

Strategic relations during the transition period and the role of nuclear weapons

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According to Mr. Zigfrid Hekker (who is well known by all the attendees to this conference) the modern strategic relations between Russia and the USA are quite paradoxical:

- Neither allies nor adversaries;
- Neither friends nor enemies.

So who we are with respect to each other and how we should develop our relations.

Analysis of the modern geopolitical situation that shows reassuring trends and poses new threats shall help us to clarify this situation.

The positive factors of the international situation development include:

- Reduction of the Russian and the US nuclear arsenals;
- Reduction of the risk of the global military conflict;
- Progress in the development of partnership relations between Russia and the USA as well as between Russia and NATO.

However there are also many factors that produce negative effect on the strategic relations and cause concern of the international community.

These factors include:

- Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (including nuclear weapons) and its delivery systems;
- Terrorism (including the international and nuclear terrorism);
- Aggravation of the risk of regional wars and local military conflicts;
- Uncertainty of military threat sources and nature of possible actions of a potential enemy.

In addition to the above it should be mentioned that steadiness and stability of the international relations declines due to mono-polarity of the world that showed up in recent years. It has to do with strengthening of the US dominating position in the

main areas of modern international community and its future development. And it is well known that lack of balance results in decline of stability.

In such situation the actions of each country participating in the world developments are definitely of dual nature and will apparently remain such for a long period of time.

On one hand the countries shall seek for reduction of the arsenals of weapons of mass destruction, strengthening of transparency and confidence-building measures, development of co-operation in combating terrorism and reduction of the risk of regional wars and local military conflicts.

On the other hand the countries shall take measures to ensure their national security in any possible military and strategic situation. In this context the "Russian National Security Concept" document states that "The Russian Federation shall have nuclear forces assuredly capable of inflicting the given damage to any aggressor state or to a coalition of states in any situation".

This shows the role of nuclear weapons in ensuring national security of the state.

It should be noted that such attitude shall not frighten anybody since it is the defensive one. But it clearly shows the role of nuclear weapons in ensuring national security.

After becoming the nuclear state Russia had no and will have no intentions to launch aggressive war against any country.

However as it was mentioned above the new situation with its dual character demands new approaches to maintain strategic stability in the world.

Russia observes the START-I Treaty. At present the process of ratification of the START-II Treaty is nearly completed. The consultative group will have to work hard to develop a mechanism of this Treaty implementation and strengthening of confidence-building measures.

Russia ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

In this context certain concern is caused by the position of some countries since the Treaty validation depends on its signing and ratification by these countries. At present Russia observes the moratorium on nuclear tests and collaborates with the US

National Laboratories under the Inter-Government Agreements, in particular under the WSSX Agreement.

To proceed with this collaboration the Russian Nuclear Research Institutes proposed a number of new areas for information exchange and joint research:

- Explosion compression of D-T gas in targets in laser systems;
- New type of ferro-electric energy sources;
- Properties of materials in super-strong/intensive magnetic fields;
- Methods of stabilizing perturbations during aircraft flights;
- Interaction of metals and alloys with hydrogen isotopes under high pressure;
- Kinetics of metals and alloys (including plutonium) aging;
- Calculation support of the hydrodynamic instability experiments;
- Ant-terrorist methods.

These and other proposals made by the US and Russian experts and specialists are currently discussed in Albuquerque at the meeting of Joint Steering Committee and Joint Coordinating Group established under the said Agreement.

We hope that our bilateral collaboration will be successful. However some circumstances that complicate the international situation and require adequate approaches and solutions should be mentioned.

Such complications include:

- NATO extension to the East;
- US withdrawal from the ABM Defense Treaty of 1972 and development of the national anti-ballistic missile defense system;
- Presence of tactical nuclear weapons beyond national boundaries (in Europe);
- Reduction of single warhead nuclear yield and possibility of preventive nuclear strike;
- Uncertainty of the future of the sea-launched cruise missiles;
- Number of the US and the Russian nuclear warheads is getting close to the number of NW in possession of other nuclear states.

The last mentioned fact will require to shift from the bilateral to the multilateral agreements on further reduction of nuclear weapons. The so-called threshold states

and non-recognized nuclear states can be of certain problem in this process. But this is the future problem.

During this transition period the nuclear weapons still remain the deterrent although there are other opinions. Some military experts and politicians state that high precision weapons supersede nuclear weapons and diminishes its importance since destruction of hazardous facilities (nuclear and conventional power plants, chemical facilities, etc.) with the help of the high precision weapons can entail consequences comparable to those resulted from the use of nuclear weapons.

These considerations are hardly justifiable since in the situation when the arsenals of the expensive high precision weapons in possession of different countries are different a country that uses it takes the risk of receiving a retaliatory nuclear strike.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Modern international situation is characterized by the opposing trends related to reassuring factors and new threats.
2. The efforts of the states to prevent a global war are effective, however they did not manage to avoid regional and local military conflicts.
3. There are some factors that aggravate the inter-state relations and require adequate measures for strengthening national security.
4. New threats the international community is exposed to require joint coordinated efforts of many countries (including the nuclear states) to strengthen security and ensure strategic stability. The interaction between the US and RF nuclear laboratories is a good example of such efforts.
5. Despite reduction of the US and the RF nuclear arsenals nuclear weapons still remain the deterrent. Emergence of new nuclear states requires the international community to enhance the proliferation prevention efforts.