

RELEVANCE OF ARMS CONTROL IN PRESENT TIMES

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The Russian American arms control process in the past has not been necessarily connected to the level of consensus among the two countries. There are significant cases when important arms control agreements were established at the same time when the global antagonism among the two countries were significantly high. Think about the SALT agreements that were signed during the Vietnam war or about the joint stewardship of NPT negotiations in the late sixties. Or think also about the INF treaty that was signed after the turmoil over the euro-missiles.

Since the beginning of the XXI century significant agreements have been also eliminated irrespectively of the level of US-Russia antagonism. Think to the decision of President Bush junior to kill the ABM treaty in 2002 or to the decision of President Trump to eliminate the INF treaty in 2018.

Now we are facing a somehow unprecedented situation. The antagonism between Us and Russia over Ukraine is rather extreme. The Us and NATO countries are de facto participating to the war in Ukraine by providing a large number of weapons to Ukraine. At the same time the arms control process has been under severe pressure. The only surviving agreement (the new START agreement) has seen the stop of the reciprocal inspections that are an essential part of the agreement.

Restoring the US-Russia arms control process is certainly not easy, given the present level of US – Russia antagonism. Nevertheless the restoration of the arms control process is extremely important now for several reasons:

1. It is important to preserve all the efforts that have been made in the past in order to avoid growing nuclear risks. The possibility of destroying now all the results obtained in the arms control process in several decades is a real danger.
2. In the present conflict in Ukraine there have been several hints by various politicians about the possibility of using nuclear weapons. These hints are extremely dangerous and putting an emphasis on the control of nuclear weapons is an extremely important reminder on the danger associated to nuclear weapons.

3. The restoration of the reciprocal verification processes is not only important for the preservation of the past results but also it is important for the establishment of direct communication between important sectors of the armed forces and possibly also between significant sectors of the political leaderships.
4. Restoring somehow and in some form the INF treaty will also be very useful in avoiding nuclear risks in Europe.
5. For both Russia and the US, deploying nuclear weapons in respective allied countries can be very dangerous, both from the point of view of the safe control of these weapons but mainly for the stress that allied countries can put on the possibility of using these weapons.
6. The level of global antagonism in several parts of the world is not limited to Europe and to the consequences of the War in Ukraine. Other parts of the world see the antagonism between countries possessing nuclear weapons growing in a dangerous way. The examples that come to mind are India-Pakistan, the situation around Taiwan with the conflicting interests of China and the US, the Korean peninsula. Putting emphasis on arms control between Russia and the US can have possibly a positive impact on other parts of the world where nuclear weapons are present or are a relevant factor.