballistic missile systems which has annulled US and Soviet anti-missile shields. Despite arms control measures between Russia and America in the new era, tensions between the two have led to the creation of a climate of mistrust, while emerging power China remained on the side-lines of agreements between the rivals of the old world order.

¹ SARDAR, Ziauddin; SWEENEY, John A. 'The three tomorrows of postnormal times.' *Futures*, 2016, vol. 75, p. 9.

² UN News. 'El Tratado para la Prohibición de Armas Nucleares entrará en vigor en enero' (UN treaty banning nuclear weapons set to enter into force in January). 25 October 2020. <https://news.un.org/es/story/2020/10/1483002> (consulted 26/12/2020)

In this environment, relations between states have deteriorated and the last Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review summit in 2015 was a failure, as this would be the origin of the rift between nuclear and non-nuclear states³.

In the meantime, the nuclear non-proliferation regime has continued to progressively deteriorate, and the termination of the INF Treaty in August 2019 is a milestone in this degenerative process. The treaty basically consisted of eliminating US and Russian land missiles with ranges of between 500 and 5,000 kilometres.

The consequences of this have been particularly worrying for Europeans, who are faced with the possibility that this type of weapon may be redeployed in situations of tension between blocs. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas stated that "a piece of Europe's security has been lost". Similarly, tension between China and the United States in the Pacific has risen with the increase in this type of missile, which could carry nuclear warheads⁴.

A new NPT review summit was scheduled for 2020, with even less promising prospects than on the previous occasion. However, the situation triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic was to some extent used to postpone the summit to no later than August 2021. Nevertheless, this has only postponed a situation that is likely to put both disagreements between the nuclearized states, and the disagreement between states with this type of weapon and those without, on the table⁵.

The extinction of the New START treaty on strategic nuclear weapons reduction between the US and Russia is being considered in this environment of tension. This treaty, heir to bipolarity in the world nuclear order, does not seem to fit the expectations of the US and Russia, who are unable to agree.

³ MEYER, Paul. 'The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty: Fin de Regime?' *Arms Control Today*, April 2017 <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2017-04/features/nuclear-nonproliferation-treaty-fin-de-regime> (consulted 26/12/2020)

⁴ BUGOS, Shannon. 'U.S. Complete INF Treaty Withdrawal' *Arms Control Today*, September 2019. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-09/news/us-completes-inf-treaty-withdrawal> (consulted 27/12/2020)

⁵ CARLSON, John. 'Is the NPT still relevant?—How to progress the NPT's disarmament provisions.' *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, 2019, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 107-109.

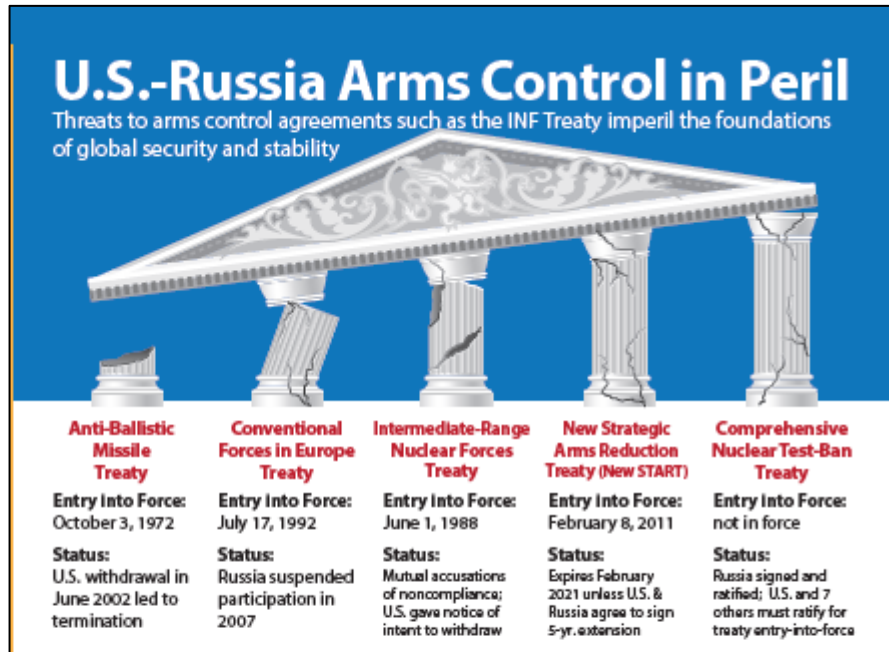


Figure 1: 'Historical evolution of the deterioration of Russian-US relations in the field of arms control'. Source: Nuclear Threat Initiative. <https://www.nti.org/newsroom/news/new-infographic-illustrates-crumbling-foundations-us-russian-arms-control/> Note that on the date the infographic was prepared the INF Treaty was forecast to disappear, as it actually did (consulted 28/12/2020)

The outgoing Trump administration's call to China to sit at the negotiating table has not been successful. In the meantime, the treaty will expire next February 2021 if both Russian diplomacy and the new administration of US president-elect Joe Biden do nothing to prevent it⁶.

However, disagreements over nuclear issues are merely a symptom of the new multipolar order in which the dispute for power is making major powers feel they need this weaponry more and more in order to impose themselves on their rivals. Regional powers meanwhile tend to fill the void that major players are unable to occupy. Finally, smaller actors who fear for their survival may look to this type of weapon as a deterrent so that major powers do not interfere with their vital interests.

Early attempts at strategic nuclear arms control

There is no agreed definition of strategic nuclear weapons, but it could be determined on the basis of the mission for which they are designed, their range, power, number of warheads they can carry, and the level of decision to use them. Therefore, those

⁶ REIF, Kingston; BUGOS, Shannon. 'Fate of New START Hinges on Biden' *Arms Control Now*, 17 December 2020. <https://www.armscontrol.org/blog/2020-12/us-russian-nuclear-arms-control-watch> (consulted 28/12/2020)

designed to achieve objectives in geographically remote regions (over 5,500 kilometres) and whose decision to use is taken at the highest political level could be considered as such, due to the effects or consequences that they could entail⁷.

The reduction of this type of armament first dates back to the end of the 1960s, when at the height of the Cold War the United States reached an arsenal of 1,700 nuclear weapons between intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched missiles (SLBMs), and its air forces had the capacity to complete the nuclear triad. The USSR had more than 1,500 long-range nuclear missiles based on ICBMs and SLBMs. In view of these figures the situation had become unsustainable, both from the security and economic viewpoints, and an attempt was therefore made to rationalise the size of both powers' arsenals.⁸

Between 1969 and 1972, the first 'Strategic Arms Limitation Talks I' (SALT I) took place, concluding with a commitment between Nixon and Brezhnev. The consequences of this led to the abovementioned ABM Treaty and the 'Interim Agreement' between the two, which committed them not to build new silos for ICBMs and not to 'significantly' increase the size of existing ones, as well as to limit the number of launchers for SLBM submarines. The limits set for the USA were 1,054 ICBM silos and 656 SLBM launchers. The USSR was set a maximum of 1,607 ICBM silos and 740 SLBM launchers⁹.

This agreement did not determine the number of bombers or the number of warheads, leaving both actors the possibility of including more in their multi-warhead missiles (MIRVs)¹⁰.

The Interim Agreement was replaced by the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks II (SALT II), with Carter and Brezhnev reaching a new commitment in 1979. Although the pact was not ratified by the US Senate, both states respected it until 1986 when President

⁷ WOOLF, Amy F. 'Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons.' *Congressional Research Service*. Updated 4 May 2020. Washington D.C. pp. 7-10.

⁸ CAMPOS ROBLES, Miguel. 'The New START Treaty', Global Strategy Report, 55/2020 <https://global-strategy.org/el-tratado-nuevo-start/> (consulted 29/12/2020)

⁹ Interim Agreement Between The United States Of America And The Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics On Certain Measures With Respect To The Limitation Of Strategic Offensive Arms (SALT I) https://media.nti.org/documents/salt_1.pdf (consulted 28/12/2020)

¹⁰ Arms Control Association. Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT I) <https://www.armscontrol.org/treaties/strategic-arms-limitation-talks> consulted 28/12/2020.

Reagan, referring to violations by the Soviets, declared that the US would not be restricted by the limits of the treaty¹¹.

This treaty established a maximum of 2,250 launch vehicles for each party, of which no more than 1,320 could carry multiple heads. It also prohibited the use of nuclear weapons in space, the use of fractional orbit missiles and fast-loading missile launchers. At the same time, the Soviets pledged not to use the Tupolev Tu-22M bomber in exchange for the Americans delaying the deployment of their cruise missiles by three years. Furthermore, missiles of this kind with ranges of more than 600 kilometres could not be tested¹².

In 1987, Reagan and Gorbachev agreed on the reduction of intermediate-range land-based missiles in the previously mentioned INF Treaty¹³. This was the beginning of an era of multilateralism in Europe that led not only to the reduction of nuclear weapons in the European theatre, but also to the control and reduction of conventional weapons, through the CFE treaty and additional measures within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Parallel to the negotiations on intermediate weapons, others were being conducted for strategic weapons through the so-called Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START), which led to by George H. W. Bush and Gorbachev signing the START I treaty in 1991, just before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Continuity of the treaty after the disappearance of the USSR was ensured following the entry into force in 1994 of the 'Lisbon Protocol' in which Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan undertook to hand over their nuclear weapons to Russia, joining the NPT¹⁴.

Basically the document reduced nuclear launch systems to 1,600 for each party and the number of nuclear warheads to 6,000. This large block contained new nuances as only 4,900 of these heads could be installed in ICBMs, of which no more than 1,100 could be mobile. Additionally, the weight limit that could be launched by each contender was set

¹¹ LARSEN, Jeffrey A.; MOORE, A. Gregory. 'Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and Treaties', in ARNOLD, James R.; WIENER, Roberta (ed.). *Cold War: the essential reference guide*. ABC-CLIO, 2012. p. 206.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ For more details on the consequences of the finalisation of the INF Treaty, we suggest reading CASTRO TORRES, José Ignacio. 'Del tratado INF al START ¿El final de los acuerdos de No-Proliferación Nuclear?' (From INF to START. The end of Nuclear Non-Proliferation agreements?) IEEE Analysis Document 02/2019 http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2019/DIEEEA02_2019CASTRO-nuclear.pdf

¹⁴ LARSEN, Jeffrey A.; MOORE, A. Gregory. 'Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and Treaties', op. cit. p. 209.

at 3,600 tonnes. The USSR also limited ICBMs that could carry 10 heads to 154. Furthermore, the treaty limited the capabilities of bombers and submarines as delivery vehicles for these weapons¹⁵.

Strategic nuclear weapons and the new world order

When President George W. Bush entered the White House in 2001, his agenda included reducing nuclear power to the 'lowest possible number consistent with our national security'. Russian President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, saw an opportunity to reduce and restructure his atomic arsenal at a time when his country was experiencing a major economic crisis, and therefore supported reducing strategic nuclear warheads to 1,500 for both countries. At that time, both states were practically at the limits of START I, which marked 6,000 head each¹⁶.

It was in this situation of mutual interest that the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) entered into force in 2003. It was in keeping with the intentions of both presidents but provided a broad margin of interpretation for reporting weapons, while not setting limits on weapons that could be stored without being deployed. In addition, the treaty did not have verification mechanisms¹⁷.

¹⁵ Arms Control Association. 'START I at a Glance'. February 2019. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/start1> (consulted 29/12/2020)

¹⁶ Arms Control Association. 'The Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) At a Glance'. <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/sort-glance> (consulted 30/12/2020)

¹⁷ Treaty Between The United States Of America And The Russian Federation On Strategic Offensive Reductions (Sort / Treaty Of Moscow) https://media.nti.org/documents/sort_moscow_treaty.pdf (consulted 30/12/2020)

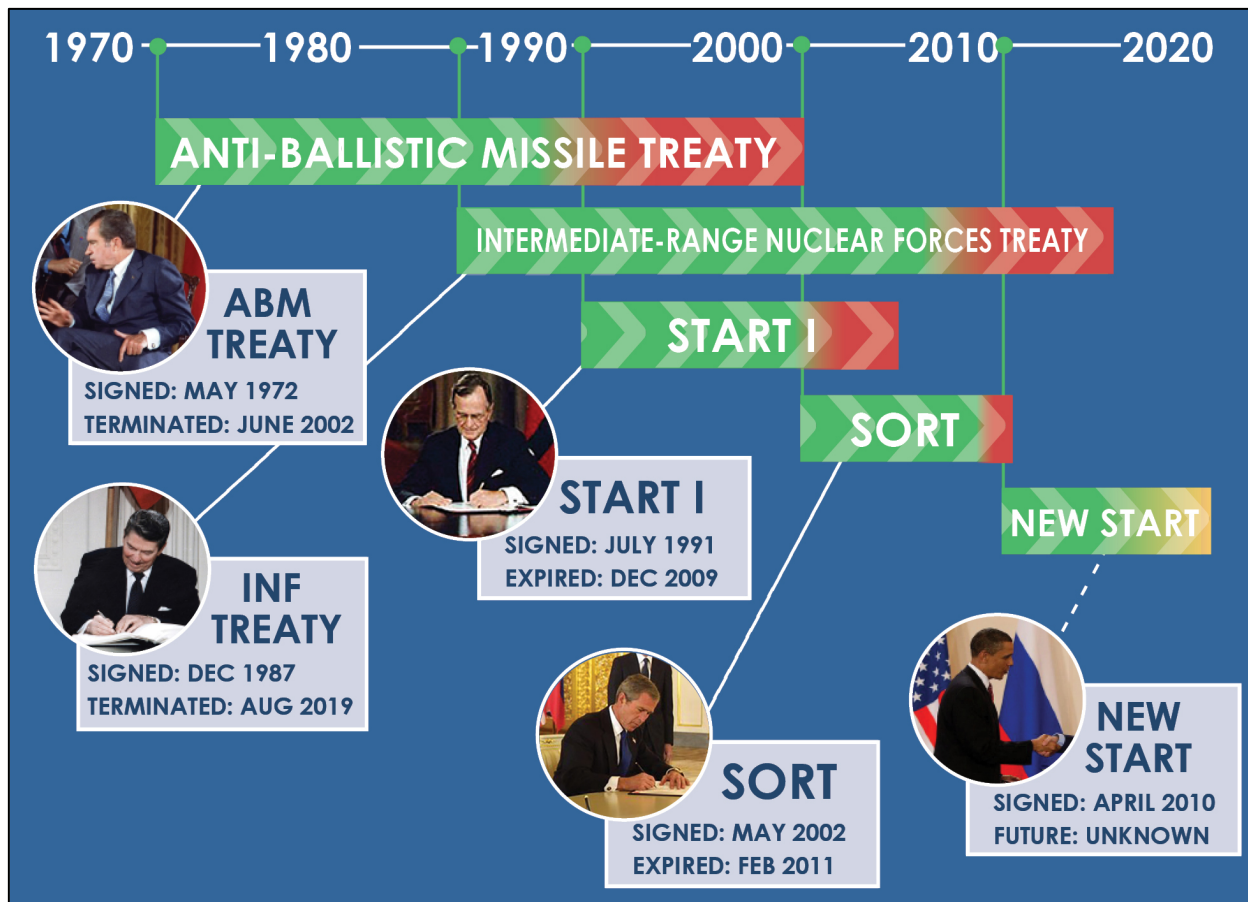


Figure 2. 'Major arms control treaties between the USSR/Russia and the USA.' Source: Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. 'US-Russian arms control agreements'. <https://armscontrolcenter.org/issues/russia/> (consulted 28/12/2020).

The course of events placed Russia in a compromising situation, with an immediate periphery full of conflicts that could affect it, apart from considering that the extension of NATO could be equally detrimental to its interests as a global power. Accordingly, in October 2008 Russian defence minister, Anatoly Serdyukov, announced a series of reforms under the name 'новый облик' (New Image), which included a plan for modernising armaments between 2011 and 2020. This plan allocated a significant proportion to strategic nuclear weapons as a bulwark to ensure Russia's safeguard¹⁸. This strategic deterrence capability would not only aim to counter NATO's possible intentions, but also to contain a hypothetical threat from China¹⁹.

Although the Americans detected irregularities by Russia regarding compliance with the INF Treaty, these were overlooked in order to negotiate a further reduction in strategic

¹⁸ BRAUN, Thomas. 'The Russian Military in 2020: Russia's Way Back to Power Projection? Implications for NATO.' *Connections*, 2012, vol. 11, no. 2, pg. 72.

¹⁹ BARABANOV, Mikhail; PUKHOV, Ruslan. 'Military Reform: Toward the New Look of the Russian Army.' *Valdai Club, Discussion*, Moscow, 2012. p.11, 30.

nuclear weapons. The interest was mutual, as President Obama had an arms reduction agenda, but one that would qualitatively help maintain a more effective and modern nuclear triad, while being able to control the Russians through an inspection regime²⁰. The then Prime Minister Putin needed time to emerge from the economic and military crisis in which Russia was plunged, while allowing him to develop tactical nuclear weapons more in keeping with his interests.

Finally, the New START Treaty was signed between Presidents Medvedev and Obama in April 2010. The agreement came into force in February 2011, following approval by the Duma and the US Senate after a bitter debate. Basically, the treaty called for the reduction of nuclear weapons, which had begun during the Reagan and Gorbachev administrations. Both parties were given until 2018 to reduce strategic weapons below the 1,500 threshold and to verify this, they were granted a comprehensive verification regime²¹.

Despite signing the New START Treaty, Russian nuclear forces were still updated, though respecting the treaty, and the programme to modernise the silo-based ICBM Topol-M and its mobile multi-head version RS-24 Yars continued²².

The New START Treaty in detail

The New START Treaty consists of three documents, with different degrees of detail. The first is the text of the treaty followed by a protocol and technical annexes, all of which are binding. It also includes a withdrawal clause in the event that either party considers its supreme interests to be compromised. Entry into force of the treaty in 2011 brought about the extinction of the SORT Treaty.

New START limits the Americans and Russians to the deployment of 1,550 strategic nuclear warheads. For reporting purposes, each re-entry vehicle for ICBMs or SLBMs is considered to be a warhead. Missiles in storage and assembled will also be counted, as

²⁰ Arms Control Association. 'Eleven Reasons to Support New START: Responses to Treaty Critics' Issue Brief - Volume 1, Number 11, 27 July 2010. <https://www.armscontrol.org/issue-briefs/2010-07/eleven-reasons-support-new-start-responses-treaty-critics> (consulted 02/01/2021)

²¹ Klotz, Frank. 'Extending New START Is in America's National Security Interest'. Arms Control Association. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-01/features/extending-new-start-americas-national-security-interest> (consulted 02/01/2021)

²² BARABANOV, Mikhail; PUKHOV, Ruslan. 'Military Reform: Toward the New Look of the Russian Army.' Op. Cit. p.24.

will the first stage of those that are not. Each heavy bomber equipped for nuclear weapons is also counted as a warhead, whether equipped for gravity bombs or cruise missiles (ALCM)²³.

As far as launch vehicles are concerned, the treaty provides for an additional limitation to a total of 800 vehicles between ICBMs launchers (deployed and undeployed), SLBM launchers and heavy nuclear bombers. This limitation stipulates that the number of ICBMs and heavy bombers cannot exceed 700²⁴.

From the entry into force of the treaty, both parties should comply with the agreement within a period of less than seven years. As for its duration, it would be for a period of ten years, and could be extended for a period not exceeding five years²⁵.

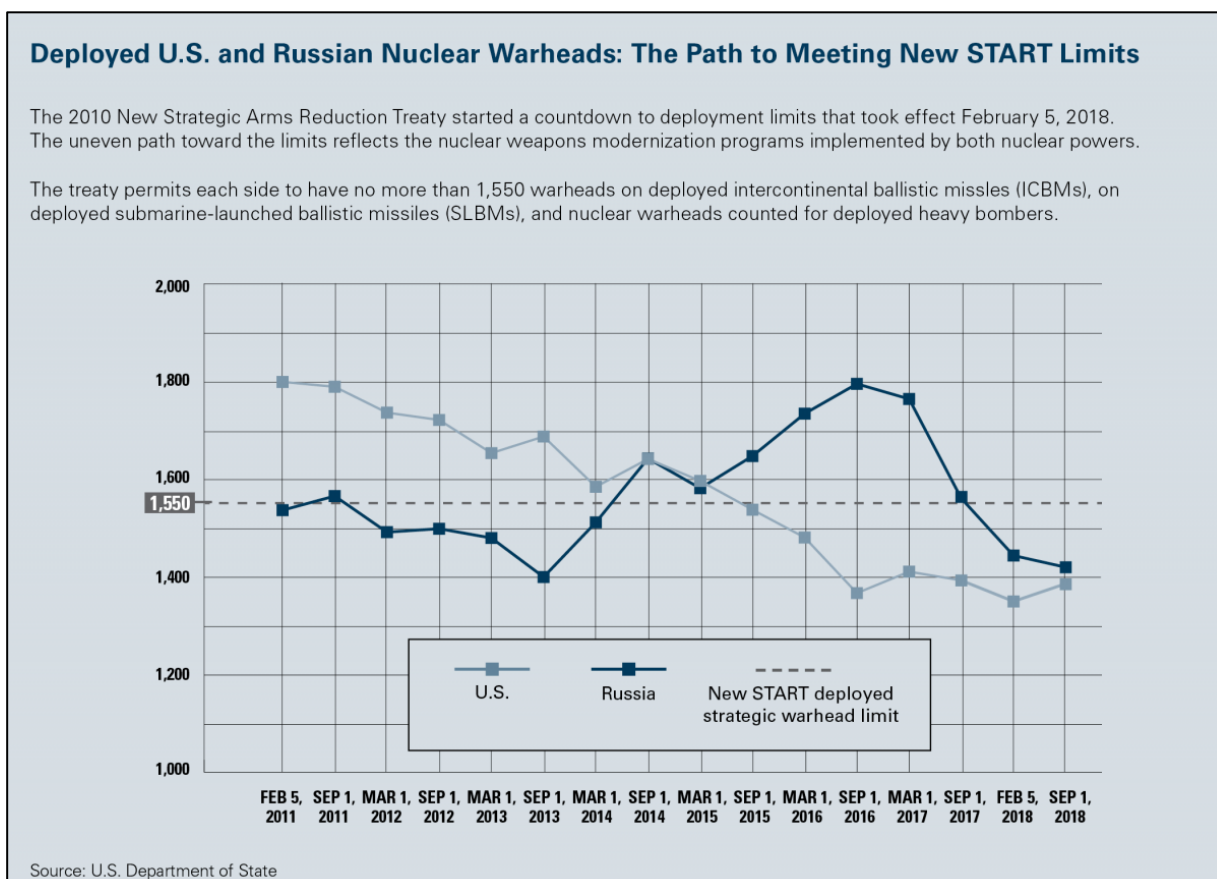


Figure 3. 'Reduction in time of US and Russian strategic nuclear weapons within the framework of the New START Treaty'. Source: Klotz, Frank. 'Extending New START Is in America's National Security Interest'. Arms Control Association. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2019-01/features/extending-new-start-americas-national-security-interest> (consulted 02/01/2021)

²³ Treaty Between The United States Of America And The Russian Federation On Measures For The Further Reduction And Limitation Of Strategic Offensive Arms. New Start Treaty. https://media.nti.org/documents/new_start_treaty.pdf (consulted 02/01/2021)

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

The protocol has a series of definitions of weapons, facilities and means of delivery related to the treaty, but does not go so far as to detail what is meant by a strategic nuclear weapon, and it is therefore necessary to conceive this by adding the series of partial definitions it contains. It also explains the form and deadlines for carrying out the regime of inspections, notifications and bilateral commissions²⁶.

As regards the verification and compliance regime of the treaty, note that it is based on the previous START I Treaty of 1991, with some modifications. The main measures include notifications, data exchange, use of satellites, inspections and field exhibitions. There is also a joint telemetry database, containing details of the launch of up to five ICBMs or SLBMs²⁷.

The inspection regime allows for 10 of these ‘type one’ interventions, on deployed and non-deployed systems, and 8 ‘type two’ interventions, on sites where the systems have not been deployed. Production facilities are not covered by this regime, but both States must notify, within 48 hours, any element covered by the treaty leaving the factory²⁸.

Current situation

Problems surfaced in November 2017 for the New START Treaty review when Christopher Ford, the US Security Council Director of Weapons for Mass Destruction and Counterproliferation, stated that they should consider extending the treaty following their Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)²⁹.

In early 2018, the US issued its new NPR, which identified actors such as Russia, China, Iran and North Korea as threats. It also specified in terms of strategic nuclear capabilities, that the US needs to rely on the three pillars of its ‘nuclear triad’. The document considered the age of this triad in which SLBMs were based on the Trident-II

²⁶ Protocol To The Treaty Between The United States Of America And The Russian Federation On Measures For The Further Reduction And Limitation Of Strategic Offensive Arms. https://media.nti.org/documents/new_start_protocol.pdf (consulted 02/01/2021).

²⁷ Nuclear Threat Initiative. Treaty Between The United States Of America And The Russian Federation On Measures For The Further Reduction And Limitation Of Strategic Offensive Arms (New Start) <https://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/treaty-between-the-united-states-of-america-and-the-russian-federation-on-measures-for-the-further-reduction-and-limitation-of-strategic-offensive-arms/> (consulted 02/01/2021)

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ REIF, Kingston. ‘New START Future Uncertain’. Arms Control Today. January/February 2018. <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-01/news/new-start-future-uncertain> (consulted 02/01/2021)

missile, which equips the old-fashioned Ohio class submarines. The pillar of the ICBMs was supported by Minuteman-III missiles, the oldest deployed single-warhead missile in the world. Finally, the air force pillar was supported by B52H and B2A bombers, the latter being the only ones capable of penetrating through enemy air defences. Therefore, the B52H were equipped with ALCM cruise missiles, but these were also very old-fashioned³⁰.

Despite the new US nuclear strategy, both parties complied with the provisions of the treaty, announcing on 5 February 2018 that the goals set had been achieved. Accession to the treaty was essential at a time when relations were very poor and there was a risk of false perceptions and miscalculations. The Russians had modernised their tactical nuclear weapons, which led to the INF Treaty³¹.

At the beginning of March 2018, during his election campaign and at the height of the INF Treaty crisis, Putin himself announced Russia's capacity based on 'invincible' hypersonic missiles, which would surpass NATO's anti-missile defences. As for the decision to use them, Putin stressed that "any use of nuclear weapons against Russia or its allies, any kind of attack, will be regarded as a nuclear attack against Russia, and in response, we will take action instantaneously no matter what the consequences are"³².

In June, the two presidents would meet in Helsinki to discuss, among other things, the continuity of INF. Although Putin was willing to do so, he was not comfortable with the previous terms and was looking for new, more advantageous negotiations³³.

Trump's position was even worse as the new context in which Russia had acquired non-strategic nuclear weapons placed him at a disadvantage, which would lead him to abandon the INF Treaty. At the same time, the Chinese threat in the Asia-Pacific region was not contained. For this reason, in April 2019, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

³⁰ Office of the Secretary of Defense, Nuclear Posture Review, February 2018, p. 47. Available at: <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF> (consulted 12/08/2020)

³¹ *The News*. 'US to Russia: respect nuclear limits under New START Treaty' <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/277476-us-to-russia-respect-nuclear-limits-under-new-start-treaty> (consulted 02/01/2020)

³² SANCHEZ, Ray. 'Putin boasts military might with animation of Florida nuke strike' CNN, 2 March 2018. <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/03/01/europe/putin-nuclear-missile-video-florida/index.html> (Consulted 02/01/2021)

³³ Fox News. 'Putin says he told Trump that Russia prepared to extend START treaty' <https://es.reuters.com/article/idUKKBN1K62WI> (consulted 03/01/2020)

opted for a comprehensive agreement that would cover all types of weapons and would also include China³⁴. China meanwhile disagreed with being included in negotiations that did not concern it and that limited its aspirations for expansion in its region³⁵.

At the end of 2019, Russia announced the inclusion of its new systems, the ICBM RS-28 Sarmat and the Avangard hypersonic missile, in the New START thus avoiding criticism from the Americans³⁶. The Russians were possibly looking for a rapprochement of positions, in order to contain the USA when they had already reached a position of balance between their security needs and their economic possibilities. It is therefore likely that this reason led Russia to declare that it was willing to rejoin the treaty without preconditions³⁷.

The US position continued to search for a favourable agreement, which required negotiating all nuclear weapons, strategic or otherwise, and including China in the talks. Therefore at the end of May 2020, the US Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control, Marshall Billingslea, insisted on these points, within a regime that would allow for their verification³⁸. He would officially express this position in June when he met his counterpart from the Russian Foreign Ministry, Sergey Ryabkov, in Vienna.

After the meeting, Ryabkov stated that the possibilities of extending the treaty under the conditions put forward by the Americans were 'minimal'. With regard to China, he clearly expressed the Russian position: "We have not taken and do not intend to take any steps to bring China into these talks, something we have told our American colleagues on multiple occasions"³⁹. This appears to tip the position of Russia, which is not directly affected by tensions between Americans and Chinese in the China Sea. Furthermore,

³⁴ KHEEL, Rebecca. 'Pompeo: Russia complying with nuclear treaty that's up for renewal'. *The Hill* 04/10/19. <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/438217-pompeo-russia-complying-with-nuclear-treaty-up-for-renewal> (consulted 03/01/2021)

³⁵ SHUANG, Geng. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's Regular Press Conference on 6 May 2019 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1661163.shtml (consulted 03/01/2021)

³⁶ Tass. Foreign Ministry: 'Sarmat, Avangard systems may be included in New START treaty'. 1 November 2019. <https://tass.com/defense/1086515> (consulted 03/01/2021)

³⁷ President of Russia. 'Meeting with Defence Ministry leadership and heads of defence industry enterprises'. 5 December 2019. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/62250> (consulted 03/01/2021)

³⁸ MORRISON, Tim. 'Transcript: Special Presidential Envoy Marshall Billingslea on the Future of Nuclear Arms Control'. Hudson Institute, 22 May 2020. <https://www.hudson.org/research/16062-transcript-special-presidential-envoy-marshall-billingslea-on-the-future-of-nuclear-arms-control> (consulted 03/01/2020)

³⁹ TÉTRAULT-FARBER, Gabrielle. 'Russia rejects U.S. terms, sees "minimal" chance to extend New START nuclear pact' Reuters, 21 September 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-usa-nuclear-chances-idUSKCN26C1BE> (consulted 04/01/2021)

the longer the Americans are committed to solving their problem with China, the less pressure they will be under to exercise external action in regions of interest.

By summer 2020, Russia had reorganised its nuclear forces and equipped them with new materials. It therefore issued for the first time a nuclear doctrine called 'Basic Principles of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence'. This doctrine referred to the deterrence and defence of the supreme interests of Russia and its allies with nuclear weapons, whether in the face of a nuclear or other attack or threat⁴⁰.

Russian doctrine led Billingslea to make a new offer in October 2020. This time, far from his initial position, he proposed extending the treaty for one year with a precondition for the freezing of all types of US and Russian nuclear warheads, demonstrable by means of a verification system⁴¹. However, although the Russians accepted the extension, they insisted on their offer of dialogue without preconditions, as these were outside the framework of the treaty⁴².

Although the Americans interpreted the agreement as close to being reached, a few days later the Russians explicitly rejected the verification measures, stating that "the degree of our differences is rather significant". As for the issue of verification, it seems that Russia is not willing to declare its tactical nuclear weapons or have its production sites monitored. The Russian point of view is that the Americans should withdraw non-strategic nuclear weapons from the territories of their European allies and dismantle the infrastructure that allows them to be rapidly deployed⁴³.

Faced with the impossibility of a rapprochement of positions, White House security adviser Robert O'Brien was forced to declare that any possibility of reaching an agreement had collapsed. Some US sources acknowledged that their administration

⁴⁰ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 'Basic Principles of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence', 8 June 2020. 10:31. https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/foreign_policy/international_safety/disarmament/-/asset_publisher/rp0fiUBmANaH/content/id/4152094 (consulted 16/08/2020)

⁴¹ SIMMONS, Ann M; GORDON, Michael R. 'White House Dismisses Putin Proposal to Extend New START Arms-Control Pact' *The Wall Street Journal*, Updated 16 Oct. 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/white-house-dismisses-putin-proposal-to-extend-new-start-arms-control-pact-11602879830> (Consulted 04/01/2020)

⁴² President of Russia. 'Meeting with permanent members of the Security Council'. 16 October 2020. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64238> (consulted 04/01/2020)

⁴³ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 'Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov's interview with the Kommersant newspaper, published on October 22, 2020'. https://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/maps/us/-/asset_publisher/unVXBbj4Z6e8/content/id/4402033 (consulted 04/01/2021)

had been too ambitious, trying to push through a disproportionate initiative at the last minute. Richard Burt, former US ambassador to Germany and negotiator of the START-I Treaty, stands out in this line of thought⁴⁴.

Owing to failed negotiations and internal conflict over the electoral dispute between the White House candidates, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov did not consider he would receive any coherent proposal from either Trump or Biden, and so 2020 has ended waiting 'until the dust settles' from the electoral process to resume talks on the treaty. Furthermore, after a meeting in Sochi between President Putin, his armed forces and the defence industry, the Russians concluded that they can live without New START, as they have everything they need to ensure their survival⁴⁵.

Under these circumstances, US President-elect Joe Biden will take office on 20 January 2021 with a short 16-day window to take action before 5 February, when the treaty expires.

Biden has on numerous occasions reiterated his support for the five-year extension of New START, but there is debate within his team as to what the appropriate duration should be. Similarly, the new government team must consider continuing the concept of 'warhead freezing' inherited from the Trump administration. At the same time, Biden must face up to assuming the continuity of Trump's nuclear programme or conversely reducing it to place greater emphasis on conventional, cyber and asymmetric capabilities⁴⁶.

Conclusions

The nuclear issue and lack of agreements in this respect are merely a consequence of a new world order, in which the dispute for spaces of power is still far from being settled. In this environment of offensive realism between global and regional powers, large

⁴⁴ SELIGMAN, Lara; BENDER, Bryan. 'Hopes dim for nuclear agreement with Russia before Election Day' *Politico*, 10/23/2020. <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/10/23/nuclear-agreement-russia-election-day-431369> (consulted 04/01/2021)

⁴⁵ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 'Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's interview with Russian and foreign media on current international issues. Moscow, November 12, 2020' 12 November 2020. https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4429844 (consulted 04/01/2020)

⁴⁶ SALAMA, Vivian. 'Biden eyes cuts to Trump nuclear program as critical arms control deadline with Russia looms'. Tuesday, 29 December 2020. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/12/29/politics/biden-nuclear-cuts-arms-control-russia/index.html> (consulted 04/01/2020)

regions are trapped in areas of tension, as may well be the case in the European theatre.

With the conclusion of the INF Treaty, this theatre was once again activated with respect to the possibility of the deployment and use of nuclear weapons. This risk expands and increases throughout the Euro-Atlantic region with the possible extinction of the New START Treaty. We cannot rule out that nuclear response options very similar to those of the Cold War will be raised again, among which the 'flexible response' could be particularly dangerous for Europe.

This option was envisaged as a proportionate nuclear reaction to an event, thus avoiding further escalation. With renewed sub-strategic and strategic nuclear weapons, all possibilities could be put back on the nuclear chessboard.

That is why it is so important not to release another seal from the lid of this veritable Pandora's box, as the New START Treaty may do, and to attempt to return to talks to settle differences over non-strategic weapons. Returning to this situation would be beneficial for all parties concerned and especially for Europeans, who are geographically and diplomatically in the middle of the dispute.

The options for Biden and Putin can range from the unlikely renewal of the treaty to the unwanted extinction of the treaty. In the meantime, an extension seems more practical, seeking time to open up new areas of negotiation and propose a new nuclear security strategy, at least as far as the incoming US administration is concerned. The maximum period of five years seems too long, so a period of a little more than a year might be adequate for, as Minister Lavrov says, "the dust to settle" on the negotiating table.

The new US president will likely have to iron out differences between Republicans and Democrats in Congress, similar to what Obama did to achieve New START in 2010. If the US nuclear triad were effectively renewed, an agreement to renew the treaty would likely go hand in hand.

It is clear that the so-called trilateral negotiations between global players have not been successful, as there is a great disparity of interests and arms relations. For this reason, it would be useful to differentiate the Euro-Atlantic and Asian-Pacific theatres in terms of negotiations, and for these to encompass less ambitious goals to gradually build a new non-proliferation regime in keeping with the new times. This differentiation, which is

easier to achieve in the case of tactical weapons, should be defined in detail for strategic weapons by specifying their power, range and location.

One example of setting of an objective that cannot be achieved in the short term is the TPNW which, paved with good intentions, will enter into force this January. Aspirations to place the problems of arms reduction, disarmament and non-proliferation in the same basket have opened up a gap between nuclearized and non-nuclearized countries that is difficult to bridge. Moreover, if the non-nuclear countries of the Atlantic Alliance were to join this treaty, they would stop sharing the information provided to them by their nuclear partners. As a result, these states that already comply with the NPT could lose references that are important to their security.

In any event, it seems that in an increasingly unstable world any measure that increases security is not enough. It is therefore necessary to consider, in the framework of the alliances and commitments in which Spain is immersed, better anti-missile and air defence to guarantee survival in the face of a situation of nuclear risk. New doctrines for the use of armed forces, not prepared for nuclear environment scenarios, should be designed in accordance with developments.

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