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### **Russia and the US “Reset” after the New START**

In March 2009 US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton symbolically gave Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov what Russia had been expecting since the previous US administration of G.W. Bush: a “reset button” of bilateral relations. Although the initiative is undeniably positive one must stress that it was and still is a “reset” on the part of the US as Russia’s stance has undergone little change. As Lavrov has pointed out «What we are doing now with the US, we were ready to do with Bush’s administration as well. Strictly speaking, Russia did not need to reset. The change of approach of President Obama *vis-à-vis* Russia may provide bilateral relations with a new quality»<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, since then Moscow and Washington have been experiencing a period of a new type of relationship. In April 2009 Russian and US Presidents met and last July Obama made his first visit to Moscow. In autumn 2009 the two Heads of State gave a significant impulse to talks on a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which was due to expire in early December 2009. Obama took a pause in implementing projects irritating Russia such as the US plans to deploy elements of anti-missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic, and NATO’s enlargement to Georgia and Ukraine. Collaboration on Iran intensified. Russia gave its consent to provide a transit corridor for the movement of food, non-military cargo and some types of non-lethal military equipment to NATO forces in Afghanistan. Cooperation between Russia and NATO was unfrozen. This favourable framework of moves encouraged Russian President Medvedev to present in December 2009 his Draft Treaty on pan-European security. Last but not least, few days ago, on April 8, Russia and the US signed a new START in Prague. After one year of “reset” one can draw practical conclusions on the quality of the “reset” as underlying principle casting light on current and future relations between Moscow and Washington, on their strengths and weaknesses.

<sup>1</sup> Interview of TV Channel *Vesti* with Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, November 11, 2009, <http://www.mid.ru/Ns-dos.nsf/44a7dafc231dc11ac32576d6002f70c1/432569d800223f34c325766c0043a8d2?OpenDocument>.

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### **Abstract**

The “reset” of Russo-US relations offered by Washington a year ago has been valued positively. However, it did not present a long-term strategy for bilateral relationship and turned out to be a selective approach so far.

From a Russian perspective, it does not address Moscow’s major interests and concerns that have arisen after the end of the Cold War. Its first “component” – the new START pact – has a positive meaning, but it has little impact on the “reset” of bilateral military affairs. Its second “component” – the “exchange deal” (no missile defence programme in Europe in return for support against Iran’s nuclear programme) – does not entail a stable cooperation as both parties prefer not to take a definitive stand.

Yet in Prague the two Presidents pledged to boost economic ties. This suggests a new more pragmatic and realist dimension of bilateral relations, which should be further strengthened.

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## Meaning and Scope of the “Reset”

Broadly speaking, the idea of “reset” appears to match Russia’s aspiration not to be ignored as international actor and a (correlated) claim that an approach of disregard not only is not advantageous to US foreign policy priorities but it may actually hinder their solution. Leaving aside this aspect, what does the “reset” imply? True, it is a chance for improving relations as compared to US-Russian relations under G.W. Bush administration. However, the “reset” course did not entail a principal re-orientation of the US foreign policy but only a modification of rhetoric and a refusal to harshly criticize Russian leadership’s policies<sup>2</sup>. To some extent, the “reset” is rooted in the cyclical evolution of bilateral relations as they developed after 1991: confidence and following concessions by the Russian side have been often replaced by disillusionments and tensions, which in turn have been followed by “warmer” relations. The firm stance of Russia displayed in the August 2008 war with Georgia, the financial crisis, the dead-end of bilateral relations reached under Bush’s administration, prompted President Obama to explore a new approach in foreign policy based on dialogue. The latter allows the US to maintain its global leadership and to guarantee its chances for political manoeuvres. In other words, the US is exploring new methods for achieving past goals. Thus the dialogue with Russia involves primarily issues of Washington’s foreign policy objectives. Therefore the US approach is instrumental to US political priorities (Iran, Afghanistan, international terrorism, and non-proliferation) while courting Russia’s sensibility with compensations for previous neglect of its interests. Controversial issues with Russia remain unsolved.

The problem here is that such an approach is selective; it does not promote a long-term perspective on bilateral relations. Today Russia and the US are still unable to define what their relationship is: are they allies or enemies, partners or rivals (or a mixture of all of this). The distrust and inadequate understanding of each other, accumulated during the past twenty years have certainly contributed to this condition of uncertainty and indefiniteness. Given current international economic and political realities, «both countries view each other as declining powers. The US does not trust the future of Russia; Russia too, often reminds that the era of US domination is coming to an end. Thus clarity with regard to Russo-US relations is not soon to come about. The “reset” then appears to be an intermediate phase, a means to disguise the absence of a strategy»<sup>3</sup>.

The “reset”, as it developed so far, comprises two elements<sup>4</sup>. First, the negotiation and signing of a new START (see analysis below) and, second, a deal of “exchange” – Washington will “freeze” the deployment of anti-missile defence elements in Central and Eastern Europe in return for Russia’s support of the US policy *vis-à-vis* the Iranian nuclear programme. Although the two countries are closely working on the issue, Moscow nevertheless seems being somewhat cautious. From a Russian point of view, the problem with the “exchange” is somewhat dubious and twofold. On the one hand, the offered deal means for Moscow to oppose a regional actor (Iran), whose positions should not be ignored and with whom Russia has economic relations, while taking the side of an actor (the US), whose positions in the region are getting weaker. On the other hand, the “reward” for Russia, related to Central and Eastern Europe security system, is not even legally defined and remains highly indefinite. In other words, Russia is expected to cede on an important question of its foreign policy (i.e. maintaining a constructive dialogue with Iran) while receiving a non-fully guaranteed offer (the US did not completely scrap the anti-missile defence programme).

As already stated above, fundamental contentious issues and concerns for Russia are left outside the “reset”: first, the evolution of the post-Soviet space, where Russia aspires to preserve an exclusive

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<sup>2</sup> A. TOKUNOV, *Hitraya perezagruzka*, December 4, 2009, [www.mgimo.ru](http://www.mgimo.ru).

<sup>3</sup> F. LUKYANOV, *Perezagruzka ot nechego delat'*, January 21, 2010, <http://www.gazeta.ru/column/lukyanov/3314237.shtml>.

<sup>4</sup> S. KARAGANOV - D. SUSLOV - T. BORDACHEV, *Perenastroika, a ne perezagruzka. Interesai Rossii v otnosheniah s SSHA*, June 2009, pp. 13-14.

sphere of its vital interests (that is to preserve the status quo<sup>5</sup>) and second, the evolution of the European security system and Russia's role and place in it (so questions like NATO's enlargement, the unwillingness of the US to sign a treaty prohibiting missile defence systems in Europe, the fate of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty and the 1999 Agreement on its Adaptation, the Draft Treaty on European security)<sup>6</sup>. Both of these controversial issues are rooted in the different view the US and Russia has on the end of the Cold War. Russia does not consider itself a loser and therefore expresses its desire to set on equal basis the post-Cold War international order. On the contrary, in the US it is a commonly shared opinion that Washington won the war while Russia lost it. This "victory" confirmed the universality of Western liberal and democratic values and the need to promote and consolidate them in other countries.

Yet another weakness of the "reset" is that it implies much more relations and interest the two parties have with third countries than bilateral relations strictly speaking. For the US these countries are Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, and the Middle East; for Russia they are the countries in the post-Soviet space and Moscow's role in Europe and its security system. On all these regional questions there is a negative interdependence between Moscow and Washington, which may develop in an antagonistic way with the one party hindering the projects of the other party. Furthermore, their priorities are differently positioned within their national scales of importance (see for example the case of Iran, which is placed at the first place in the US political agenda but not at the same position in Russia's one; thus whereas NATO's enlargement poses a threat to Russia's national security, as Moscow argues, that process does not regard at all US national security). This is why rather than "reset" it may be more appropriate to speak of a normalization of bilateral relations. To have a real "reset" a more comprehensive perspective and strategy for bilateral relations is required creating conditions for a positive interdependence and cooperation.

## The New START

One of the components of the "reset" is the negotiation and signing of the new START<sup>7</sup> in Prague<sup>8</sup>, which is set to last for ten years with envisaged reductions to be completed in seven years. Like previous strategic arms control agreements, the new START limits (see table below) the number of strategic nuclear delivery vehicles (SNDVs), namely intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and heavy bombers, that each side may possess. The

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<sup>5</sup> During US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to Moscow on March 19, 2010, Russian Premier Vladimir Putin overtly expressed his country's concerns and priorities. Putin views the cornerstone of relations with the US in Washington's acceptance of Moscow's strategic drive to reintegrate the post-Soviet space. Putin indeed identified Russia as primarily a regional power that sees the US as a main challenger of its post-Soviet regional design. If Washington agrees to uphold the WTO membership of the customs union of Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia, accepts the Russian policy on Georgia and Ukraine, and recognizes the new greater Russia as a geopolitical equal in security affairs, there could be real progress and partnership. See P. FELGENHAUER, *Putin Outlines Critical Issues in US-Russian Relations*, in «Eurasia Daily Monitor», Vol. 7, Issue 58, March 25, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> S. KARAGANOV - D. SUSLOV - T. BORDACHEV, *Perenastroika, a ne perezagruzka*, cit., pp. 9-10.

<sup>7</sup> The full text of the Treaty is available at: <http://eng.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2010/04/225211.shtml>.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting the "concessions" Russia made with regard to timing and location of the Treaty signing ceremony. The date – April 8 – was aimed at fulfilling the interest of the Obama administration in signing the pact before the April 12-13 summit on nuclear security in Washington. As for the place, Moscow would have preferred the capital of a non-NATO nation, Kiev for example, as suggested in March 2010 by the new Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich. Prague, a new NATO member, was not a desirable location for Moscow as it is associated with NATO's eastward enlargement and with US plans to deploy elements of its anti-missile defence shield. In contrast, the Obama administration values the symbolism of Prague. It was there that President Obama a year ago called for the first time for a nuclear-weapons free world. Thus the signing of the new START meant a practical demonstration of the realization of his vision. Furthermore, choosing a central European city is also a symbolic gesture aimed at convincing regional governments that they could benefit from better US-Russian relations. In 2009, the political establishment of these countries showed concern with the "reset" in relations between Moscow and Washington fearing it might negatively affect their national interests and security.

allowed number of deployed SNDVs is set at the lowest level in history of bilateral strategic arms control – 700. For the first time, the new START introduces a limit on non-deployed SNDVs – 100. Each party may possess no more than 800 deployed and non-deployed vehicles. This component corresponds to Russia's insistence to address non-deployed strategic delivery systems, contrary to what have been agreed in the past, and to include verification provisions for them as well. The main concern of Moscow was US greater capacity to redeploy such strategic systems.

<i>Treaty</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Warheads</i>	<i>Delivery vehicles</i>
<b>START 1</b>	USA	5,576	1,198
	Russia	3,909	814
<b>SORT</b>	USA (2009 data)	2,202	798
	Russia (2010 data)	2,504	566
<b>New START</b>	USA and Russia	1,550	800 (700 deployed)

Source: J. P. ZANDERS, A Good START, ISS Analysis, April 2010.

The Treaty also contains provisions that limit the conversion of SNDVs to non-nuclear missions and foresees a strict monitoring of any such adaptation. Like previous US-Russian strategic arms control agreements, the new Treaty does not require elimination of warheads when delivery vehicles are reduced. Warheads removed from reduced SNDV can be eliminated or stored at each party's discretion. No verification regime is established for the removed warheads. As with START I, the new Treaty includes special and rather complicated accounting rules for determining the number of warheads falling under the 1,550 limit. These rules are such that these and other limits are sometimes even more "artificial" than START I, particularly when it comes to heavy bombers. Every heavy bomber will be counted as one warhead. However, in reality, one of these planes could carry often more than ten gravity bombs, short-range air missiles (SRAMs), or/and air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs).

The new START verification regime is less extensive than that of the START I and reduces the number of types of inspections that will be carried out to verify compliance. Two issues were of major importance for Russia during the negotiations process. The first one was whether to continue monitoring at missile production facilities. Under START I, the United States and Russia could maintain a permanent presence at one of the other party's production facilities. However, due to a halt in US production of new strategic missiles, during the last decade Russians have practically stopped exercising their right while US personnel continued to monitor the Russian plant at Votkinsk. After the expiration of START I, US inspectors had to leave the plant. The new START allows the right to conduct inspections at production facilities but it does not speak of continuous monitoring activities. The second issue was the exchange of telemetry data from missile tests. Due to the absence of such tests in the US, Russians complained that this had turned into a one-sided restriction imposed on Moscow. However, most likely, the real concern was that the telemetry data from Russian tests could be used for developing US missile interceptors against Russia's missiles. The new START, instead, provides for mutually agreed exchange of telemetry data on conditions of parity.

Missile defence was another sensitive issue for Russia. As early as their first summit in April 2009 President Obama and President Medvedev agreed that the new treaty would contain a provision recognizing the interrelationship between offensive and defensive strategic systems. During the treaty negotiations, however, the United States sought to focus the new START exclusively on offensive

weapons in order to avoid imposing practical restrictions on its missile defence programme. Russia's approach was precisely the opposite, exacerbated after Romania and Bulgaria expressed their readiness, just few weeks before the signing of the Treaty, to discuss the bid of hosting US missile defence programme's elements on their territories. As a result of Russo-US talks, the new START mentions the interdependence between offence and defence systems in its Preamble, while Article 5 prohibits conversion of missile defence launchers into offensive ballistic missiles.

### The New START Seen through the Lens of Russia

The majority of Russian experts share the view that the Bush administration's approach to arms control was determined by a belief that given the asymmetry in US and Russian economic capabilities, Moscow would not be able to maintain its strategic deterrent forces in the foreseeable future. Therefore, Washington was not interested in limiting its strategic weapons in order to impose restrictions on the Russian strategic deterrent and evinced little interest in negotiating a successor to the START I agreement. According to Bush's administration, the Russian stockpile would decline regardless of any arms control agreement. However, the 2002 US unilateral withdrawal from the 1972 US-Russian Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty triggered Moscow's attention to its strategic nuclear modernization. The new *Sineva* SLBM was commissioned; *Bulava* SLBM is undergoing testing and could be commissioned in 2010 or 2011. The construction of two new strategic *Borei*-class submarines has been completed and they are ready to receive *Bulava* missiles. In 2016 a new heavy ICBM is expected to be commissioned. In mid February 2010 Premier Putin declared that primary concern of Russia's military affairs will be nuclear forces of containment, of space and air-defence and that by 2020 no less than 70 percent of the Russian arsenal will be modernized. In this sense, without a new START Washington would have had the risk of losing access to information on Russian strategic arms and forces at a moment of their intense modernization process.

For Russia, the Treaty represents an opportunity mainly for four reasons. First, it helps the country to save money on modernization of those strategic arms that would reach the end of their service lives in the near future. Second, as each party will independently determine the composition and structure of its strategic offensive arms, the agreed ceiling does not force Russia to drastically reduce its current strategic offensive forces in contrast to previous treaties, which, for example, prohibited or limited Russian heavy bombers. Indeed, the Treaty does not require Moscow to make additional reductions as, according to some estimates, by 2015 the number of Russian SNDVs could fall to 500 because they will be obsolete. The agreed ceiling at 700 deployed vehicles might even allow Moscow to increase strategic deployments above original plans. Russia's financial and industrial capacity will determine how many arms it will be capable to produce. Third, the relatively low limit of deployed and non-deployed SNDVs alleviates Moscow's concerns regarding US ability to upload its currently stored warheads onto ballistic missiles, which are not fully loaded, and achieve a breakout capability.

Moreover there is another particularly important reason for Russia to sign the new START. In a sense, the Treaty sanctions its status of a first-rate power and the US recognizes the need to establish a cooperative relationship based on *equality*. «The fact that the US signs such a treaty with Russia and not with China or India, nor with Europeans, reinforces the role of Russia in world affairs and confirms that Russia is still one of the leading centres of power in international arena and that its interests should be taken into consideration»<sup>9</sup>. The psychological component (i.e. perceptions) of the issue is well visible here. The absence of limits on Russian and US arsenals would cause Russia feeling insecure in its capability to maintain an equilibrium and stable relationship with the US in the nuclear arms sector. This feeling could then prompt Moscow to seek to increase the level of deployed warheads and delivery vehicles more than the level foreseen in the new START<sup>10</sup>. Thus for Russia the Treaty per se is a

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<sup>9</sup> S. ROGOV, *Shestaia popytka strategicheskogo mira*, in «Nezavisimaya gazeta», April 8, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> A. ARTEM'EV, *Prazskaia vesna mozhet okazat'sia rannei*, April 9, 2010, [http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2010/04/09\\_a\\_3349399.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2010/04/09_a_3349399.shtml).

positive step ahead but considered in a broader perspective the new START is unlikely to produce a significant advancement of Russo-US relations. A number of gaps weaken the impact of the “reset” intent.

### Gaps in the “Reset” Relations after the New START

Observers point out that while President Obama pushes for reduction in the US nuclear arsenal, the Pentagon is developing a weapon to help fill the gap: missiles armed with conventional warheads that could strike anywhere in the world in less than an hour. According to US military officials the intercontinental ballistic missiles, known as *Prompt Global Strike* weapons, are a necessary new form of deterrence against terrorist networks and other adversaries. The *Prompt Global Strike* programme, which the Pentagon has been analysing for several years, is already causing apprehension in Moscow, where Russian officials predict it could trigger a non-nuclear arms race and complicate Obama’s long-term vision of a nuclear-zero world. It is still a controversial question whether the development of *Prompt Global Strike* is or is not affected by the new START. Analysts suggest that any conventional ballistic missiles would count the same as nuclear ones under the Treaty. Although deployment of a conventional ballistic missile is not expected until 2015, at the earliest, the project has received a recent substantial support by the Obama administration, which sees the missiles as a part of an array of defensive and offensive weapons that could eventually replace nuclear arms. (This stance is confirmed by the new US nuclear doctrine issued just two days ahead of the signing of the new START. Its main provision states an aspiration to reduce the role of nuclear weapons while exploring other means to counter and preventing nuclear terrorism). In fact the administration has asked the US Congress for US\$ 240 million for next year’s *Prompt Global Strike* development programme, i.e. a 45 percent increase from the current budget<sup>11</sup>. The issue of *Prompt Global Strike*, however, may again destroy the fragile degree of confidence established between Moscow and Washington with the ultimate effect of contradicting the “reset” rationale. Although the issue is still controversial, it is this controversy that should encourage both parties to consider the new START not as an end but rather as a starting point, a bridge, towards a broader discussion of security issues on which limits are still not imposed.

Another problem not addressed by the new START and the “reset”, is the fate of tactical nuclear weapons, which are quite destructive with the most potent being several times more powerful than the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Today these weapons remain entirely unconstrained by any legally binding agreement regulating their numbers and deployment, including the new START. Currently the United States has about 500 in its active arsenal while Russia about 2,000. Many of these US and Russian weapons are deployed in Europe. Washington has expressed its intention to include them in a new round of negotiations but has met a firm opposition by Russia. Indeed, Moscow insists that such talks are linked to security system in Europe – a question that has not been overtly discussed yet. At present Russia considers the tactical nuclear weapons as a means of neutralization of NATO’s supremacy, especially in light of its possible future enlargement (the other unsolved issue by the US “reset”), and demands that the US withdraws these weapons from Europe – a request that manifestly clashes with the apprehension of some new Central and Eastern European NATO members who view them as a symbol of the US commitment to the defence of the continent.

As already pointed out, the new START does not address the problem with the anti-missile defence project promoted under the previous US administration. It is worth noting that along with the text of the Treaty on the Kremlin’s site a Statement on Missile Defence<sup>12</sup> appeared stating that: «The Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States can operate and be viable only if the US refrains from developing its missile defence capabilities quantitatively or qualitatively. Consequently, the exceptional circumstances referred to in Article 14 of the Treaty include increasing the capabilities of

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<sup>11</sup> C. WHITLOCK, *US Looks to Non-nuclear Weapons to Use as Deterrent*, in «Washington Post», April 8, 2010; S. ROGOV, *Shestaia popytka*, cit.

<sup>12</sup> The US insisted that Russia does not publish the statement but Moscow considered its publication necessary.

the US missile defence system in such a way that threatens the potential of the strategic nuclear forces of the Russian Federation». And Article 14 provides that «Each Party shall, in exercising its national sovereignty, have the right to withdraw from this Treaty if it decides that extraordinary events related to the subject matter of this Treaty have jeopardized its supreme interests». In other words, the second and perhaps most unstable and delicate component of the “reset” is at stake. True, Moscow obtained Washington’s formal recognition of the interrelation between offensive and defensive systems on which it builds up its right to withdraw from the Treaty. The US had no other political choice but to refuse a full-fledged recognition as its NATO allies in the European Union would have interpreted the move as ceding to Moscow’s pressure. However, Russia’s anxiety about US missile defence programmes persists and the US recognition in the Treaty’s Preamble can barely placate it<sup>13</sup>. The solution offered is thus temporary – until such system does take place and Moscow decides to withdraw from the pact. The picture afterwards will be lack of confidence and continuous tensions between Moscow and Washington, and Moscow’s exclusion from regional and European security systems. So far the US has never shown an interest or a commitment to negotiate and sign a treaty binding itself not to deploy such systems. Quite the contrary, while “scrapping” the Bush administration missile defence plans, President Obama actually confirmed the deployment in Poland of the US *Patriot* missiles. The new START is hence signed against the background of a total absence of limits on deployment of strategic anti-missile defensive systems. Interestingly, in 2002 the US unilaterally withdrew from the ABM Treaty; now, this scenario now can be repeated again but this time on the part of Russia as if to ironically counterbalance that past US move.

The “reset” of bilateral relations allowed Russia to advance its interest in restoring its status of an international key actor in security matters by presenting in December 2009 President Medvedev’s Draft Treaty on Security from Vancouver to Vladivostok. However, the “reset” did not make any step further; nor has the Draft stimulated a broader, collective and constructive debate so far. In a sense, the Draft was not included in the “reset” and neither the US nor NATO, nor the European Union fully endorsed the June 2008 Russian President’s initiative. Thus the “reset” puts aside the question of a common approach to European security; it does not improve the confidence-building between Russia and NATO/US. Quite the opposite, this lack of trust reminds old stereotypes and strengthens the existing different approaches to security. As Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov stressed «the approach towards the Draft Treaty on European Security is a test-case of sincerity of Russia’s partners, including NATO»<sup>14</sup>. Washington’s approach to the proposed Draft is of a crucial importance for Russia – if positive it will acknowledge Moscow’s fundamental role in shaping European security architecture; if not – it will once again fuel the view that European stability and security are a matter of US exclusive responsibility.

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<sup>13</sup> As Berman notices, the issue of the US missile defence was not welcomed in the US as well leading to major critics to Obama’s decision. «The new deal prejudices the administration against future investments in precisely the types of defences needed to protect against nuclear weapons. It is useful to remember that Russia, together with China, has long lobbied for limits on America’s missile defence plans. During its term in office, the Bush administration resisted those impulses, preferring to maintain the right to shape its response to emerging threats as it saw fit. Team Obama has taken a different tack. During the negotiating process, the White House reassured sceptics that the new pact would not include any sort of quid pro quo on missile defence. But the actual text of the Treaty says otherwise, restricting the US from using existing missile launchers for defence duties in the event of that it must move quickly to counter unforeseen threats. Russian officials, meanwhile, have made clear that they view any further US movement on missile defence as hostile. All of which makes abundantly clear that, for all of the administration’s rhetoric to the contrary, missile defence has become a casualty of our [US] new strategic understanding with Russia». See I. BERMAN, Failure To Launch, Forbes.com, April 13, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> T. IURIEVA, *Rossija-NATO: kakovay perspektivai otnoshenii?*, April 2, 2010, [www.mgimo.ru](http://www.mgimo.ru).

## Conclusion

The “reset” proposed by the US has been a selective approach so far. From a Russian perspective it does not address Moscow’s major interests and concerns that have arisen after the end of the Cold War. Besides it does not advance any viable long-term strategy for Moscow-Washington’s relationship. Its first component – the new START pact – has a positive meaning, but it has little impact on the broader “reset” of bilateral military affairs. Its second component – the “exchange deal” (namely, no missile defence programme in Europe in return for support against Iran’s nuclear programme) – does not entail a stable cooperation as both parties manifest caution and prefer not to take a definitive stand. To some extent, the “reset” perpetuates the previous phase of Moscow’s distrust as it continues not to take into consideration the whole spectrum of interests that are fundamental for Russia (and may have a considerable impact on the European Union as well – see, for example, the countries of the shared neighbourhood).

One concluding remark should be emphasized. Following the signing of the new START both Presidents pledged to boost economic ties. This suggests perhaps a new more pragmatic, realist and constructive dimension of bilateral relations, which should be strengthened further and developed. The economic dimension has not been included in the “reset” approach so far but could be a promising basis for enhanced direct Russo-US bilateral relations. Russia needs to modernize its economic and industrial system in order to maintain its competitiveness globally and regionally. Therefore stable economic relations with Washington could be a key solution of this problem. This example is an evidence that despite existing asymmetry, in some sectors symmetry may appear bringing beneficial long-lasting effects to both actors.

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