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## The Moscow Summit: a Strategic and Arms Control Dimension

The reduction of strategic nuclear weapons will be one of the core issues at the US-Russia Summit between Presidents Medvedev and Obama that will take place in Moscow from 6 to 8 July. The two leaders already met on April 1 in London where they initiated a bilateral dialogue on strategic affairs. After their meeting in the Russian capital they will have an additional opportunity at the G8 Summit of L'Aquila in Italy where the main strategic issues will be discussed within the framework of the non proliferation agenda. But the Moscow encounter will be a first official bilateral meeting in one of the two capitals and will take place after an intensive period of bilateral negotiations and in an international scenario which has gone through major changes. A new arms control strategy was announced by President Obama in his historic speech in Prague on April 5, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on that same day made a controversial ballistic missile test followed, few weeks later, by an even more dramatic second nuclear detonation. The developments subsequent to the controversial elections in Iran further complicate the perspective of a negotiated solution to the Iranian nuclear program.

The Moscow meeting will take place after a decade which

has seen no significant progress in the field of multilateral and bilateral nuclear arms control. The CTBT, the Treaty which bans nuclear testing, was the last major nuclear multilateral agreement to be concluded: it has not yet entered into force.

During the same period, the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which is a pillar of international peace and security, has suffered significant erosion. Three countries: India, Israel and Pakistan have not adhered to the Treaty. Since its indefinite extension in 1995, India, Pakistan and the DPRK have carried out nuclear tests. All these countries are located in areas of international tension.

The Treaty has been further weakened by the ambitious and initially clandestine Iranian nuclear activities for which there is, at present, no realistic peaceful justification. The 2005 NPT Review Conference was a failure. No significant progress was made on the three main pillars of the Treaty: Disarmament, Non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

### Bilateral Disarmament

The bilateral disarmament agenda between the US and Russia, which is also relevant for the NPT process, has not,

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### Abstract

The reduction of strategic nuclear weapons will be one of the core issues at the US-Russia Summit between Presidents Medvedev and Obama that will take place in Moscow from 6 to 8 July. The Moscow meeting will take place after a decade which has seen no significant progress in the field of multilateral and bilateral nuclear arms control.

Progress in the bilateral negotiation between the US and Russia is urgent not only because of the deadline of some appointments (the START1 treaty or the NPT Review Conference in May 2010) but also because both the US and Russia have a clear interest to produce some tangible results in the nuclear Disarmament field. Moreover the strategic reductions by Russia and the US that will be discussed would also open the prospect of reductions by the other nuclear capable states.

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to date, made significant progress. After September 11 2001 the Bush administration confirmed its fundamental skepticism *vis-à-vis* constraints or limitations of the US freedom of action in the field of armaments.

In 2002 the US withdrew from the ABM Treaty, which was until then considered a cornerstone of international security. The evolution of the US missile defense program and the prospect of its deployment in European countries was seen by Russia as an obstacle to progress. In the multilateral area the US refusal to ratify the CTBT treaty while Russia had already given up the option of conducting further nuclear tests, was also a source of disappointment for Moscow. During the final years of the Bush administration the positive climate established after the first Bush-Putin encounter was replaced by a growing political mistrust and military nervousness.

All this happened while Russia was recuperating, thanks in great part to its economic recovery and to the dramatic increase of the price of oil, from the trauma of the dismantling of the Soviet empire and was regaining part of its self-confidence. Russia decided to suspend the implementation of the CFE Treaty, to give greater visibility to the projection of its strategic assets and to hint at a possible deployment of short range missiles in Kaliningrad. The perspective of a NATO enlargement to include Ukraine and Georgia, the confirmation by NATO of the missile defense deployment

in Eastern Europe, both endorsed at the Bucharest NATO Summit, as well as the recognition by most NATO and EU countries of Kosovo independence, further complicated the situation. This trend reached a peak last year with the Georgian crisis.

### **Some Positive Developments**

Some positive developments also took place. In the same year in which the US withdrew from the ABM Treaty, Russia and the US concluded the Strategic Offensive arms Reduction Treaty (SORT) that provided for the reduction, to a number, between 1700 and 2200, of deployed offensive nuclear weapons. Although it was welcomed by the international community, this Treaty was not considered a total success since it contemplated reductions or limitations only to deployed but not to stockpiled nuclear weapons. The Treaty contained no verification provisions. Reductions were to be achieved by 2012, which is the expiration date of the Treaty. After that date the two countries could theoretically resume building their arsenals.

2002 also marked an emerging entente between Russia and NATO, symbolized by the Pratica di Mare Summit in Italy, which contained meaningful arms control provisions. In the same year at Kananaskis (Canada) G8 countries agreed on a Global Partnership allocating up to 20 billion US Dollars almost completely dedicated to

finance Russian programs to eliminate obsolete and redundant WMDs and delivery means. In following years, at the UN, Russia and the US worked together in promoting the extension to the rest of the world of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. In 2007 there were also indications of a greater Russian flexibility to accommodate US concerns at the Conference on Disarmament. The US-Russia Strategic Framework Declaration agreed upon at the last bilateral meeting between Presidents Bush and President Putin in April 2008, which took place in Sochi, contained some cautious although constructive elements.

In spite of a changed atmosphere between Russia and the West, both sides tried to isolate as much as possible the strategic subjects from the general deteriorating trend. But on the eve of the US presidential elections, the overall picture was uncertain.

### **The New US Administration**

Barack Obama gave important hints of his future administration's orientations on Arms Control and Nonproliferation in the early days of his campaign. His strategy was broadly outlined in an article published in the July 2007 issue of the Foreign Affairs magazine in which he indicated that his priority would be to confront the threat of the spread of nuclear weapons. He made reference to the four US "wise men" (Shultz, Perry, Kissinger, Nunn) who promoted the vision of a world free of

nuclear weapons, and stated his strong commitment to the US ratification of the CTBT Treaty, to the negotiation of a verifiable FMCT and to “jump-start the creation of an International Bank to assure the supply of nuclear fuel to countries abiding by the NPT rules”. With reference to Russia he indicated the necessity “to update and scale back our dangerously outdated Cold War nuclear postures and de-emphasize the role of nuclear weapons”.

President Obama’s inaugural address did not touch strategic issues since fundamental values and principles, more than specific policies, were announced on that occasion. He did mention however that: “With old friends and former foes, we will work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat and roll back the specter of a warming of the planet”. The term “former foes” is interpreted as a reference to Russia.

Last April, the President’s first trip to Europe was the occasion to make official and to further elaborate the Arms Control and Nonproliferation agenda outlined during the campaign.

In their joint declaration made in London on April 1, Presidents Obama and Medvedev decided to begin bilateral negotiations to work out a new comprehensive, legally binding agreement on reducing and limiting strategic offensive arms to replace the Start 1 Treaty. This was a very timely announcement since the parties are running out of time. The Treaty, which expires in December 2009, is the only strategic agreement

still in force, which maintains some verification provisions. If the Treaty expires without replacement, the whole network of verification and confidence-building measures, which are in place between the two countries, could be lost.

In London it was announced that the parties would seek levels of reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms that will be lower than those of the 2002 Moscow SORT Treaty. The agreement will include effective verification measures, and the two parties intend to conclude it before next December. By the incoming Moscow Summit negotiators are to report on the progress achieved.

President Obama was more specific on the main Arms Control and Nonproliferation issues in his landmark statement of April 5 2009 in Prague where he announced new principles and measures in the field of multilateral nuclear disarmament. He made the unprecedented public admission that the US is the only nuclear power to have used nuclear weapons and mentioned Washington’s moral responsibility to act and to lead in seeking “the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons”. This objective is to be pursued gradually and multilaterally through a process, which should start by seeking to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in a national security strategy. However, as long as these weapons exist, Washington will maintain “a safe and secure arsenal to deter any adversary and the defense of allies”. The main features of the new US

posture announced by President Obama are as follows:

- further cuts in addition to the Strategic Treaty seeking at that point the inclusion of all nuclear weapons states;
- the US ratification of the CTBT to be pursued “immediately and aggressively”;
- seeking a new Treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile material intended for use in nuclear weapons;
- strengthening the NPT in all its three pillars including the access to peaceful nuclear energy;
- more resources and authority to be allocated to strengthen international inspections;
- “Real and immediate consequences” for countries caught breaking the rules or withdrawing from the NPT without cause;
- a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation including a nuclear fuel bank. This framework should not be based on the denial of rights to nations that play by the rules.

President Obama used tough language towards North Korea. His language, at that time, was more moderate towards Iran indicating that the US administration would seek engagement with Iran and would support Iran’s right to peaceful nuclear energy with rigorous inspections. The US missile defense project in Europe was directly linked to the Iranian ballistic missile capability. “As long as the threat from Iran persists, we

intend to go forward with a missile defense system that is cost effective and proven. If the Iranian threat is eliminated, we will have a stronger basis for security, and the driving force for missile defense construction in Europe at this time will be removed”.

### **Russian Reaction**

It is probably difficult to expect Russia to immediately reciprocate to the major opening which came from the new US President Prague statement. An improvement, however, was already witnessed, before Prague, at the Geneva meeting of the Foreign Ministers Clinton and Lavrov who agreed to “press the reset button” and to lay down the process that led to the London strategic announcement. But, in subsequent speeches Russian officials reacted cautiously to the Obama’s goal of building a nuclear weapons free world, saying that Russia would rather concentrate on solving immediate issues and put up several conditions to which strategic negotiations would be linked. They include banning weapons in space, major efforts to cut conventional forces, guarantees that nuclear weapons would be destroyed rather than just stockpiled. Russia also believes that a new strategic treaty should include not only warheads but also their strategic delivery means, including heavy bombers in which Moscow is considered as having an inferiority. Russians also advocate the exclusion of the possibility of deploying strategic

offensive arms outside national territories. The rationale behind this Russian posture is enshrined in the relevant chapters of the new national security strategy which was promulgated in May 2009 by President Medvedev, a text which deserves an accurate analysis.

The “noble goal of saving the world from the nuclear threat”, is in principle shared, but one should not forget that Russia feels to be behind the US in terms of conventional weapons and is therefore believed to want to hold on to its nuclear arsenal. However in a recent statement, Prime Minister Putin indicated that Russia might abandon nuclear weapons if other powers “owning them officially and unofficially”, do the same.

### **Future Prospects**

The Russian and US negotiators acknowledged the positive evolution of the strategic dialogue initiated with the London declaration after their preliminary round in Rome on April 24. The new climate of the negotiation was confirmed later in Geneva and is being corroborated by some significant developments in the international arena. One of them is the satisfactory outcome of the NPT preparatory Committee which took place in May in New York. This was followed by encouraging developments at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, the only multilateral body in the UN framework which has the specific mandate of negotiating Disarmament treaties. For 13 years the Conference has

been unable to negotiate any kind of agreement. This unproductive trend should change. At the end of May the CD finally agreed on a program of work which includes in particular the negotiation of a Treaty to ban (“cut off”) of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons (FMCT).

Progress in the bilateral post Start negotiation between the US and Russia is urgent not only because of the deadline of the START1 treaty but also because both the US and Russia have a clear interest to produce some tangible results in the nuclear Disarmament field before the NPT Review Conference in May 2010. Even during the darkest periods of the cold war, Moscow and Washington have had a convergent interest in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and in preserving the integrity of the NPT. The conclusion of a new strategic reduction treaty would propitiate a positive outcome of the NPT Review conference. But, as recently stated by the Acting US Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, Rose Gottemoeller, “the NPT Review Conference is not a finish line”. Further steps would be necessary both in the bilateral and multilateral field. One cannot forget that in addition to the strategic arsenals, there are even larger quantities of “non strategic nuclear weapons”. The strategic reductions by Russia and the US that will be discussed at the Moscow Summit would also open the prospect of reductions by the

other nuclear capable states. Russia and the US are engaged in a negotiating process which will be key to the destiny of nuclear Arms Control and Nonproliferation in the years to come. All efforts should be concentrated between now and December 2009 to propitiate a positive result of this negotiation.

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