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**FROM BREZHNEV TO PUTIN: DYNAMICS OF THE SOVIET / RUSSIAN
LEADERSHIP ATTITUDE TOWARDS COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED
STATES ON NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION**

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Summary

The paper argues that one of the main factors enabling successful cooperation between the two countries on non-proliferation is the relative equality of capabilities and resources available to both states to prevent or solve a non-proliferation problem. Since 1970, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (the NPT) has been one of the few international agreements forcing both the Soviet Union / Russia and the United States to take cooperative actions to prevent further nuclear proliferation as well as to pursue nuclear arms control measures. However, when it comes to the practical implementation of the NPT and cooperation in this area between the Soviet Union / Russia and the United States, national approaches towards such cooperation are not so unequivocal and undergo certain changes determined by several factors.

In this paper, I analyse the main ways of and the reasons for the evolution of the Soviet / Russian approaches to the cooperation with the United States on the NPT from 1970 till present days. While implementing such an analysis, I rely upon the Waltz's methodology of the analysis of international relations and refer to Sagan's models of proliferation drivers.

In my opinion, at the current stage, Russia's leadership seems to be trying to get back to the situation that existed before 1985. In recent years, in those cases where Russia has been provided with the opportunity to cooperate with the United States on an equal basis (as it took place in Syria and Iran), the effective Russia-U.S. cooperation on non-proliferation was



possible. It is important to note that currently there is a strong trend towards further politicization of bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation fora where Russia is still involved. Those fora already include the IAEA and may include the Proliferation Security Initiative in the future.

Introduction

One could agree with the opinion expressed in September 1961 by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency: “the weight” of each of the factors (or drivers) determining states decisions to proliferate “is not fixed and may change as costs and difficulties change and the political-strategic factors alter.”¹ In the same vein, Sagan argued that “nuclear weapons proliferation and nuclear restraint have occurred in the past, and can occur in the future, for more than one reason: different historical cases are best explained by different casual models.”² Applying the same argument for the analysis of the Soviet approach to non-proliferation, Potter argued in 1985 that “the Soviet (as well as U.S.) non-proliferation behaviour has not always conformed closely to declaratory policy. This is not surprising, given the different functions (symbolic, political, and military) that non-proliferation policy performs and the different security risks (real or perceived) posed by various Nth countries. One would hardly expect the Soviet Union, for example, to adopt a posture on non-proliferation that failed to distinguish among the threats raised by West German, Iraqi, Cuban, and Indian possession of nuclear weapons.”³

Thus, one should consider several internal and external factors while analysing the Soviet / Russian approaches towards the cooperation with the United States in the field of nuclear non-proliferation. This work will rely upon the Waltz’s methodology of the analysis of international relations. In general terms, Waltz’s methodology implies three levels of analysis of states’ international behaviour – the level of international system, the level of the state itself (considering domestic makeup of the state, including the decision-making process), and

¹ National Intelligence Estimate, NIE 4–3–61, September 21. “Nuclear Weapons and Delivery Capabilities of Free World Countries Other Than the US and UK.” Secret. 16 pp. CIA Files, Job 79R01012A, ODDI Registry, accessed on January 12, 2017, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v07-09mSupp/d243>

² Sagan, Scott D., “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb,” *International Security* 21.3 (1996), 54-86, accessed January 12, 2017, <http://faculty.maxwell.syr.edu/rdenever/ppa%20730-11/sagan.pdf>

³ William C. Potter (1985) *Nuclear Proliferation: U.S.-Soviet Cooperation*, *The Washington Quarterly*, 8:1, 141-154



personal level (the nature of particular statesmen and political leaders).⁴ In addition, this work will refer to three models of proliferation drivers proposed by Sagan.⁵ Two other drivers, which are frequently mentioned in the non-proliferation literature, will be added to Sagan's models. Therefore, this work will refer to five types of proliferation drivers – security, prestige, domestic politics, technology, and economics.

The core of the NPT bargain is its Article VI, which commits each of the parties to the treaty to pursue negotiations on "... effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control." Resolution 2028 (XX) "Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons" – adopted by the UN General Assembly on November 19, 1965 – three years before the adoption of the NPT, described the necessary principle of the future deal as follows: "The treaty should embody an acceptable balance of mutual responsibilities and obligations of the nuclear and non-nuclear powers."⁶

The above mentioned balance of mutual responsibilities and obligations manifested in non-nuclear weapon states' commitment to refrain from acquiring nuclear weapons (Articles II and III), and the nuclear weapon states' pledge not to proliferate military nuclear technologies to other states (Article I), but to provide assistance to them in the development of peaceful nuclear technology (Articles IV and V), and, most importantly, to participate, together with non-nuclear weapon states, in negotiations on measures relating to nuclear disarmament (Article VI).

The link between disarmament and non-proliferation, thus enshrined in the NPT, has always found its reflection in the Soviet / Russian foreign policy. One can say that the reliance on the provisions of the NPT and the IAEA safeguards to limit the nuclear threat to itself and its allies has always been the central part of the Soviet / Russian non-proliferation policy.

⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* Revised Edition by (Author), New York: Columbia University Press, 2001

⁵ Sagan, Scott D., "Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb," *International Security* 21.3 (1996), 54-86, accessed January 12, 2017, <http://faculty.maxwell.syr.edu/rdenever/ppa%20730-11/sagan.pdf>

⁶ UN General Assembly Resolution 2028 (XX), Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, November 19, 1965, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/217/91/IMG/NR021791.pdf?OpenElement>



At the same time, the very concept of “nuclear non-proliferation” has always occupied a much less important place in the Soviet / Russian foreign policy and expert discussions. While in the United States, the development of nuclear non-proliferation discourse has led to the establishment of what Craig and Ruzicka have labelled as “non-proliferation complex,”⁷ in the Soviet Union the official approaches to this issue have always been dependant on the state of strategic relations between the two superpowers, as well as on the ability of the Soviet Union / Russia to cooperate with the United States in this area on an equal footing.

I tend to agree with Potter who claims that the Soviet attitude to nuclear non-proliferation represented a sort of a pendulum between the situation when the Soviet \ Russian concern with non-proliferation “was clearly peripheral to the major strategic objectives of countering the U.S. nuclear weapons advantage and competing with the United States internationally for friends and allies” and the situation when the United States “found it easier to gain support from the Soviet Union than its Western allies [...] for its efforts to tighten nuclear export controls.”⁸

Potter at his 1985 analysis named four different periods since 1945 in the development of each superpower's thinking on nuclear exports and non-proliferation.⁹ While agreeing with Potter that politics have always played an important role in the cooperation between the two countries, I believe that the decisive role in the successfulness and robustness of the cooperation has always been played by the ability of the Soviet Union / Russia to work together with the United States on an equal basis, and to provide its independent and unique input into solution of one or another proliferation problem. In those cases where the resources and capabilities available for the cooperation were considerably unequal, the cooperation was less successful. Thus, I argue that the conditional periodisation of the Soviet/Russian cooperation with the United States on the NPT depends mainly on the dynamics of the Soviet / Russian ability to cooperate with the United States on an equal basis. Accordingly, one might distinguish between the following four periods of cooperation: 1970 – 1985, 1985 – 1991, 1991 – the beginning of the 2000s, the beginning of the 2000s – till present.

⁷ Craig, Campbell, Ruzicka, Jan, *The Nonproliferation Complex, Ethics & International Affairs*, Volume 27.3 (Fall 2013)

⁸ William C. Potter (1985) *Nuclear Proliferation: U.S.-Soviet Cooperation*, *The Washington Quarterly*, 8:1, 141-154

⁹ *Ibid.*

A clear distinction between these conditional periods is questionable since the transitions from one period to another did not occur in a moment, were influenced by the changes on several levels (in this work those levels are labelled in accordance with the Waltz's methodology), while those changes themselves were influenced by several incentives and disincentives to proliferate. Nevertheless, it is apparent that there are considerable differences between the factors which influenced the Soviet / Russian readiness to cooperate with the United States in the 1970s, during the times of Yeltsin, and in current post-Crimean realities.

The Period of 1970-1985

In 1970-1985, the attitude of the Soviet leadership towards the cooperation with the United States on the NPT was being formulated within the context of the "Cold War." Among the main factors that contributed to the cooperation between the two countries were the danger to both the United States and the Soviet Union of becoming entangled in regional conflicts having a potential for escalation of nuclear weapons use, as well as the greater complexity and uncertainty that the spread of nuclear weapons would introduce into global power politics. In fact, one can say that the confrontation between the two countries in that period, as well as the existence of their own spheres of influence, promoted their cooperation in non-proliferation realm.

During that period, many articles on non-proliferation in Soviet writings included passages about the importance of the NPT. The Soviet view of the NPT was summarized as follows: "The Non-Proliferation Treaty, and reflects the interests of all countries – large and small, nuclear and non-nuclear, developed and developing – and there is no alternative to the NPT in the contemporary world."¹⁰

Potter notes that "since 1974, the United States and the Soviet Union often have worked closely together in international fora to tighten nuclear export restraints and to gain greater adherence

¹⁰ Citation: The Soviet Union and Nuclear Proliferation: Policy at a Crossroads (U) Army War Coll Carlisle Barrcks PA R L Rigby 02 Apr. 88



to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.”¹¹ The Soviet Union and the United States cooperated closely at the London Suppliers Group meetings, at meetings of the IAEA, the NPT Review Conferences, at sessions of the UN General Assembly on the non-proliferation topic, at the Zangger Committee meetings, as well as through high-level ad hoc consultations on non-proliferation issues.

In 1974, the U.S. Department of State admitted that “while the Soviets could become major exporters of the full range of nuclear materials, equipment and technology, their exports have in practice been quite limited,”¹² They also noted that “there are no export areas in which the Soviets have a less restrictive policy than we do”, as well as that the United States had “frequent consultations with the Soviets on IAEA matters through the U.S. respective missions to the IAEA, with an excellent record of cooperation and mutual support in this field.”¹³

By 1981, the Soviet Union confirmed that it will not use its nuclear weapons against those countries which refrain from nuclear weapons production and acquisition. In addition, the Soviet Union, at least verbally, supported the creation of WMD-free zones in the various regions of the world, including Northern Europe, the Balkans, the Mediterranean, Africa, and Latin America. Finally, the historical record contains examples of practical cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States on resolving proliferation crises, one of the most striking of which was the cooperation on the issue of South African nuclear program.

However, for the Soviet Union cooperation with the United States on the NPT has never been a value in itself, and has always been dependant on a number of variables.

¹¹ William C. Potter (1985) Nuclear Proliferation: U.S.-Soviet Cooperation, *The Washington Quarterly*, 8:1, 141-154

¹² AUGUST 26, 1974 MEMORANDUM TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FROM FRED IKLE AND WINSTON LORD, 'U.S. POLICY ON NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION' Policy Planning Staff, box 348, Nov. 1974. Obtained and contributed by William Burr. ORIGINAL ARCHIVE National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Nuclear Proliferation International History Project (NPIHP), <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119778>

¹³ State Department telegram 228213 to U.S. Embassy Moscow, 'Nuclear Safeguards Consultations', October 17, 1974, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, National Archives Access to Archival Databases Online collections, State Department telegrams for 1974 and other years. Obtained and contributed by William Burr. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119781>



As it was noted in the United States national intelligence estimate of 1982, “in a more general and far-reaching sense, nuclear proliferation has an impact on the U.S.-Soviet relationship because of the extent to which nuclear proliferation affects U.S. and Soviet influence and interests asymmetrically: the issue creates difficulties for the United States in its bilateral relations with nearly every state mentioned in the regional discussions, a situation the Soviet Union can be expected to exploit in order to undercut U.S. influence. The United States and its allies have far greater equity in strategic and economic ties with most of these countries than does Moscow.”¹⁴

It is true that within the context of bipolar confrontation, regional proliferation perspective has always been one of the key in determining the two countries' ability and readiness to cooperate on the NPT. The “Cold War” system allowed the Soviet Union to carry on active nuclear trade, and, as Potter puts it, it was “more a sign of Soviet confidence in its ability to exercise political control over the recipients’ program than an indication of diminished support for the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.”¹⁵

In this regard, Europe has always been one of the central regions in determining the Soviet/Russian attitude towards the cooperation with the United States in the field. Any further nuclear proliferation in Europe could directly threaten the national security interests of the Soviet Union, creating direct threat to its mainland and its allies.

The ideology played its own role in the development of the Soviet non-proliferation policy. In case of India, after all the U.S. nuclear assistance for India stopped immediately after 1974, “for the socialist countries it was a rather difficult task to deal with Indian nuclear program,” since they “did not want to condemn India,” nor could they stand up for it without setting themselves against their own standpoint. For a long time, the Soviet Union “propagated that there is no essential difference between the nuclear explosive devices which serve military or peaceful purposes, and it depends solely on the manufacturer or possessor of the device to

¹⁴ JULY, 1982, NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE, NIE-4-82, 'NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION TRENDS THROUGH 1987', <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116894>

¹⁵ William C. Potter (1985) Nuclear Proliferation: U.S.-Soviet Cooperation, *The Washington Quarterly*, 8:1, 141-154



decide which purpose he will use it for.” For this very reason, the Soviet Union adopted the standpoint of “refraining from expressing its opinion,” which was duly appreciated by India.¹⁶

Another case of “expressive silence” took place in 1977 when the Soviet Union and the United States jointly pressure West Germany to revise its nuclear deal with Brasil. Then, the Soviet Union was not interested “in publicity for the renewed partnership of the usually adversarial victorious powers.” The Soviet press kept silent about the episode, because the Soviets “did not want to be seen in the Third World as accomplices of the United States, as atomic imperialists aiming to exclude others from technological and economic progress.”¹⁷ The same “expressive silence” took place in the case of the Soviet-U.S. cooperation on South Africa.¹⁸ The case of FRG-Brasil nuclear deal can serve as an illustration of another factor influencing the Soviet non-proliferation policy during the period – the interdependence between the non-proliferation and disarmament agendas. Initially, both the Soviet Union and the United States had accepted the contract signed between Bonn and Brasilia in the summer of 1975. But the 1977 Soviet demarche in Bonn aimed to “signal to Washington Moscow’s agreement with the second motive of improving the conditions for a Russian-American agreement on the limitation of strategic arms (SALT). For this reason, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrey Gromyko, instructed his man on the Rhine to explain in clear terms, but without passion, that the Soviet government shares the American reservations against the agreement with Brazil. Moreover, Palin [the Soviet Ambassador to Bonn] recommended, under Moscow’s orders, that the Germans take seriously the strong objections from the Americans.” Just like the United States, Moscow was criticizing not the supply of nuclear plants, but the export of facilities for the enrichment and reprocessing of fuel.¹⁹

¹⁶ Memorandum, Hungarian Foreign Ministry, on India's Policy on Nuclear Disarmament,” October 31, 1974, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Országos Levéltár, MOL). XIX-J-1-j India, 1974, 50. doboz, 60-406, 003434/9/1974. Obtained and translated for NPIHP by Balazs Szalontai. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112879>

¹⁷ Brazilian Embassy Cable, Brazilian Ambassador to Bonn Reports on Soviet Pressure on West Germany,” March 21, 1977, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil (CPDOC), Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV), Azeredo da Silveira Archive, AAS mre pn 1974.08.15 pp. 589-591. Obtained and translated by Fundação Getúlio Vargas, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115218>

¹⁸ AUGUST 10, 1977 LETTER, WARREN CHRISTOPHER TO WILLIAM HYLAND, 'RESPONSE TO SOVIET MESSAGE ON SOUTH AFRICA', <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119249>

¹⁹ Brazilian Embassy Cable, Brazilian Ambassador to Bonn Reports on Soviet Pressure on West Germany,” March 21, 1977, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil (CPDOC), Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV), Azeredo da Silveira Archive, AAS mre pn 1974.08.15 pp. 589-591. Obtained and translated by Fundação Getúlio Vargas. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/115218>

In addition to regional, ideological and disarmament perspectives, it should be noted that the very concept of non-proliferation has always occupied different places in the Soviet / Russian decision-making and that of the United States. Moreover, one can say that in the period of 1970-1985, non-proliferation was not the central topic of the Soviet-U.S. dialogue. As then U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance noted in 1978, among the issues which provoked concern in regard to the Soviet Union in the United States were “the increase by the USSR of its military forces, especially in Europe,” “the situation in Africa,” and “question of human rights.”²⁰

As far as the state level is considered, the system of foreign policy decision-making was established in the Soviet Union in early 1970s.²¹ That system, which included representatives of five main bodies of the Soviet Union Government – Politburo, the KGB, the Military Industrial Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Defence – was being developed throughout the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s. The system was unofficially called by its participants as the “Big Five.”²² The mandate of this informal advisory body was broader than just arms control issues.²³ The “Big Five” system allowed for reduced influence of personal factor, and reinforced the importance of ideology in the Soviet non-proliferation policy as the “Big Five” members had to conform to the ideology of the state in their decision-making.

Economic driver also played a role. In the late 1970s, the interconnection between the arms race and problems in the Soviet Union economy became apparent to the Soviet leadership. As Brezhnev noted in 1978, “the strengthening of the country’s defensive capabilities still requires our continual attention. Unfortunately, it is not possible to reduce military expenses significantly for now. NATO, especially the USA, is heating up the arms race. [...] The

²⁰ JUNE 02, 1978 MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO AND US SECRETARY OF STATE VANCE, 31 MAY 1978 (EXCERPTS), <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117044>

²¹ Akhromeev, Sergey, Kornienko, Georgy. Glazami Marshala I Generala. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnie Otnosheniya, 1992

²² See, for example: Savel'ev, Aleksandr, Detinov Nikolay N. The Big Five: Arms Control Decision-making in the Soviet Union. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1995; Akhromeev, Sergey, Kornienko, Georgy. Glazami Marshala I Generala. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnie Otnosheniya, 1992, pp. 129-159

²³ Коргунов С. В. Современная внешняя политика России: стратегия избирательной вовлеченности. М.: ГУ-ВШЭ, 2009



production of modern weapons is a heavy burden on the economy. But we view the strengthening of our defences as a national, as well as an international duty.”²⁴ The Soviet Union was no longer able to continue the arms race at the levels of the 1960s - early 1970s. Therefore, it was necessary to negotiate arms control measures with the United States.

This willingness to negotiate arms control measures with the United States provoked by the economic driver, also stipulated the Soviet Union’s willingness to cooperate with the United States in the field of nuclear non-proliferation (as it happened in the case of FRG-Brazil deal). In addition, the Soviet Union was not interested in appearance of new nuclear powers in terms of the additional burden it could create for the Soviet military industrial complex. On the other hand, the emergence of new nuclear weapon states within the “socialist camp” was considered as factor able to reduce that burden – an argument that will be used in case of India in 1985-1991.

Economic driver also manifested itself in fast breeding reactors issue. As Potter put it, “especially at odds with the U.S. policy during the last half of the 1970s was Soviet support for plutonium reprocessing and recycle and breeder reactors.” This issue, in particular, provided for certain “policy convergence with respect to regional, multinational fuel cycle facilities (MFCFs). In addition to its attractiveness on non-proliferation grounds, the Soviets find the concept of MFCFs appealing for two other reasons. First, as Gloria Duffy has noted, “it is a measure permitting further refinement of the nuclear fuel cycle and movement to an actual-albeit regulated-plutonium-based fuel cycle, a step the USSR heartily support. Second, as Duffy also points out, a regional fuel cycle system already operates within the CEMA framework, with the processing facilities based in the Soviet Union. Consequently, “not only would the Bloc presumably be left relatively untouched by any new international arrangements, but the Soviets would have a model to show the rest of the world.”²⁵

²⁴ “Transcript, Meeting of East German leader Erich Honecker and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, Crimea, 25 July 1978 (excerpt),” July 25, 1978, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Stiftung “Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR” im Bundesrarchiv (SAPMO-BArch) Berlin, DY30 JIV 2/201/1495. Obtained and translated by Christian Ostermann.
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117047>

²⁵ William C. Potter (1985) Nuclear Proliferation: U.S.-Soviet Cooperation, *The Washington Quarterly*, 8:1, 141-154



Thus, in the period of 1970-1985, the following factors determined the Soviet Union attitude towards the cooperation with the United States on nuclear non-proliferation issue:

- At the level of the international system, the Soviet Union had enough capabilities to influence third world countries;
- At the state level, economic driver forced the Soviet Union to limit proliferation to potentially hostile, or uncontrolled countries, while collective decision-making mechanism smoothed internal conflicts between bodies of the Soviet Government and strengthened ideological factor in the Soviet Union non-proliferation policy.
- The influence of personal factor was quite weak thanks to the “Big Five” system.

The period of 1985-1991

After Gorbachev came to power in 1985, he attempted to give a new common ground to the Soviet-U.S. dialogue in nuclear field. Unfortunately, the result was not a closer cooperation between the two superpowers, but the collapse of the Soviet Union and sharp narrowing of the Russian sphere of influence. Describing the main difficulties that he faced at the level of international system, Gorbachev noted in 1988: “we are proposing and willing to build a new world, to destroy the old basis. Those who oppose it are in the minority, but these circles are very influential. In the classified information which we receive they speak directly: we cannot allow the Soviet Union to seize the initiative and lead the entire world.”²⁶

At the same time, during this period the Soviet Union leadership still considered it possible to control the spread of sensitive nuclear technologies to certain countries. For example, middle-level Soviet leaders, while dealing with their Indian partners, still adopted such an attitude “as if the Soviet Union had India fully in its pocket, as if it were India's “big brother.”²⁷

²⁶ Minutes of the Meeting of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU CC), (Excerpts),” December 27, 1988, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Center for the Storage of Contemporary Documentation (TsKhSD), Moscow, fond 89, perechen' 42, dokument 24. Translated by Vladislav Zubok.
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112478>

²⁷ “Ciphred Telegram No. 88, Embassy of Hungary in India to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” March 28, 1984, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Országos Levéltár, MOL). XIX-J-1-j India, 1984, 66. doboz, 60-103, 002450/1/1984. Obtained and translated for NPIHP by Balazs Szalontai.
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111953>



Though, it seems that during that period, the Soviet Union and the United States shared a common understanding of threats and challenges posed by further nuclear proliferation. For instance, in 1986 the Soviet Union officials thought that India will “nearly inevitable” become a nuclear power soon and formulated the following negative consequences of such a development:

- If nuclear non-proliferation collapses in India, many pro-Western countries – including Pakistan, Israel, and South Africa – will openly take the path of nuclear armament. The danger of local nuclear conflicts will increase;
- A new anti-Soviet campaign will unfold, claiming that India became a nuclear power with Soviet support;
- The process of nuclear disarmament will become even more complicated.²⁸

On the other hand, the illusion of “controlled proliferation” forced the Soviet Union leadership to believe that “the Indian nuclear potential would essentially strengthen the strategic position of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries.”²⁹

Also, the Soviet Union still was able to use its influence in certain regions in exchange for some political or economic preferences, as it took place in case of the ratification of the NPT by North Korea in December 1985. It is believed that the Soviets pressured the North Koreans into signing the NPT as a result of urging by the United States. In exchange, the Soviets have agreed to supply the North Koreans with a safeguarded commercial power reactor.

Although at the level of international system the confrontation basically remained the same, Gorbachev attempted to adjust the level of the state to the task of intensifying the dialogue with the United States. Gorbachev began to destroy the collective decision-making mechanism and

²⁸ “Ciphred Telegram No. 342, Embassy of Hungary in India to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” November 12, 1986, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Országos Levéltár, MOL). XIX-J-1-j India, 1986, 65. doboz, 60-4, 002134/3/1986. Obtained and translated for NPIHP by Balazs Szalontai. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111958>

²⁹ “Ciphred Telegram No. 126, Embassy of Hungary in India to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” March 24, 1987, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Országos Levéltár, MOL). XIX-J-1-j India, 1987, 58. doboz, 60-4, 002195/1987. Obtained and translated for NPIHP by Balazs Szalontai. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111959>



faced a strong opposition within the military-industrial complex. The principle of collective responsibility, as well as the rule of the old ideology both became blurred.

In March 1985, after the death of Chernenko, the Soviet leadership in charge of foreign policy changed. There came new Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Shevardnadze. The first disputes appeared within the “Big Five.” Akhromeev cites the following story from 1985: “At one day, when discussing the INF issue, comrade Zaikov (a member of the Politburo charged with coordinating the work of the Soviet Government agencies negotiating arms control treaties with the United States) said: “You know, comrade Akhromeev, the time when you together with Comrade Kornienko formulated the policy of the country in disarmament has passed. Now the political leadership of the state formulates it. You need to take this into account.”³⁰ That was the first sign of Gorbachev’s new tactic – to bar the Soviet military from decision-making on political issues. The nuclear talks with the West were considered by Gorbachev and Shevardnadze as a mainly political task.³¹ The “Big Five” began to follow the initiatives of the political leadership, while the original idea was to coordinate all political initiatives with military and military-industrial complex before they are put forward.

A well-known Gorbachev’s “perestroika”, or the “new thinking” policy became the main factor of internal politics influencing the foreign policy as well. In the very beginning, certain part of the Soviet military, including Akhromeev, really believed in that new policy. In particular, in 1990 Akhromeev wrote: “A new political thinking was finally formulated by the autumn of 1986. Its basic principle was that a nuclear war cannot be a mean to achieve political, economic, ideological, any whatsoever purpose. [...] Remembering that time, I consider it the most joyful. The Soviet people believed in perestroika.”³² Another important factor was certainly the Chernobyl disaster that convinced both the Soviet Union and the rest of the world that it is necessary to strengthen the control over the proliferation of nuclear technologies.

It is also notable, that the Western counterparts of Gorbachev did not believe in his success not only at the level of international system, but at the level of the state as well. For instance, then

³⁰ Akhromeev, Sergey, Kornienko, Georgy. *Glazami Marshala I Generala*. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnie Otnosheniya, 1992

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Akhromeev, Sergey, Kornienko, Georgy. *Glazami Marshala I Generala*. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnie Otnosheniya, 1992



former United States Secretary of State William Rogers said in 1988: “Of course it [the “new thinking” policy] won’t work. In the long run, either Gorbachev will be removed from his office, as Khrushchev was, or Russia will become a much different society. If he remains in the office, and the society becomes more open, a new challenge will face the United States. We will have to constantly remind ourselves in that event that a system which has openly and consistently espoused world domination does not easily change its spots; or if it does, in all likelihood it will be a temporary change.”³³ The West in general and the United States in particular made a mistake when they did not take seriously Gorbachev’s good intentions. As it will be analysed below, today’s crisis in Russia-U.S. relations in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation was, to a certain extent, provoked by that mistake.

Finally, the economic driver still played a role in formulating the Soviet Union attitude towards non-proliferation. In particular, the Soviet Union leadership still thought that the proliferation to “friendly” countries could reduce the arms race burden on the Soviet economy. As one of the Soviet documents stated in 1987, to a certain extent it would “alleviate the military burden weighing on the Soviet Union, since hitherto the latter has been compelled to counter the potential of as many as four nuclear powers.”³⁴

Thus, in the period of 1985-1991, the following factors determined the Soviet Union attitude towards the cooperation with the United States on nuclear non-proliferation issue:

- At the level of the international system, the Soviet Union still has enough capabilities to influence third world countries;
- At the state level, economic driver still forced the Soviet Union to limit proliferation to potentially hostile, or uncontrolled countries (and to consider the option to encourage proliferation to “friendly” countries), while collective decision-making mechanism was

³³ Statement of William P. Rogers, Former Secretary of State, The INF Treaty [microform] : hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, One Hundredth Congress, second session, on the treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the elimination of their intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, January 25, 1988, pp. 209-211, accessed on August 23, 2017, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015014752847>

³⁴ “Ciphred Telegram No. 126, Embassy of Hungary in India to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” March 24, 1987, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Országos Levéltár, MOL). XIX-J-1-j India, 1987, 58. doboz, 60-4, 002195/1987. Obtained and translated for NPIHP by Balazs Szalontai. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/111959>

challenged and internal conflicts between different agencies of the Soviet Government arose, weakening ideological factor in the Soviet non-proliferation policy.

- The influence of personal factor became strong enough to challenge the “Big Five” system.

The Period of 1991 - the Beginning of the 2000s

In 1991, the Cold War was over, and the ideological factor was withdrawn from Russian approach to non-proliferation. The system that to a large extent determined the cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States disappeared. The ability of Russia to influence non-proliferation regime has been narrowed to the borders of the former Soviet Union, and is still in decline in present days. This fact, in many ways, determined the geographical scope of cooperation between Russia and the United States during this period. The most meaningful and effective non-proliferation cooperation was limited to the territory of the former Soviet Union.

As Russian researchers note, “petty differences and clashes prevailed in U.S.-Russian relations at this stage (above all, the matter of Russian exports to Iran, which has become a constant issue throughout these years). The parties failed to discuss strategic problems and could not respond to such non-proliferation challenges, such as the 1998 nuclear tests in India and Pakistan. Moscow and Washington have also failed to find effective and mutually acceptable ways to curb missile proliferation. They have not helped the CD in Geneva to overcome its deadlock and have failed to sustain the momentum for a FMCT.”³⁵

After Russia has lost its sphere of influence, it faced the competition with the United States in those regions that previously were within the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence.³⁶ Nevertheless, certain U.S. officials started to think about the importance of the factor of equality for the Russia-U.S. cooperation in the field of nuclear non-proliferation. Some of them understood, in particular, that “there is no way to persuade the Russians to allow the United States to take a more active part in protecting their weapons of mass destruction without

³⁵ Vladimir Orlov, Roland Timerbaev, and Anton Khlopkov, *NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION IN U.S.-RUSSIAN RELATIONS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES*, PIR Library Series, 2002

³⁶ Договор о нераспространении ядерного оружия. Проблемы продления (Открытый доклад СВР за 1995 год)



convincing them that U.S.-Russian relations are fundamentally cooperative rather than competitive.”³⁷

As for the state level, the Russian authors note that “one of the most serious non-proliferation problems for Russia in the 1990s was the lack of a clear and coherent state policy in the area of WMD non-proliferation and, as a result, the lack of appropriate coordination, redistribution of powers among the agencies involved in export control decision-making. [...] Russian Government had no efficient mechanisms to control the implementation of its declarations. As a result, Russian non-proliferation declarations were devalued, the world began to view them as “export declarations,” while at the same time, Minatom and other governmental bodies involved in military-technical cooperation “dominated Russia’s internal politics.”³⁸ Yeltsin’s attempts to solve this problem did not bring success. As a result, at the late 1990s, it was clear that even the Foreign Ministry was unable to manage the whole set of problems that was faced by the Russian foreign policy in the 1990s.³⁹

But, probably, the most important internal factor influencing Russia’s approaches towards the cooperation with the United States during that period was economics. In some sense, economic problems allowed for the continuity of Russia-U.S. cooperative programs introduced in the 1990s (as it took place in case of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, bilateral Agreement Regarding Cooperation in the Area of Nuclear Material Physical Protection, Control and Accounting, and WSSX agreement).

At the individual level, the main difference was the multiplication of the number of statesmen who tried to influence and lead the country's foreign policy. In place of one Gorbachev and his opponents, there came Yeltsin, Kozyrev, Mikhailov, Primakov, and others who have tried to enforce the interests of their agencies in the field of foreign policy in general and in the field of non-proliferation in particular.

³⁷ Citation: Vladimir Orlov, Roland Timerbaev, and Anton Khlopkov, *NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION IN U.S.-RUSSIAN RELATIONS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES*, PIR Library Series, 2002

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Кортунов С. В. Современная внешняя политика России: стратегия избирательной вовлеченности. М.: ГУ-ВШЭ, 2009



Orlov also notes⁴⁰ that a distinctive feature of that period was that the nuclear non-proliferation policy was implemented under the influence of “enormous pressure from external players. The most visible U.S. pressure on Russia was manifest in two cases: Iran and India.” In addition, he argues that although Russia “has put forward dozens of major initiatives” in the 1990s, “it has coped with the “recipient of international aid” and the “lame duck” syndromes. In non-proliferation and disarmament matters, Russian diplomats have pursued their own policy with confidence and without regard for others.” But serious and well-considered proposals were allowed “to die quietly as a rule.” Russia was helpless in promoting its own grand initiatives, according to Orlov.

Thus, in the period between 1991 and the beginning of 2000s, the following factors determined Russia’s attitude towards the cooperation with the United States on nuclear non-proliferation issues:

- At the level of the international system, Russia lost its ability to influence third world countries; its area of influence was limited to the territory of the former Soviet Union;
- At the level of the state, economic driver became the strongest factor influencing Russia’s non-proliferation decision-making;
- The strong influence of personal factor led to the complete destruction of the decision-making mechanism that existed before 1991.

The period between the early 2000s and present days

One could agree that today there is a certain prejudice in the West against almost every major Russian foreign policy move. This prejudice increased dramatically in 2014 because of the events in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. For Russia, it is now much harder to convey its concerns in the field of international security to its Western partners. At the same time, for the West, it is now much easier to convince world public opinion that Russia is not only “bullying” Ukraine or the United States’ presidential elections, but the international security system in general. And it seems to be almost inevitable that the nuclear non-proliferation field will be the next victim of current hostile discourse between Russia and the United States. One of the most recent

⁴⁰ Vladimir Orlov, Russia’s Nuclear Quest Comes Full Circle, 29 December 2011, Russia in Global Affairs, 4, 2011, <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Russias-Nuclear-Quest-Comes-Full-Circle-15422>



and, probably, the brightest examples is the crisis of the 2000 Russia-U.S. Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement (the PMDA).

On October 31, 2016, the president of Russia signed the Federal Law on the Suspension of the PMDA.⁴¹ Numerous expert comments on the reasons for the decision converged in describing it as mainly politically-motivated move, “a way to register political dissatisfaction”,⁴² and another asymmetric response to the United States’ sanctions and numerous unfriendly statements by the United States government officials on Russia’s actions in Ukraine and Syria.⁴³ The basis for such an assessment was formed by the contents of the Federal Law itself, as well as by a few public comments on the issue made by Russian government officials.

By April 2016, it became apparent that Russia will manage to fulfil its obligations under the PMDA by 2018 (including completion of the construction of its MOX-fuel production line at the Mining and Chemical Combine in Zheleznogorsk and the launch of its BN-800 reactor at the Beloyarsk nuclear power plant).⁴⁴ At the same time, the building of the United States MOX Fuel Fabrication Facility at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina faced financial problems. Those financial problems postponed the implementation of the United States obligations under the PMDA for years, if not for the decades.⁴⁵

Because of these problems, the United States announced⁴⁶ that it could unilaterally (without negotiating it with Russia) change the way of plutonium disposition to mixing weapon grade

⁴¹ Federal Law No 381-FZ on the Suspension of the Agreement between Russia and the United States Concerning the Management and Disposition of Plutonium Designated as No Longer Required for Defence Purposes and Protocols to the Agreement, October 31, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, <https://rg.ru/2016/11/02/plutony-dok.html>

⁴² David Filipov, “Russia suspends plutonium deal with the U.S.,” The Washington Post, October 3, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/russia-suspends-plutonium-deal-with-us/2016/10/03/c502e628-8980-11e6-8cdc-4fbb1973b506_story.html?utm_term=.ea71cea0e193

⁴³ Darya Dolzhikova, “Who killed the U.S.-Russia plutonium agreement, and does it really matter?” The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, December 1, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://thebulletin.org/who-killed-us-russia-plutonium-agreement-and-does-it-really-matter10221>

⁴⁴ Pavel Podvig, “Can the U.S.-Russia plutonium disposition agreement be saved?” The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, April 28, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://thebulletin.org/can-us-russia-plutonium-disposition-agreement-be-saved9389>

⁴⁵ Thom Mason, ed., Final Report of the Plutonium Disposition Red Team, August 13, 2015, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2015/08/final-pu-disposition-red-team-report.pdf>

⁴⁶ State Department, 2016



plutonium “with radioactive waste and burying it underground in rooms excavated within a salt formation.”⁴⁷

On April 7, 2016, President Putin stated that Russia will look into the matter and will decide how to react to the situation with the PMDA.⁴⁸ Six months later, on October 31, 2016, the president signed the Federal Law on the suspension of the PMDA. According to the Federal Law, three reasons were behind the decision (in order of their appearance in the document).

First, the Federal Law mentioned “a fundamental change in the circumstances that existed at the date the PMDA entered into force,” as well as “the emergence of a threat to strategic stability” as a result of increased military infrastructure and the number of the United States military contingent stationed in the territories of members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) that joined NATO after September 1, 2000.⁴⁹ Second, the Federal Law mentioned hostile U.S. actions (including Magnitsky Act, Ukraine Freedom Support Act of 2014, sanctions against Russian legal entities and individuals, the financial damage caused by these sanctions, including the loss from the introduction of Russia’s “counter-sanctions” against the United States).⁵⁰ Third, the Federal Law mentioned the United States’ failure to implement its obligations under the PMDA.

In 2016, President Putin spoke on the issue of the suspension of the PMDA twice - on April 7, 2016 ⁵¹ (being the first Russian official who raised the issue of possible reaction to the violations of the PMDA by the United States) and on October 27, 2016.⁵² He also repeated his arguments during his latest speech at the Valdai Club Session on October 19, 2017.

⁴⁷ Remarks by Mikhail Ulyanov, Director of the Foreign Ministry Department for Non-Proliferation and Arms Control and Representative of the Russian Federation at the First Committee of the 71st Session of the UNGA, New York, October 3, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, http://www.mid.ru/en/general_assembly/-/asset_publisher/lrzZMhfoYRUj/content/id/2486599

⁴⁸ Vladimir Putin took part in the third Truth and Justice regional and local media forum, April 7, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51685>

⁴⁹ Federal Law No 381-FZ, 2016

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Truth and Justice, 2016

⁵² Vladimir Putin took part in the final session of the Valdai International Discussion Club’s 13th annual meeting, October 27, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53151>



On April 7, 2016, speaking at the Truth and Justice forum of Russian regional and local media in Saint Petersburg, President Putin said that the United States, unlike Russia, did not fulfil its obligations under the PMDA. According to President Putin, the United States “plans to dispose its accumulated highly enriched nuclear fuel by using a method other than what we [Russia and the United States – AK] agreed on when we signed the corresponding agreement. This means that the United States preserves what is known as the breakout potential, in other words, it can be retrieved, reprocessed and converted into weapons-grade plutonium again. This is not what we agreed on,” President Putin added.⁵³

Six months later, on October 27, 2016, speaking at the Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Forum, President Putin said that the conditions for the resumption of the PMDA, enlisted in the Federal Law, were a “starting position.”⁵⁴ A month before the October speech by President Putin at Valdai, the Director of the Russian Council on Foreign Affairs Dr. Andrey Kortunov in his article explained that putting forward “starting position” usually means putting forward deliberately excessive demands in order to be able to step back a few steps while achieving a compromise solution.⁵⁵

To further enhance this “starting position” thesis, President Putin in his October speech added that the conditions which were later listed in the Federal Law, were just “a piece of paper,” while “the plutonium disposition conditions, which the United States has violated, are a crucial issue pertaining to international security and the management of nuclear materials.”⁵⁶ Russia, he added, have suspended the PMDA “because the United States did not meet its obligations. As for conditions for negotiations on a wide range of issues, we can reach an agreement.”⁵⁷

Finally, President Putin added that the United States changed the way of the plutonium disposition because of financial difficulties, “as if Russia does not have financial difficulties of

⁵³ Truth and Justice, 2016

⁵⁴ Valdai, 2016

⁵⁵ Andrey Kortunov, “Rossiya Proschaetsya s Obamoy: Poslaniye Novomu Prezidentu,” Russia in Global Affairs, October 5, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://www.globalaffairs.ru/global-processes/Rossiia-proschaetsya-s-Obamoi-Poslanie-novomu-prezidentu-SShA-18410>

⁵⁶ Valdai, 2016

⁵⁷ Ibid.



its own”,⁵⁸ thus confirming that Russia’s decision to suspend the PMDA was not provoked by financial problems.

To understand why these two statements by the Russian president are important, one should consider peculiarities of modern Russia political system. According to the Russian Constitution, the president of Russia is the Commander-in-Chief approving Russian military doctrine. Also, the president (and not the foreign minister) directs the foreign policy of the country. Finally, it was President Putin who, according to his own words, “initiated the creation”⁵⁹ (and, until 2012, was the official leader) of the “United Russia” party, which, since September 2016, enjoys the constitutional majority in the Russian parliament. At the same time, in accordance with the recent polls by the leading Russian independent public opinion research companies, the percentage of the Russian population supporting President Putin was as high as 64% in October 2016 (and increased to about 67% by December 2016)⁶⁰, while the percentage of the Russian population regarding the United States as the most hostile country to Russia was 75% in June 2016.⁶¹

These internal factors taken together can explain why there was no difference between the texts of the draft Federal Law submitted to the State Duma (the lower chamber of the parliament of Russia) by the president on October 3, 2016 ⁶², and the final version of the Federal Law signed on October 31. These factors also explain why there were no substantive debate on the issue within the Russian parliament, that was actually supposed “to determine the detailed conditions for the resumption of the PMDA.”⁶³ The only discussion of the issue within the parliament was held on October 19, 2016, and was mainly about explaining the president’s decision to

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Vladimir Putin is taking part in political party United Russia’s 15th congress, July 27, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/52279>

⁶⁰ FOM, Vladimir Putin: Rating, Assessments of Work, as of December 17, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://fom.ru/politika/10946>

⁶¹ Elena Mukhametshina, “Osnovnimi Protivnikami Zhiteli Rossii schitayut SSHA, Ukrainu i Turtsiyu,” June 2, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2016/06/02/643351-rossiyane-reshili-im-vragi>

⁶² Draft of the Federal Law No 381-FZ on the Suspension of the Agreement between Russia and the United States Concerning the Management and Disposition of Plutonium Designated as No Longer Required for Defence Purposes and Protocols to the Agreement, October 3, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, [http://asozd2.duma.gov.ru/addwork/scans.nsf/ID/C4294ACB989FB546432580410044CB71/\\$File/1186208-6_03102016_1186208-6.PDF?OpenElement](http://asozd2.duma.gov.ru/addwork/scans.nsf/ID/C4294ACB989FB546432580410044CB71/$File/1186208-6_03102016_1186208-6.PDF?OpenElement)

⁶³ Remarks by Mikhail Ulyanov, 2016



each other, rather than opposing or critically analysing the president's decree.⁶⁴ The same was true for the independent debate within the expert community. No single publicly relevant expert debate or meeting was held in Russia on the issue of the PMDA or even nuclear security cooperation between Russia and the United States in general between April and October 2016.

As a result, it took only one day of October 19, 2016, for the State Duma to discuss and unanimously approve the Federal Law with no changes to the original version submitted by the president on October 3, 2016. In a week, on October 26, 2016, the upper chamber – the Council of the Federation – ultimately confirmed the suspension. And on October 31, 2016, the Federal Law was signed by the president.

Finally, additional information on the drivers behind the decision to suspend the PMDA can be found in comments made by the representatives of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, commenting on president's decision on October 3, 2016, said that by suspending the PMDA Russia wanted the United States “to understand that it cannot introduce sanctions against Russia that can do relatively little harm to Americans and at the same time to continue selective cooperation with Russia when it benefits the United States.”⁶⁵

Another representative of the Russian MFA – Director of the MFA Department for Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Mikhail Ulyanov – added on the same day that “the creation and further development of a ballistic missile defence system to the detriment of Russia's national security and global strategic stability”⁶⁶ could form additional reason for the suspension (this reason was not mentioned in both draft and final versions of the Federal Law). He also claimed that Russia considers the situation around the PMDA as “not affecting the international agenda. It concerns exclusively relations between Russia and the United States and is the result of Washington's myopic policy and failure to honour its obligations.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Transcript of the Meetings held on October 19, 2016, The State Duma of the Russian Federation, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://transcript.duma.gov.ru/node/4527/>

⁶⁵ Remarks by Mikhail Ulyanov, 2016

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.



Finally, MFA Deputy Minister Sergey Ryabkov, while speaking before the Russian parliament on the issue of the PMDA suspension on October 19, 2016, added that Russia intended “to use the situation with the PMDA in the interests of the national program of developing a closed nuclear cycle.”⁶⁸

This mentioning of the closed nuclear cycle program by the Deputy Minister Ryabkov is important because it was the first official confirmation of a possible technological and economic drivers behind the decision to suspend the PMDA.

The Russian concept of closed nuclear cycle includes three main elements: the fast breeder reactor (which are the BN-600 and BN-800 reactors), the MOX-fuel fabrication facility (which is the facility in Zheleznogorsk constructed in accordance with the PMDA), and means of reprocessing the spent nuclear fuel.⁶⁹ As it was indicated above, the 2010 Protocol allowed Russia to use fast breeder reactor BN-800 for disposal of surplus plutonium, but it limited Russia’s actions at the latter stage (which is the reprocessing) in two ways.

First, the BN-600 and BN-800 reactors operations with the MOX-fuel was limited by the provision that “the radial blanket of the BN-600 reactor will be completely removed before disposition of conversion products begin in it, and the BN-800 reactor will be operated with a breeding ratio of less than one for the entire term” of the PMDA.⁷⁰ Second, according to the PMDA, “neither party shall reprocess spent plutonium fuel ... or any other fuel irradiated in a disposition facility ... except for reprocessing ... up to 30 percent of the assemblies with fuel containing plutonium prior to irradiation that have been irradiated in the BN-800,” and only “for purposes of implementing research and development programs.”⁷¹ The remaining 70 percent were supposed to be kept in long-term storage with no possibility to use it for commercial or industrial purposes until the full implementation of the PMDA. These

⁶⁸ The State Duma, 2016

⁶⁹ “Assessment of Nuclear Energy Systems Based on a Closed Nuclear Fuel Cycle with Fast Reactors,” A Report of the International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles (INPRO), IAEA, 2007, accessed December 10, 2016, http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/Publications/PDF/TE_1639_CD/PDF/TE_1639_CD.pdf

⁷⁰ Protocol to the Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Russian Federation Concerning the Management and Disposition of Plutonium Designated as No Longer Required for Defense Purposes and Related Cooperation, April 13, 2010, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/182688.pdf>

⁷¹ Ibid.



considerations appeared to be relevant, and Deputy Minister Ryabkov's statement was confirmed by the fact that the BN-800 reactor started its commercial operation the very day after the Federal Law entered force – on November 1, 2016.⁷²

Thus, one could argue that several drivers were behind Russia's decision to suspend the PMDA.

Norms of equality and prestige were manifested when the problems of sanctions and selective cooperation with Russia by the United States were mentioned. Domestic political situation appeared to be a perfect background for using the fact of the PMDA suspension as the factor of propaganda (especially considering that formally Russia fulfilled its obligations, and the United States did not).⁷³ The desire to speed up the development of the national program of the closed nuclear cycle could form the technological and economic drivers.

Finally, the security driver seems to be less relevant. It is unclear, how cancelling the PMDA would make the United States change its current policy on sanctions or NATO expansion,⁷⁴ as well as what is the link between "the emergence of a threat to strategic stability"⁷⁵ because of NATO enlargement and the United States sanctions' and the decision to suspend the PMDA.

As of December 2016, the United States asked the International Atomic Energy Agency to monitor the disposition of its surplus plutonium in South Carolina,⁷⁶ and the president of Russia in his decree ordering suspension of the PMDA stated that Russia's surplus plutonium would not be used for weapon programs.⁷⁷

⁷² "BN-800 Started Its Commercial Operation," The Department of PR and Information of the Beloyarskay Nuclear Power Plant, November 1, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://www.atominfo.ru/newso/v0477.htm>

⁷³ Podvig, 2016

⁷⁴ Aleksandr Kolbin, "Why the "non-proliferation complex" should help Donald Trump?" The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, December 9, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://thebulletin.org/why-%E2%80%9Cnonproliferation-complex%E2%80%9D-should-help-donald-trump10273>

⁷⁵ Federal Law No 381-FZ, 2016

⁷⁶ "IAEA meets to strengthen security as USA disposes of plutonium," World Nuclear News, December 7, 2016, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://world-nuclear-news.org/NP-IAEA-meets-to-strengthen-security-as-USA-disposes-of-plutonium-0712167.html#.WEkaLcNBtdE.twitter>

⁷⁷ Decree of the President of the Russian Federation on the Suspension of the Agreement between Russia and the United States Concerning the Management and Disposition of Plutonium Designated as No Longer Required for Defence Purposes and Protocols to the Agreement, October 3, 2016, <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102411272>

After suspending the PMDA, Russia likewise suspended its participation in a 2013 cooperative agreement on nuclear and energy related research and terminated a third agreement from 2010 on exploring options for converting research reactors from weapons-usable fuel.

Nevertheless, it remains unlikely that the United States will address Russian concerns regarding the US ABM system in the way Russia wants it to. It is also clear that NATO will not retreat from Russia's borders. And, over the medium term, sanctions against Russia will not be cancelled.

In addition, there are signs of politicisation of certain non-proliferation forums. Recently, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reacted very sharply to the fact that "in March 2017, U.S. banks froze a tranche of Russia's voluntary contribution to the IAEA Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy." Another example was Russia's decision to not participate in the most recent Nuclear Security Summit (the NSS) held in Washington, DC in 2016. The Russian boycott of the 2016 NSS also came amid continued souring of U.S.-Russian relations. Finally, the only two cases where Russia has been able to cooperate with the United States on an equal basis in recent years – Syria and Iran – are almost completely deadlocked today, again due to simply political reasons.

As for the level of a state, the period of Putin's presidency changed the situation that had existed since 1991. Considering the internal arms control decision-making processes in modern Russia, one can argue that the analogue of the Soviet "Big Five" has been re-established. The Soviet "Big Five" included representatives of the Politburo, the KGB, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense and the Military-Industrial Commission. And, to a certain extent, it is possible to draw the analogy between the Soviet Union's "Big Five" and foreign affairs decision-making in modern Russia.

First of all, today's Politburo is the body called Security Council of the Russian Federation. The Security Council (including through several interagency commissions) regularly gathers together senior military-political decision-makers and holds its meetings when serious issues of national security, foreign or domestic policy arise to make the collective decisions. Today's



analogue of KGB is Federal Security Service. The Foreign Ministry and the Defence Ministry – they are basically the same, and are subordinated directly to the President. As for the Military-Industrial Commission, it was re-established in Russia in 1999 78 under Putin (he was then Russian prime-minister), was initially assigned to the Prime-Minister Putin, and in 2014 it was reassigned to the President Putin.⁷⁹

In addition, in 2007, the Rostech State Corporation was created. The new corporation consolidated all Russian defence firms.⁸⁰ The head of the Rostech Corporation is Sergey Chemezov, who is one of the closest friends of President Putin.⁸¹ Finally, President Putin himself is either a member, or formal head of each of the listed bodies forming a sort of a “Big Five 2.0:” he is the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armed Forces,⁸² formal head of the FSB,⁸³ the person who determines the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation,⁸⁴ the Chairman of both the Military-Industrial Commission⁸⁵ and the Security Council.⁸⁶ President Putin has approval rating of 66% (as of August 2017)⁸⁷ with a high possibility of being re-elected in March 2018 for the next six years, and he has close friends, former colleagues and direct subordinates within the management of every agency forming the so-called “Big Five 2.0.”⁸⁸ As a result, there is a close bunch of interests of civil and military leadership in modern Russia as far as it relates to foreign and security policy, as well as an unprecedented opportunity for military industry to influence civil and military decision-

⁷⁸ Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation on Military-Industrial Commission N278, May 7, 2006, accessed on August 23, 2017, http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_112995/

⁷⁹ Order of the President of the Russian Federation on Military-Industrial Commission of the Russian Federation, 2014, accessed on August 23, 2017, <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d5041c78a6da8cf5ad.pdf>

⁸⁰ The List of Holdings within the Rostech State Corporation, Rostech State Corporation Official Website, accessed on August 23, 2017, <http://rostec.ru/about/holdings>

⁸¹ The Making of a neo-KGB State, *The Economist*, August 23, 2007, accessed on August 23, 2017, <http://www.economist.com/node/9682621>

⁸² The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993

⁸³ Federal Law N40-FZ on the Federal Security Service, April 3, 1995, accessed on August 23, 2017, http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_6300/

⁸⁴ The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993

⁸⁵ Order of the President of the Russian Federation on Military-Industrial Commission of the Russian Federation, 2014

⁸⁶ Regulations of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, The Official Website of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, May 6, 2011, accessed on August 23, 2017, <http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d5041c78a6da8cf5ad.pdf>

⁸⁷ Vladimir Putin: Approval Rating, Public Opinion Fund, August 19, 2017, accessed on August 23, 2017, <http://fom.ru/politika/10946>

⁸⁸ *The Economist*, 2007



making. Interdepartmental Commission of the Security Council of the Russian Federation for Military Security.

In addition, just like before 1985, today there is no evidence that different agencies compete with each other for influence on Russian foreign policy decision-making (as it took place in the 1990s, for instance).

Finally, as far as the personal level is considered, it is obvious that the views of President Putin on the possibility and necessity of cooperation with the United States and the West in general on nuclear non-proliferation undergone certain evolution as well. The current stage of that evolution became clear at the last “Valdai Club” Session in October 2017. Then the Russian president labelled almost all major Russia-U.S. cooperation projects in the nuclear field as “one-sided” and unfavourable to Russian interests.⁸⁹ Moreover, a year earlier, Putin described as “naïve” the Soviet leadership in the period of 1985-1991. In particular, criticizing “unilateral” concessions on the part of the Soviet Union within the context of the INF Treaty negotiations.⁹⁰

Thus, at the current stage, the following factors determine Russia’s attitude towards the cooperation with the United States on nuclear non-proliferation issue:

- At the level of the international system, Russia was not able to reinstate its capabilities to influence third world countries; its area of influence has been further reduced;
- At the level of the state, economic driver seems to be less relevant today, while there is a revival (to a certain extent) of the decision-making process existed before 1991;
- The personal factor seems to be much less important than it was in the previous decade.

⁸⁹ Vladimir Putin took part in the final plenary session of the 14th annual meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club titled The World of the Future: Moving Through Conflict to Cooperation, October 19, 2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/page/3#sel=225:1:R3L,227:24:2jq>

⁹⁰ Braterskiy, Aleksandr, Khodarenok, Mikhail, Solopov, Maksim, Amerikantsy Nashli Sekretne Rakety Rossii, Gazeta.Ru, February 15, 2017, accessed on August 23, 2017, <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2017/02/15/10526777.shtml>



Conclusion

At the current stage, Russia's leadership seems to be trying to get back to the situation that existed before 1985. In recent years, in those cases where Russia has been provided with the opportunity to cooperate with the United States on an equal basis (as it took place in Syria and Iran), the effective Russia-U.S. cooperation on non-proliferation was possible.

It is important to note that there is a strong trend towards further politicization of bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation fora where Russia is still involved. Those fora may include the IAEA and the Proliferation Security Initiative.