

Nuclear Disarmament in the Russian Domestic Debate: PROs and CONs

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Factors shaping Russian domestic debate on nuclear disarmament (ND)



- the end of bipolarity has had a paradoxical effect on ND;
- the current generation of politicians and specialists either do not know the past or do not consider it important;
- nuclear forces are virtually the only area where Russia is equal – and in some categories superior – to the United States;
- Washington’s nuclear posture has long envisaged the first use of nuclear weapons, and retained this concept even after the end of the Cold War.

Opponents of ND versus Proponents

- **Nuclear weapons saved the humanity from the threat of the III world war and even played kind of civilizing role for political elites of the leading countries;**
- **Nuclear proliferation is not guided by the lack of disarmament but rather by other incentives;**
- **After the new START, the so called Prague treaty, further reductions of the Russia nuclear arsenal will have a destabilizing impact**
- **Nuclear weapons were created and used in 1945 not for deterrence and political containment but for total destruction of an adversary in case of a new war;**
- **The link between nuclear disarmament and non proliferation did exist and does exist, although it is not direct;**
- **Even after the planned reductions there will be a long way to the rational minimal ceilings of the existing nuclear arsenals**

CONs and PROs

- **It is impossible to stop nuclear proliferation. Therefore, we should accept nuclear proliferation as a reality .**



- **It would be naïve to think that a future nuclear proliferation will be developing along the old pattern;**
- **With all criticism, the USSR and USA were much more reliable and responsible than the majority of states that are striving for nuclear weapons;**
- **Their nuclear forces will be more primitive and vulnerable than those of NWS which means that these counties will be much more prone to first use of nuclear forces.**

CONs and PROs

- **Given Russia's geopolitical vulnerability, slow economic modernization, corruption, lack of soft power, it would be a national suicide to destroy or even to diminish further its nuclear potential.**
- **The role of nuclear weapons as a guarantor of Russia's security and its great power status is strongly exaggerated by the critics of nuclear disarmament.**

Conclusion

- However reasonable and convincing the proponents of ND may be, nowadays they are in minority in Russia;
- However, this situation is neither new, nor desperate;
- Looking back in time we cannot but recognize that the USSR and the US were able to conclude important arms control treaties in the periods of high tensions in the international relations;
- All depends on national priorities, among which nuclear arms control must occupy one of the top positions. Obviously the present situation is different and this should be corrected without further delay.