

Obama and Trump's influence on the process of nuclear disarmament between the U.S. and Russia

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Abstract

In order to answer the question as to how Obama and Trump have influenced the process of nuclear disarmament between the U.S. and Russia, this thesis shall address three important time periods divided over three chapters. First it will establish the situation prior to Obama's presidency, explaining how George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush established the START I treaty and SORT treaty. Subsequently, it will explain how Obama developed his policies based on his desire of a nuclear-free world, and how he focused on involving the international community. In addition, Trump's presidency shall be investigated, showing that his policies are focused on maintaining a nuclear presence for the sake of deterrence. My findings indicate that the manner in which Obama and Trump establish their policies differs greatly, and in conclusion it can be argued that these presidents have a different perception of the *nuclear taboo*, and that Obama belongs in the *agonist* category while Trump resembles a *sanguinist*. Their foreign policy towards nuclear disarmament is handled in accordance to these perceptions.

Keywords: Obama, Trump, Nuclear Disarmament, Denuclearization, United States, Russia, Foreign Policy.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Chapter 1: Nuclear disarmament before Obama.....	6
Chapter 2: President Obama: "Peace and security."	12
Chapter 3: President Trump: "Fire and fury."	25
Conclusion.....	35
Works Cited.....	39

Introduction

The use of nuclear weaponry has always been reason for debate. Ever since these weapons were first deployed during World War II, and the arms race of the Cold War that followed, nations have struggled with the question as to how to continue their nuclear policies, and what to do with their nuclear stockpile. Despite numerous endeavors to work towards nuclear disarmament, the most recent of which will be outlined in this thesis, a significant amount of weaponry - more than enough to herald the end of our planet (Henriksen 38) - remains within the hands of nine of the world's countries (Hennigan 21). At this time, the U.S. and Russia "account for nearly 93% of the world's nuclear arsenal" (Hennigan 21). Because of this, the nuclear disarmament process between the U.S. and Russia would yield the most immediate reduction of nuclear weaponry within the world, and therefore shall be the process this thesis shall focus on.

To determine the progression and continuation of this process, this thesis shall focus on one of the main actors involved, the president of the United States, and - more specifically - the two most recent ones, Barack Obama and Donald Trump. It shall take a closer look as to how the position and powers of president influence the process of disarmament and how these two presidents have used it to shape policies between the U.S. and Russia. As a result, the thesis shall answer the question as to how Obama and Trump have influenced the nuclear disarmament process between the U.S. and Russia.

Previous research on this topic has indicated the following points of interest that shall be reflected upon. In regards to Obama's terms in office, Pifer notes that his original agenda, when it comes to the reduction of nuclear weaponry, may have been too ambitious (116). He claims that the reasons as to why Obama was unable to live up to his plans can be found in three factors, those being the Republicans, a certain reluctance to continue with his plans, and

the Russians (Pifer 101). An interesting note is that one of the periods during which the progress of nuclear disarmament slowed down "coincided with presidential election campaigns in Russia and the United States" (Pifer 105). Lonsdale agrees that Obama's plans were overly optimistic, and even goes so far to call them naive (470). A reason for this he finds in the desire to find "security through "stability"" (Lonsdale 467), deeming it impossible to do so with Russia (Lonsdale 467).

In regards to Trump Michaels writes that before his election "Trump [has] not mentioned how his administration would approach U.S.–Russia arms control" (63). He does note that the Republican Party plays an important role in the nuclear power balance, by branding Obama's measures as weak (Michaels 68). Cimballa also mentions the power of the political party, noting that Congress is currently split on this matter and thus plays an important role in the shaping of policies (175). By now, more is known about Trump's plans when it comes to nuclear power. The U.S. department of Defense released the *Nuclear Posture Review* of 2018, which indicates that Trump seeks to increase his nuclear arsenal as a form of deterrent, to make sure "that potential adversaries perceive no possible advantage" (NPR 2018 8). This is in line with Michael's notion that "Trump believes that Russia's modernization of its nuclear arsenal is at a more advanced stage" (64).

Aside from these aspects that tie in with the topic, this thesis shall use the theory of Tannenwald and Gavin to further contrast the differences between Obama and Trump. Tannenwald has coined the concept of the nuclear taboo, a phenomenon that "has constrained the practice of self-help in the international system. States are not free to resort to nuclear weapons without incurring moral opprobrium or political costs" (463). Gavin makes a distinction between *sanguinists* and *agonists*, the former of which are in favor of using the destructive powers of nuclear weaponry as a deterrent, while the latter believe peace and stability is "largely maintained through arms control treaties, global norms, complex alliances,

and international institutions" (Gavin 160). These theories shall be applied on the findings concerning both Trump and Obama, to see whether they can be appointed to one of these categories and whether this explains how they handled - or continue to handle - the nuclear disarmament process between the U.S. and Russia.

To answer this question I will primarily rely on previous literature. I shall base my findings on academic articles, but also on official government documents, alike the Nuclear Posture Review and National Security Strategies, as well as excerpts of speeches by Obama and Trump. By analyzing these sources and by taking a comparative approach between Obama and Trump's presidencies, I will attempt to find patterns that may be applied to the current day situation as well as the two aforementioned theories. This in turn may enable a prediction of what might happen in the near future. The research sub-questions shall be tackled in a chronological order, starting with a summary of the nuclear disarmament process since the end of the Cold War to establish the situation by the time Obama took up office. Afterwards, the thesis shall focus on the Obama and Trump presidencies more thoroughly, to offer a clear indication as to how exactly they have shaped their policies. Based on these findings, a comparison will be made to the theories of Tannenwald and Gavin at the thesis' conclusion. This will answer as to why and how Obama and Trump have influenced the process of nuclear disarmament between the U.S. and Russia as they have.

Chapter 1: Nuclear disarmament before Obama

At the end of the Cold War, the U.S. had two main goals, the establishment of nuclear arms accords that would lower the amount of warheads aimed at the United States, as well as the "freeing of Soviet satellite states from Communist thralldom" (Henriksen 38). According to Bush such goals could be achieved via collaboration with Gorbachev, and thus the Americans tried to ensure his political survival, for if Gorbachev would find himself replaced by political hard-liners the chances of collaboration with the United States would decrease (Henriksen 38).

In an attempt to decrease the amount of nuclear weaponry in existence, "the Bush White House resurfaced the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) talks, which the Reagan administration had proposed to Moscow" (Henriksen 38). It was in favor of both superpowers to reduce the amount of weaponry at their disposal, for maintaining and servicing such arms was highly costly (Henriksen 38). After two years of talks, Bush and Gorbachev signed the START I treaty on the 31st of July 1991, which would reduce the amount of nuclear weaponry of either party with about 50 percent (Henriksen 38). This, however, meant that both the United States as well as Russia were still in possession of about 6,000 nuclear weapons each, which remained to be "many more than needed to destroy the planet" (Henriksen 38). A few years later, at the end of 1994, both parties ratified their agreement and the treaty became effective.

Subsequently, the U.S. Department of Defense also funded further arms-control agreements, one of which was the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program - an initiative of a Democratic Senator Sam Nunn and Republican Senator Richard Lugar (Henriksen 39). The aim of the CTR program was to "dismantle Soviet nuclear and chemical arms, lest these deadly instruments fall into rogue or terrorist hands" (Henriksen 39). On the

3rd of January 1993, a few weeks before Bush would relinquish the office of president, he and Boris Yeltsin signed the START II treaty (Henriksen 39). This treaty would decrease the number of nuclear weapons even further than the initial 6,000 of START I. Russia would decrease its number of nuclear arms with another 3,000 and the United States with 3,500 (Henriksen 39). It took the U.S. Senate four years before they were ready to ratify this treaty, another four years later the Russians too were ready to ratify it (Henriksen 39) - meaning it would go in effect in April 2000, roughly a year before president Clinton would conclude his second term in office.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that Bush actively tried to influence the nuclear power balance. However, such a reduction, while being of course a form of progress, was mostly a symbolic act - for the amount of weaponry that remained afterwards was still great enough to destroy the world (Henriksen 38).

Boris Yeltsin harbored a "optimistic vision of Russia's future as an integral part of the Western world" (Shoumikhin 148), meaning that he was indeed readily willing to go along with Bush's plans to reduce the amount of nuclear weaponry, especially to alleviate some of the burden they posed to Russia's economy at a time of crisis (Shoumikhin 148). Yeltsin and his government "continued to rely heavily on the philosophy of mutual assured destruction in bilateral strategic relations" (Shoumikhin 148). The reduction of the nuclear arsenal alongside that of the United States was not solely for the betterment of the world, however, for by assuring some form of control over the amount of weaponry the United States possessed the Russians could in turn assure that their own nuclear power remained second-to-none (Shoumikhin 148). The START I and START II treaties appeared thus like a success seen from Moscow's perspective, and in March 1997 Yeltsin and president Clinton reached an agreement concerning the structure of a START III treaty (Shoumikhin 148). This treaty would have reduced the amount of nuclear weapons even further to 2,000-2,500, and would

also "mandate the elimination of nuclear warheads, and not just carrier missiles, in order to assure the irreversibility of strategic arms reduction" (Shoumikhin 148). Further negotiations on the START III treaty were to take place after START II was put into effect, but these never took place (Shoumikhin 148).

As mentioned earlier, it took the Russian government eight years to consider whether they wanted to ratify the START II treaty or not. During this time, in September 1997, an addition was made to the treaty which extended the deadline of the treaty's ratification, but which also included the agreed statements made regarding another treaty that would "stall U.S. progress towards developing ballistic missile defenses" (Shoumikhin 149). This other treaty concerned the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty that was signed during the Cold War in 1972. In the years that followed, however, the United States made a plan to develop a National Missile Defense (NMD) system (Shoumikhin 149). To enable to development of such a NMD system the ABM treaty had to be modified, and the United States made a formal proposal to achieve this in January 1999 (Shoumikhin 149). The Russians deemed that no changes to the ABM treaty were possible (Shoumikhin 149). Despite of this fact, the U.S. Congress decided to continue their plan for the development of the NMD system even though they kept discussing their arms control talks with the Russians (Shoumikhin 149). Russia in turn perceived this as "vacillations in the approach of the Clinton administration [...] [and] decided to apply political pressure" (Shoumikhin 149).

Russia publicly threatened to abandon the START I treaty, as well as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty and the Treaty on Conventional Force Limitations in Europe (CFE) if the United States would consider abandoning the ABM treaty (Shoumikhin 149). The pressure of Russia towards the United States appeared to pay off, for in June 1999, presidents Clinton and Yeltsin reaffirmed the importance of and their commitment to the ABM treaty, while Russia also promised the U.S. future negotiations when it came to latter's

plans for their NMD system (Shoumikhin 149). Such talks never occurred before Yeltsin ended his term as president in December 1999 (Shoumikhin 149).

In conclusion, it can be deduced that the period of collaboration between Clinton and Yeltsin proved to be a time of political struggle. Treaties that were put in place by Gorbachev, Yeltsin and Bush were no longer beyond violation, for the United States began to push for alterations to the ABM treaty while Russia was willing to sacrifice the START I treaty as a result. The political friction appeared to have originated from Clinton's lack of willingness to take a clear stance as to how he wanted to treat the Russians - as it was not clear whether he was willing to go against past treaties, or whether he still sought to cooperate with them. While the ABM treaty was later reaffirmed and a groundwork was put in place for a potential START III treaty, these events must have caused some damage to the trust between these nations, which in turn may affect the credibility of any past and future negotiations.

The new millennium had arrived, signaling the replacement of Boris Yeltsin by Vladimir Putin and the impending departure of Bill Clinton who would hand the United States presidency to George W. Bush. In the wake of 9-11, on the 13th of December of 2001, George W. Bush released a statement concerning the ABM treaty. He noted that he has "concluded the ABM Treaty hinders [his] government's ability to develop ways to protect [his] people from future terrorist or rogue-state missile attacks" (Arms Control Association, par. 3). Bush notes that the times in which the ABM Treaty was instated were different (Arms Control Association, par. 4) and that he desires to have the freedom and flexibility when it comes to the defending of the American people against future terrorist attacks (Arms Control Association, par. 6). On the day of this statement, Bush sent "formal notice to Russia, in accordance with the treaty, that the United States of America is withdrawing from this almost 30-year-old treaty" (Arms Control Association, par. 3). This meant that six months later, the United States would indeed be able to withdraw its support of the

In May 2002, the two leaders signed the Strategic Offensive Reductions (SORT) treaty, which "came on the heels of the good feeling between George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin, following 9-11 and Russia's support for U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan"(Cimbala 261). The SORT treaty was based on very general terms and entailed that both nations continued to "reduce their numbers of operationally deployed warheads on intercontinental launchers to between 2,200 and 1,700 by the end of the year 2012" (Cimbala 261). In that regard, this treaty would go even further than the START III treaty that Yeltsin and Clinton had planned. Both nations, however, would be "free to deploy its own mix of land based, sea based and airborne delivery systems, unrestricted by detailed counting rules" (Cimbala 261). Cimbala notes that Bush employed a "less detailed and more generic approach to nuclear arms reductions" (261) compared to earlier treaties. In turn, this resulted in the feeling among critics that the Bush administration did not feel as serious about arms control as its predecessors, and that the lack of details in the SORT treaty indicated a lower priority to decrease and limit the amount of nuclear arms (Cimbala 261).

The following month, six months had passed since the formal notice the United States sent to Russia in regards to the ABM treaty. The United States withdrew itself from the ABM treaty, which in turn meant that the treaty was terminated. Subsequently, the Russians withdrew from the START II treaty that same month, and only the SORT treaty remained. In September of the same year, the Bush Administration released the National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2002. In the file the cancelation of the ABM treaty is not mentioned, and the Administration opted to focus fully on the newly established SORT treaty instead. It is noted that the treaty "is emblematic of this new reality and reflects a critical change in Russian thinking that promises to lead to productive, long-term relations with the Euro-Atlantic community and the United States" (NSS 2002 26).

Since the end of the Cold War, three American presidents have had most differing approaches to the altering of the nuclear power balance between the United States and Russia. As has been shown, George H. Bush established the important START I and START II treaties. Bill Clinton, however, threatened the stability of the START I treaty by proposing to renegotiate the terms of the ABM treaty in an attempt to enable the establishment of a NMD system - in other words, the desire to protect one's own nation seems to play an important factor to reconsider the deals made in nuclear power treaties. This is also shown by George W. Bush, for the terrorist threat to the United States that became apparent after the attacks of 9-11 appeared to be his reason to withdraw from the ABM treaty once and for all, which also resulted in the termination of the START II treaty by the Russians. Two important treaties remain, however, those being the START I treaty - which is set to expire on the 5th of December of 2009 - and the new SORT treaty which will expire on the 5th of February of 2011. Both these dates exceeded George W. Bush's time as president of the United States, meaning that his successor would be able to determine how the nuclear power balance between the U.S. and Russia continued to be affected.

Chapter 2: President Obama: "Peace and security."

"America's commitment [is] to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons," were words spoken by president Obama in the city of Prague in April 2009 (Traynor, par. 3). At this time, the newly instated president had only been in office for a few months and this was his first big speech on foreign policy (Traynor, par. 2). In it he addressed his plans in regards to the reduction of nuclear arms. Obama told the public that he wanted to lessen the role that nuclear weapon played in the defense of the United States, and that he would press the Senate to ratify the comprehensive test ban treaty, for the president deemed that "it is time for the testing of nuclear weapons to be banned" (Traynor, par. 5). On top of that, Obama wanted to reinforce the 1968 nuclear non-proliferation treaty and announced that within a year's time, Washington would host a global summit during which the nuclear security of the world would be discussed (Traynor, par. 6). Obama also mentioned the desire for a new global ban on the production of materials that are need to create nuclear weaponry, as well as an international institution that would be put in charge of supplying and monitoring enriched uranium (Traynor, par. 7). This institution would then ensure that any uranium that is given for civil nuclear power generation, is not repurposed by *rogue states* for military use instead (Traynor, par. 7). Obama reaffirmed during his speech that he reached an agreement with the Kremlin to commence a new arms control process so they may "reach agreement on a new strategic arms reduction treaty" (Traynor, par. 8). This treaty would be similar to the START I treaty, and would ensure that the amount of warheads is reduced by a third by the end of the same year (Traynor, par. 8). Lastly, the president noted he desired "a new international effort to secure "loose nukes" and "vulnerable nuclear material" within four years (Traynor, par. 8).

With these plans Obama set the tone for the reduction and control of the world's nuclear arms during his presidency. An extensive amount of measures that were potentially proposed due to the knowledge that the weapon reduction treaties START I, established by George H. Bush, and SORT, signed by his son, were due to expire within the duration of Obama's first term in office. Despite the desire to make significant changes, it was yet to be seen whether the new president of the United States would be able to put them into action. This chapter will not focus on all of the measures that Obama proposed during his Prague speech, but will, in accordance to the topic of this thesis, focus primarily on his negotiations with Russia and the results there of.

The negotiations with the Russians, the latter nation now led by president Medvedev, commenced not long after Obama's Prague speech. The New START treaty was born as a result. "The treaty is made up of a 17-page text, a 165-page, 10-part Protocol and unpublished Annexes" (Rusman 564). This treaty, while created as a replacement of the START I treaty, does not function completely the same as its predecessor. For one, where START I was to last 15 years, New START aims to have the reduction of nuclear weaponry completed in only seven years - which is in line with the maximum duration of the administration of an United States president (Rusman 564). This shows that Obama was planning to get this arms reduction completed during his presidency perhaps to ensure that any Republican president would prove unable to overturn these policies. It does, however, mean that Obama hoped that he - or at least another president who subscribed to his nuclear disarmament viewpoints - would be able to get elected for a second term in office. Potentially this was but a political gamble, but it does show that Obama was under the impression he could get a reduction of nuclear weaponry done in a far shorter time than before. After the initial seven years, New START would continue for another three years unless a new treaty was instated, and should

this expectation not be fulfilled the length of the treaty could be increased by another five years if need be (Rusman 564).

Based on these parameters, Rusman notes that "New START is thus designed somewhat more as a thermometer of the development of strategic relations, and not as a norm setting acceptable and durable upper levels for strategic nuclear weapons holdings" (564). In other words, this new treaty's success may depend on the political state between the United States and Russia and can be changed accordingly to reflect any shifts within this state. Rusman continues in saying that the reason as to why New START's rules of continuation are put in place is to possibly serve as a method of "closing the door to a new SORT-like, declaratory treaty, that would supplement New START with new reduction goals without settling controversial issues such as definitions, counting rules and verification methods" (Rusman 565). Based on this, it appears that Obama has chosen to prevent another SORT treaty from being instated. This treaty, as mentioned in the previous chapter, made an attempt at arms reduction but was not particular clear as to how exactly - and to what extent - such a reduction would be achieved. By preventing a treaty akin to the SORT treaty from following up New START, it appears as if Obama's intent is to make sure that even in the wake of New START a proper new treaty shall be negotiated. Should this fail, New START can be prolonged for a while longer. Obama is thus clearly thinking ahead, both for his own time as president of the United States as well as for the president that will follow.

Aside from looking at how this treaty's duration will function it is of course important as to what measures the treaty itself details. For one, "New START limits the total number of strategic warheads to 1550" (Rusman 565). These strategic warheads could either be deployed land-based missiles, also known as Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), or sea-based missiles, also known as Sea-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) (Rusman 565). New START also determines that "each deployed heavy bomber counts for one warhead" (Rusman

565). There are also "separate limits for deployed (700) and deployed and non-deployed (800) strategic launchers. A maximum of 100 launchers may thus be non-deployed"(Rusman 566). Aside from the reduction of nuclear weaponry and the methods to deploy, New START made new rules in regards to keeping track of whether the other party was living up to their end of the deal. The treaty allowed parties to conduct ten inspection visits of bases where ICBM bombers are stationed or of submarines, to make sure that all the numbers that are declared add up (Rusman 568). Aside from these so-called Type 1 inspections, the parties may also conduct eight Type 2 inspections annually, during which the parties may verify the non-deployed weapons (Rusman 568).

The negotiations revolving the New START treaty lasted roughly a year, and were not without points of friction. One concerned the decision of the United States to station "elements of mobile missile defence systems" (Rusman 570). From the point of view of the Russians they saw little reason to reduce their nuclear arsenal if other nations - supported by the United States - would increase their defenses against such weaponry, for this would upset the balance. Rusman notes that "Russia view[ed] its nuclear weapons as counterweights to the American preponderance on other fronts (conventional forces, space assets and missile defence) (570). The plan of the United States to build such a defense system was one of the reasons for the Bush Administration to pull out of the ABM treaty, as addressed in the previous chapter. To get the negotiations back on track Obama altered these plans, noting that the defense system "would have to be "cost-effective and proven"" (Rusman 570). In other words, the United States would continue their support and plans to set up such a defense system but not in the way the Bush administration had originally intended. This in turn allowed for some more leeway in the negotiations, for the Obama administration could follow its own plan. This plan, however, involved the stationing of missile defense at sea in September of 2009, a system that would later be supported by land based defense systems

(Rusman 570). The presence of such a system gave cause for worry to the Russians, meaning that it continued to play a part in the negotiation process.

Despite of this, the negotiations were concluded successfully. A year after his speech, on April 8, 2010, Obama returned to Prague to meet with Medvedev to sign the New START treaty (Henriksen 238). A few days later, another of the plans that Obama outlined during his initiation speech in Prague came to fruition - the hosting of a Nuclear Security Summit in Washington D.C.. Skidmore calls this summit perhaps "the most prominent example of Obama's reliance upon informal or ad hoc multilateralism" (47). Even though the meeting did not result in any binding agreements, the 47 nations involved made voluntary steps towards the reduction of nuclear materials and technologies within their own countries (Skidmore 47). "This informal approach to international cooperation lowers the autonomy costs associated with binding accords and avoids the political costs of seeking Congressional support for new commitments" (Skidmore 47). Naturally, it is a good thing that Obama managed to convince many nations to support his cause in reducing the amount of nuclear materials, though the fact that these agreements are not binding causes the risk that these nations do not live up to the promises they have made. What is certain is that the Nuclear Security Summit has put the reduction of nuclear materials and technologies, weaponry included, back on the agenda on a global scale. In two years time, another Nuclear Security Summit would follow.

The Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) of April 2010 further clarified the stance of the Obama Administration on Russia. It noted that the intent of the U.S. was to improve "transparency and mutual confidence [...]to] help create the conditions for moving toward a world without nuclear weapons and build a stronger basis for addressing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism" (NPR 2010 6). By building up this mutual understanding the Administration tried to continue the nuclear disarmament process and hoped to work towards "significantly reduced force levels" (NPR 2010 9). New START seemed to have only been

the beginning of the Administration's ambitions, for the NPR notes that Obama "has directed a review of post-New START arms control objectives, to consider future reductions in nuclear weapons" (NPR 2010 11).

A month later, the Obama Administration also released its National Security Strategy (NSS). The goal of a nuclear-free world is repeated once more, though the Administration also makes sure to point out that "[a]s long as any nuclear weapons exist, the United States will sustain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal, both to deter potential adversaries and to assure U.S. allies and other security partners that they can count on America's security commitments" (NSS 2010 23). This section indicates that the Administration still valued the possession and deterrence of nuclear weaponry at least to a certain extent. Aside from announcing the New START treaty with Russia, the Administration also noted that it "will pursue ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty" (NSS 2010 23). In this regard Obama did not prove as successful, however. This treaty, drafted in 1996, bans the use of nuclear explosions in general but has not been ratified by the United States to this day.

The New START treaty did make it to Congress, though "a planned vote in the summer of 2010 was postponed when the administration proved unable to round up a sufficient number of Republican votes for the treaty" (Skidmore 50). In the opinion of the opponents of the treaty, New START contributed nothing to the security of the United States or the treaty would in fact weaken the position compared to that of Russia (Deyermond, "Assessing the Reset" 504). Deyermond explains that in particular the warhead ceiling within detailed in New START has been a point of discontent, for it would require cuts to the arsenal of the United States but not to that of Russia ("Assessing the Reset" 504). On top of that, the focus of the treaty on strategic rather than tactical weaponry would also be in favor of Russia (Deyermond, "Assessing the Reset" 504). To explain, strategic nuclear weapons are used far away from the battlefield, for example to strike specific targets as military bases or industry.

Tactical nuclear weapons are used on the battlefield, these nuclear weapons are more precise and not as destructive as their strategic counterpart.

Aside from aforementioned reasons, a second point of criticism to the New START treaty was that defensive and offensive nuclear weapons are now treated as one (Deyermond, "Assessing the Reset" 505). Critics deemed that this "undermine[d] the development of US plans for missile defense, compounding the challenge which critics claimed was already posed by the reset" (Deyermond, "Assessing the Reset" 505). The reset mentioned concerns the decision of the Obama Administration to establish a missile defense system that was originally planned by the Bush Administration. This new plan was to the disapproval of critics, who were of the opinion that Obama made alterations to appease Russia, which in turn would weaken the system and betrayed the Czech Republic and Poland. These two countries had agreed to allow the defense system to be built on their soil despite the opposition of its people as well as Russia (Deyermond, "Assessing the Reset 505).

At the start of December 2010, Obama's attempt to get the New START treaty ratified was aided by an article published in the *Washington Post*. It concerned a statement of five former secretaries of state who had all served in Republican administrations, Henry A. Kissinger, George P. Shultz, James A. Baker III, Lawrence S. Eagleburger and Colin L. Powell. The five secretaries of state started their letter by saying that:

Republican presidents have long led the crucial fight to protect the United States against nuclear dangers. That is why Presidents Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush negotiated the SALT I, START I and START II agreements. It is why President George W. Bush negotiated the Moscow Treaty. As a result, we urge the Senate to ratify the New START treaty signed by President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev (Kissinger et al., par. 1-2).

The letter continued with offering arguments as to why the Senate should ratify the New START treaty. The five secretaries of state deemed that it is a suitable continuation of the START I treaty that allows for the United States to still maintain its military strength to defend itself as well as its allies (Kissinger et al., par. 2). They also showcased the opinion of the commander of the United States' nuclear forces who has testified that the amount of warheads that will remain with the New START treaty will prove sufficient for the nation's military missions, something to which, according to the secretaries, seven unnamed former nuclear commanders agreed (Kissinger et al., par 2). On top of that it is noted that "[t]he defense secretary, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the head of the Missile Defense Agency - all originally appointed by a Republican president - argue that New START is essential for our national defense" (Kissinger, par. 2).

The former secretaries continued by stressing the importance that the New START treaty offers the possibility to verify as to whether the Russians live up to their part of the deal (Kissinger et al., par. 5), and noted that "the Obama administration has agreed to provide for modernization of the infrastructure essential to maintaining our nuclear arsenal" (Kissinger et al., par. 7). This concerned the spending of 84 billion dollars on the nuclear weapons complex of the Energy Department over the course of ten years (Kissinger et al., par. 7). This is an interesting aspect, for it shows how Obama and his administration have influenced the ratification regarding the New START treaty. In turn for the support of the Republicans improvements to the infrastructure are promised, which seems to have convinced at least these former secretaries, who now seek to convince the Republicans in the Senate as well.

Interestingly, another reason to ratify the treaty that is pointed out by the former secretaries of state, is that Russia should no longer be considered the main source of nuclear danger (Kissinger et al., par. 8). In turn they argued that it are rogue states as North Korea and

Iran that pose such dangers, but that an arms control treaty with Russia still mattered "because it is in both parties' interest that there be transparency and stability in their strategic nuclear relationship" (Kissinger et al., par. 8). This nuclear relationship also played a part in the notion that the help of the Russians will be required to keep check of aforementioned rogue states as well as to deal with matters of terrorism (Kissinger et al., par. 8). These examples show a different perspective on Russia as is perhaps expected of Republicans. Rather than portraying the nation as their rival or enemy, it seems as if they realized that other nations are a greater threat to the stability in the world, and that the Russians may play a part in regaining that stability.

It is uncertain what part the letter and arguments of these five former secretaries of state has played in the ratification of the New START treaty, but on December 22, 2010, the ratification of the treaty was achieved (Skidmore 50). Thirteen Republican senators, as well as two independents, joined the 56 Democrats resulting in the necessary two-thirds majority (Deyermond, "The Republican Challenge" 78). This, however, meant that - despite the letter in the Washington Post - two-thirds of the Republican Senators still opted to vote against the treaty (Skidmore 50). Either way, this ratification can definitely be considered a victory on Obama's part. Skidmore notes that despite the collaboration of Democrats and some of the Republicans on this matter, it would not signal the end of divisions between the two parties when it comes to national security (50). The difficulties concerning the ratification of the New START treaty also gave cause for worry to the Obama administration in regards to the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which they feared would end in failure (Skidmore 50).

The fact that the treaty was ratified did not mean that the Republicans stopped critiquing it. One of the most prominent critics of New START outside of Congress was Mitt Romney. By mid-2011, Romney noted that New START had given the Russians major

reductions of the United States' nuclear arsenal while gaining nothing in turn (Deyermond, "The Republican Challenge" 77). Romney allegedly repeated these criticisms during his presidential campaign, calling it "a 'we give, Russia gets' policy" (Deyermond, "The Republican Challenge" 77). Elections in general may be detrimental to the continuation of the nuclear arms reduction process, for Pifer notes that: "[t]he senior leaderships in Moscow and Washington effectively put serious arms control on hold for the latter part of 2011 and most of 2012, which coincided with presidential election campaigns in Russia and the United States" (105). If Obama had continued his protocols it could potentially have played into the hands of his political opponent who condemned the New START negotiations.

Regardless of Romney's opposition and the pause in the arms control process, Obama was granted a second term in office. At this time, the second Nuclear Security Summit, hosted in March 2012 in Seoul, had already taken place. During this summit "Obama was caught on an open microphone [...] confiding to Medvedev that, after his re-election 'I will have more flexibility' on the missile-defence issue" (Stent 131). With Obama occupying the White House once more, he would now be able to make use of this increased flexibility during his negotiations with Russia. Aside from that, the new Obama administration noted that it planned on pushing the agenda concerning the decrease of nuclear weapons forward, even if it seemed as if there was but limited interest of Russia to do so (Stent 136).

Despite of this reluctance, in June 2013, during a speech in Berlin, Obama "call[ed] on Russia to revive the push for a world without nuclear weapons" (Rampton, par. 1). He proposes to cut the amount of deployed nuclear weapons by a third but Russia did not seem impressed by the proposal (Rampton, par. 1). Once more the missile defense system harmed the negotiations. The Russians said that if they would reduce their amount of nuclear weaponry further they would no longer serve as a deterrent with the nuclear defense system in play (Rampton, par. 6). Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister, argued that they

cannot take the call for reduction seriously when the United States continues to build the ability to intercept Russia's strategic nuclear weapons (Rampton, par. 7).

Other critics also attacked Obama's plan. They argued that reducing the amount of nuclear weaponry of the United States even further would jeopardize the security of the U.S. as well as that of its allies (O'Hanlon and Pifer, par. 2). These type of arguments appear to be similar to the ones used by the Republicans who tried to prevent the ratification of the New START treaty. Disagreeing with this sentiment, O'Hanlon and Pifer offer a series of arguments in favor of Obama's plans. They note that even with this reduced number of warheads, Washington continues to possess "a robust, reliable and even redundant nuclear deterrent" (O'Hanlon and Pifer, par. 4). They explain that even in the worst case scenario it is highly unlikely that it would ever be wise to employ "more than tens of nuclear warheads" (O'Hanlon and Pifer, par. 4). O'Hanlon and Pifer continue to argue that even with the reduction to the amount of weapons, the United States and Russia will still have significantly more weapons than other nations with nuclear power in the world, ensuring their power is preserved (par. 7). It is also pointed out that a reduction of the amount of nuclear weaponry will benefit both the United States as well as Russia financially, for the maintenance of such a large amount of weapons is costly (O'Hanlon and Pifer, par. 7-8). For the United States, it is estimated that these plans could save the nation 2 to 3 billion dollars a year (O'Hanlon and Pifer, par. 8).

But in the years that followed tensions lingered between the United States and Russia. In early September 2014, at a NATO summit in Wales, President Obama promised European nations that it would defend the independence of Baltic nations that feared a possible Russia intervention (Henriksen 290). To ensure as much, Obama called for other European nations to put further economic sanctions against Russia in effect as well as to increase their defense spending (Henriksen 290). A year later, the United States deployed 300 U.S. Army

paratroopers in Ukraine to aid the local National Guardsmen in their training, in response to Russia's backing of Ukrainian separatists (Henriksen 290-91). On top of that, they also chose to participate in a joint military exercise to train Georgian soldiers at roughly the same time (Henriksen 291). "Both US deployments elicited Moscow's condemnation for treading in its sphere" (Henriksen 291). It is perhaps due to the destabilization of the situation in Eastern Europe and the clashes that followed between the United States and Russia as a result that further negotiations in regards to the decrease of nuclear weaponry of the two nations have not occurred. Due to Russian aggression in the region, the United States could not forsake its European allies and thus the plans for the missile defense system remained in place. In turn, the Russians - in accordance to the statement of their Deputy Prime Minister - would not find it beneficial to decrease their nuclear arsenal, for it would no longer serve as a deterrent.

When the Obama Administration released its 2015 NSS the tone towards Russia had changed in accordance with recent events. Rather than speaking of newly established nuclear disarmament deals, the NSS noted that the U.S. is "leading global efforts to impose costs to counter Russian aggression" (NSS 2015 2). Beyond offering a suitable response to Russia's aggression Ukraine, the Administration wanted to see to "countering Moscow's deceptive propaganda with the unvarnished truth" (NSS 2015 25). Relations between the U.S. and Moscow have soured, and comparing this NSS with the one of 2010 does show that nuclear disarmament attempts can easily be disrupted. Despite of this, the NSS of this year did include the note that the U.S. "will keep the door open to greater collaboration with Russia in areas of common interests" (NSS 2015 25). In other words, perhaps a chance remains in the future to continue nuclear disarmament efforts.

At the end of his presidency, while making little extra headway with Russia, Obama did manage to strike "a landmark nuclear weapons agreement with the Islamic Republic of Iran" (Henriksen 291). This accord was made possible due to negotiations between Iran and

members of the Security Council, which besides the United States also included Russia (Henriksen 291). In this regard the two nations were still capable of cooperating in an attempt to reduce the amount of nuclear weaponry in the world. In 2016, Obama hosted another Nuclear Security Summit in Washington during which he attempted to ensure further securing of nuclear materials as well as the prevention of nuclear terrorism (Rampton, par. 17).

Back in 2009, set out in his speech in Prague, "Obama's vision of a "world without nuclear weapons" [...] earned him the Nobel Peace Prize" (Rampton, par. 9). He was the president who negotiated the New START treaty and had it ratified, as well as the one who took the lead in organizing Nuclear Security summits. While Obama called for transparency and the pursuing of mutual objectives concerning further nuclear disarmament with Russia (NPR 2010 6), even he had to acknowledge that for as long as nuclear weapons do exist, the U.S. will have them in their arsenal as a deterrent (NSS 2010 23). Unfortunately, despite Obama's efforts to make further progress with the nuclear disarmament process, Russia's aggression in eastern Europe caused relations to sour. Nuclear arms control became of lesser importance than the condemnation of the Russian's actions, and elections too got in the way resulting in further delays. At the end of his term in office, another attempt was made to revitalize the disarmament process, though it would be Obama's successor who got to decide on how this process would continue and how relations with Russia would take shape.

Chapter 3: President Trump: "Fire and fury."

"They will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen" Donald Trump warned North Korea (Baker and Sang-Hun, par. 3), using "chilling language that evoked the horror of a nuclear exchange" (Baker and Sang-Hun, par. 2). Trump put forward his views on nuclear weapons. His tone was in stark contrast with Obama's one, who cherished a notion of peace pretty much connected to a nuclear-free world. Despite the fact that this remark concerns North Korea rather than Russia, it is telling of Trump's point of view on the use of nuclear weaponry. This chapter shall investigate whether a similar tone can be found in the negotiations with Russia, and will look at how Trump has affected - and is currently affecting - the nuclear disarmament process between the United States and Russia. It has to be noted that at the moment of writing this text Donald Trump has only occupied the White House for roughly a year and a half, meaning that his political reign is far from over. Therefore this chapter will only address a portion of Trump's involvement in the nuclear disarmament process, though it will aim to make a prediction as to how he will continue to do so in the remaining years of his presidency.

As with any candidate who runs for the presidency Trump's past actions and remarks were analyzed long before he reached the White House. Michaels and Williams have written about what they call the *Nuclear Education of Donald Trump*. They note that in his days before becoming president, his views on arms control were mixed (Michaels and Williams 63). Trump has expressed his admiration for Richard Nixon in the past, a dealmaker who opened a dialogue with communist China and who managed to convince the Russians to start negotiations in regards to "the first meaningful reductions in nuclear arms" (Michaels and Williams 63). At the same time, Trump also uttered critique on U.S. diplomats, saying that they are "constantly falling over themselves to make goodwill offerings at the bargaining

table" (Michaels and Williams 63). Trump thus portrayed himself as a negotiator or dealmaker, but hinted that he wanted to be tougher than current and past U.S. diplomats. Despite speaking about his intent to make deals, he did not elaborate at this point as to how he wanted to approach the nuclear arms control issue between the United States and Russia (Michaels and Williams 63). He did, however, state he has the intent to develop and build up further missile defense measures (Michaels and Williams 63).

Aside from this twofold strategy, Trump also shared his opinion on Russia's nuclear arsenal prior to being elected. He said that the U.S. is "[...] in very serious trouble, because we have a country (referring to Russia) with tremendous numbers of nuclear warheads—1,800, by the way—where they expanded and we didn't, 1,800 nuclear warheads" (Michaels and Williams 64). Notions as these hint to the desire of Trump to expand or at least stabilize the number of nuclear weapons at the disposal of the United States, which conflicts the ideas of the New START treaty. In regards to the latter, "the 2016 Republican Party platform expressed opposition to further arms control with Russia and viewed New START as "so weak in verification and definitions that it is virtually impossible to prove a violation" (Michaels and Williams 68). These two matters combined spell a Republican presidency that will show its reluctance to matters relating nuclear arms control and the New START treaty. Lastly, Michaels and Williams note that "Trump's seemingly pro-Russian stance may lead him to accommodate Moscow's preferences by abandoning or bargaining away missile defense, or at least those European-based elements of it" (Michaels and Williams 69).

Trump was thus predicted to be a president who would not shy away from making deals with nations that are seen as rivals of the United States, but if these deals are made, they would be more in favor of his country than previous deals. He had a pro-Russian stance which may affect the position of the U.S. when it comes to supporting European nations against Russian aggression, but at the same time Trump did not dismiss the idea of deploying further

missile defense measures, meaning that this could cause friction with the Russians alike it has done in the past. Lastly, Trump and the Republican Party showed reluctance when it comes to arms control to ensure that the United States remains as strong - or stronger than - Russia, a stance that may jeopardize the New START treaty and its aim for nuclear disarmament.

At the end of February 2017, roughly one month after his inauguration, Trump was asked questions about a tweet he released in December of the previous year, in which he said that "the United States must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capacity "until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes"" (Holland, par. 5). Now, as president, Trump's opinion on the matter took on a more moderate tone. He said that, like his predecessor, he would rather see a world without nuclear weapons but then pointed out the concern that the United States had "fallen behind on nuclear weapon capacity" (Holland, par. 6). Trump continued by saying that "[he is] the first one that would like to see ... nobody have nukes, but [the U.S. is] never going to fall behind any country even if it's a friendly country [...]. [I]f countries are going to have nukes, [the U.S. is] going to be at the top of the pack" (Holland, par. 7-8). This is a far more competitive stance on the possession of nuclear weapons that Obama used to express.

A similar tone of voice could be found in the Trump Administration's National Security Strategy of December 2017. The NSS noted that "Russia challenge[s] American power, influence and interests, [and] attempt[s] to erode American security and prosperity" (NSS 2017 2). These challenges were in part contributed to the threat to U.S. targets caused by the "developing of advanced weapons and capabilities" (NSS 2017 8). Interestingly enough, the file also stated that "[e]nhanced missile defense is not intended to undermine strategic stability or disrupt longstanding strategic relationships with Russia" (NSS 2017 8). These type of statements appear to contradict the rather confrontational rhetoric of Trump. On the one hand, they wanted to show the world that they have not equal but greater power than

other nations with nuclear arms, but at the same time missile defense would not be used to hamper the power of - in this case - Russia to ensure longstanding relations. At the same time, the NSS acknowledged that "[t]he combination of Russian ambition and growing military capabilities creates an unstable frontier in Eurasia, where the risk of conflict due to Russian miscalculation is growing" (NSS 2017 26).

Despite the evident friction, further reduction of nuclear armaments would be in line with the New START treaty, which "require[d] that by February 5, 2018, both countries must limit their arsenals of strategic nuclear weapons to equal levels for 10 years" (Holland, par. 11). Later that month, the Bureau of Arms Control released a fact sheet indicating the current numbers of nuclear weapons within U.S. and Russian possession (Bureau of Arms Control), which are in accordance to the New START agreements.

The question is whether Trump is willing to continue to live up to the political agreements of New START, for he deems it "a one-side deal [and] just another bad deal that the country made" (Holland, par. 14-15), followed by the notion that the U.S. is "going to start making good deals" (Holland, par. 15). That remark may be an indication that Trump is going to pull out of the New START treaty in an attempt to forge a better treaty instead. There are also some other aspects that play a part to a potential dislike for New START. At this time, "[t]he United States is in the midst of a \$1 trillion, 30-year modernization of its aging ballistic missile submarines, bombers and land-based missiles" (Holland, par. 16). Of course it would be difficult to explain to the American public to spend such amounts of money on something that will be made redundant should the U.S. continue to decrease its nuclear arsenal. On top of that, Trump was of the opinion that Russia is violating a 1987 treaty that bans land-based intermediate-range missiles of the United States and Russia, by deploying a ground-based cruise missile (Holland, par. 17), a matter he wished to raise with Putin when the two would meet (Holland, par. 19). In other words, as Trump was under the impression that Russia is not

sticking to the rules, he may be more reluctant to stick to agreements himself - which could mean a more easily abandoned New START treaty.

A year later, in February 2018, *TIME* published an article by W. J. Hennigan called "The New Nuclear Poker," which outlined the actions that Trump has taken concerning the matter of nuclear arms since taking up office. The first thing of note is that at the end of 2017, "the Trump Administration ordered the [D]epartment [of Energy] to be ready, for the first time, to conduct a short-notice nuclear test in as little as six months" (Hennigan 17). For the first time in 34 years such a test takes place (Hennigan 18). According to an unnamed National Nuclear Security Administration official this test is to be conducted for political purposes, for it would show Russia and other countries with nuclear weaponry "what they are up against" (Hennigan 17). According to Hennigan, "[t]he Trump Administration [...] is convinced that the best way to limit the spreading nuclear danger is to expand and advertise its ability to annihilate its enemies" (18).

Aside from ordering a nuclear test Trump has also invested in this weapon complex, signing off on a plan of 1.2 trillion dollars to overhaul it (Hennigan 18). In other words, for the first time in over three decades an American president did not attempt to work towards nuclear disarmament but wished to show the power and capabilities of the U.S. instead. The large investment in this weapon testing complex may only encourage further proliferation, for spending that amount money on a facility that would later go unused would be difficult to explain in the political arena as well as to voters during future elections. During his State of the Union address Trump, on 30 January 2018, Trump addressed this matter and once more reasoned a similar point of view as he did a year prior. According to Trump:

We must modernize and rebuild our nuclear arsenal, hopefully never having to use it, but making it so strong and powerful that it will deter any acts of aggression. [...]

Perhaps someday in the future there will be a magical moment when the countries of the world will get together to eliminate their nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, we are not there yet (Hennigan 18).

The following month, the Trump administration released their 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which was drafted by U.S. Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, and released by this secretary's office. Once more the administration stresses that its "first priority is to protect the United States, allies, and partners" (NPR 2018 1). The report stated that the United States worked towards disarmament over the past years but that China and Russia are moving in the opposite direction (NPR 2018 1). Despite of this, the U.S. desired not to brand these other countries as adversaries and seeks a stable relation with both (NPR 2018 2). The phrasing of these statements is curious. On the one hand, the Trump administration is clearly displeased with the actions of Russia and China and seek to answer those actions in kind by increasing the amount of nuclear weaponry at their disposal. While such an action may potentially spark an arms race, for China and Russia could answer it in kind, the administration insists they work towards a stable relation. One would think the idea of an arms race is the last thing these nations want, but in February 2017, Trump stated about such a topic: "Let it be an arms race ... we will outmatch them at every pass and outlast them all" (Thakur 108).

The NPR does, however, elaborate further on the stance of the U.S. towards Russia. It noted that while strategic dialogues were maintained in the past in regards to nuclear competition and risks, recent events - the occupation of Crimea being mentioned - has caused a substantial decline towards constructive engagement (NPR 2018 2). The idea that Russia may have more advanced or numerous nuclear weapons does not sit well with the administration either. In their eyes, Russia deemed itself more capable and "[c]orrecting this

mistaken Russian perception is a strategic imperative" (NPR 2018 8). It is also mentioned that Russia has not lived up to some of the treaties they have forged with the United States, the most significant violation being the use of a system that was banned by the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (NPR 2018 13). This missile would put European capitals at risk, and was, according to former U.S. officials "derisively nicknamed the SSC-8 "Screwdriver" by NATO analysts because "Russia used it to screw us" (Hennigan 20). The NPR concludes that "Russia is either rejecting or avoiding its obligations and commitments under numerous agreements, and has rebuffed U.S. efforts to follow the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with another round of negotiated reductions and to pursue reductions in non-strategic nuclear forces" (NPR 2018 13).

This review thus makes it sound as if the new take of the Trump Administration on nuclear weapons is solely a response to the actions of Russia and other nations with nuclear military capabilities. Once more it is stressed that the response of the U.S. is solely a means of deterrence. According to the NPR the testing of new weaponry "will will raise the nuclear threshold and help ensure that potential adversaries perceive no possible advantage in limited nuclear escalation, making nuclear employment less likely" (NPR 2018 8). In other words, creating more specialized weapons and increasing the volume of nuclear weaponry will - according to the Trump administration - help make the world safer place by deterring others from using their weapons.

Trump's State of the Union and his Administration's Nuclear Posture Review seem to set a trend for his policies in regards to this matter. In a meeting in the Pentagon on July 20, during which the nuclear stockpile reductions were discussed, Trump would also allegedly have called for more, rather than fewer, nuclear weapons (Hennigan 18). It should, however, be noted that the increase of the number of nuclear arms or new technologies are not a certainty of deterrence. Cimbala argues that "[a]dditional legacy launchers and warheads are

not necessarily the keys to the kingdom of deterrence in the post-industrial and Internet age" (184). Instead, he proposes, there should be more of a focus on cyber security (Cimbala 184).

Trump's decisions are not left without response by the Russians. In December 2017, Vladimir Putin accused the U.S. of violating nuclear arms deals, and said that Trump's aggressive military policy "seriously affects security in Europe and in the whole world" (Hennigan 18). Alike the United States, Russia is increasing its spending in nuclear weaponry and is "in the midst of overhauling its nuclear forces, including new ICBMs [(Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles)], ballistic-missile submarines and modernized heavy bombers" (Hennigan 21). On top of that the nation is "also practicing nuclear snap drills that involve missile launches from the air, land and sea" (Hennigan 21). As both nations accused one another of breaking treaties, are developing new nuclear weaponry, and are increasing the amount of weapons at their disposal, it raises the question as to how this will affect the New START treaty, which is set to expire in roughly three years time.

The future of New START being uncertain poses, according to Cimbala, two challenges to future nuclear force reductions. One he calls the incremental approach, which would mean that "each state would reduce its number of deployed long-range nuclear weapons to a maximum of 1,000" (Cimbala 173). This approach appears to be in line with former treaties which have gradually reduced the amount of nuclear weapons at the disposal of the U.S. and Russia. The second option Cimbala proposes is more ambitious. The U.S. and Russia could "reduce each of the peacetime numbers of operationally deployed weapons to several hundred instead of 1,000 weapons" (Cimbala 173). Cimbala argues that this is a means of minimum deterrence, meaning that the possession of such an amount of nuclear weaponry is still enough to destroy any adversary but that it would greatly reduce the amount of excess weaponry in the world (173). The question is, however, whether Trump or Putin would ever make such a decision given the examples they are showing today.

As Trump's presidency is still ongoing, it is also worth paying attention to factors that may influence his impending nuclear disarmament policies. The Administration's stance is countered by a split Congress, which is divided between *defense hawks* and *deficit hawks* (Cimbala 175). To explain, *defense hawks* are those who are in favor of increasing the defensive capabilities of the United States, while *deficit hawks* want to keep control of government spending. The latter group could speak out against Trump's plan to invest over a trillion dollars in the nuclear facilities, for example. Another potential problem for Trump may face could be due to bureaucratic politics. Cimbala explains that:

The US Air Force is responsible for operating two of the three legs of the American strategic nuclear triad: ICBMs and bombers. SLBMs and their host platforms, fleet ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs), belong to the Navy. Neither service is eager to surrender the roles and missions assigned to it, and both the Air Force and Navy can make a case for the uniqueness of their platforms as contributions to stable deterrence (Cimbala 177).

In other words, different groups within the U.S. armed forces could oppose Trump's decision to invest in particular nuclear weaponry for it may affect the amount of work their force can conduct. These forces could pressure politicians to speak in their favor, who in turn could put a halt to Trump's plans by dividing Congress.

How exactly these political and economic matters play out only time can tell. A reason for concern about the current course of actions of Trump and Putin remains evident, however. Alexei Arbatov, a Russian expert, notes that with "the total disintegration of the existing framework of treaties and regimes" (Thakur 110) the risk of the use of nuclear weaponry in combat will grow ever more prominent (Thakur 110). On top of that, Hennigan writes that if

New START should falter "it will be the first time the effort to limit the strategic stockpiles in the U.S. and Russia has lapsed since 1991" (20), meaning that it would be quite the setback towards any former measures of nuclear disarmament.

What we do know is that the tone in regards to the matter of nuclear disarmament has drastically changed since Trump has taken up office. He saw himself as a dealmaker and planned to negotiate agreements that are, in his eyes, more favorable to the United States. Rather than speaking of further reduction of the nuclear weaponry, he sought to increase numbers and improve quality, thus threatening the agreements of the New START treaty which were thus far honored. In his mind, the increase in weaponry would show the world that the U.S. is able to withstand any threat, which would serve as a greater deterrent to any who may consider attacking the nation. In that regard, Trump lived up to his words of fire and fury. In response, on January 26 of this year, the second hand of the Doomsday Clock, which conveys the risk of nuclear annihilation, was pushed forward by another 30 seconds. This is "the closest Doomsday has loomed since 1953, when the U.S. and Russia first tested hydrogen bombs within months of each other" (Hennigan 21). At the same time, but a few days ago, Trump has shown that he is not fully opposed to denuclearization by meeting with the leader of North Korea in an attempt to improve relations. Time will tell whether the president of the United States will be visiting Moscow as well.

Conclusion

As has been shown, Obama and Trump's policies regarding the nuclear disarmament process between the U.S. and Russia differ greatly. To further contrast these two presidents, their actions will be compared by drawing on the theories of Nina Tannenwald, who has written about what she calls the *nuclear taboo*, as well as Francis Gavin's comparison of *sanguinists* and *agonists*.

Tannenwald writes that "in delegitimizing nuclear weapons, the nuclear taboo has constrained the practice of self-help in the international system. States are not free to resort to nuclear weapons without incurring moral opprobrium or political costs" (463). If leaders do not live up to adhering to this taboo they "risk being classified as outside the bounds of "civilized" international society" (Tannenwald 463). The taboo operates via three causal mechanisms, namely "domestic public opinion, world opinion (U.S. leaders perceived favorable world opinion as crucial to sustaining their legitimate leadership of the Western alliance), and personal conviction informed by beliefs about American values and conceptions of the appropriate behavior of civilized nations" (Tannenwald 462).

Based on the findings outlined in the chapters of this thesis, it can be argued that Obama and Trump interpret the nuclear taboo differently. Obama has shown he has a personal conviction against nuclear weapons and wants a nuclear-free world. He is thus in favor of the disarmament process. He has made efforts to involve the international society in this process via Nuclear Security summits and in turn did not face a political backlash at the end of his first term in office. Trump, on the contrary, has showcased to not deem the use of nuclear weapons as great a taboo as his predecessor, for he threatened to use the weaponry on any nation that may threaten the U.S. in turn, which has affected his standing among the international society. Trump does appear to be acting out of his personal conviction that the

power of deterrence is of a greater benefit than a decrease in nuclear weaponry. Whether domestic public opinion on his policies has soured due to his liberal perception of the nuclear taboo we may find out during the next presidential elections.

Aside from the interpretation of the nuclear taboo, Gavin notes that U.S. leaders can also be divided in *sanguinists* and *agonists*. "[S]anguinists are skeptical of the ability of states, international organizations, or international law to radically alter the basic laws of global politics. Power, not ideals or norms, is what matters" (Gavin 159). "[A] sanguinist would quickly acknowledge the devastating capabilities of atomic and, especially, thermonuclear bombs. Paradoxically, sanguinists believe this enormous destructive power is precisely what allows nuclear weapons to stabilize international relations and dampen the possibilities of great power war" (Gavin 159). By comparison, "[a]n agonist [...] is a "struggler" or combatant" (Gavin 159). Agonists do not "believe that deterrence is either self reinforcing or sufficient to provide international peace and stability" (Gavin 160). Instead this is "largely maintained through arms control treaties, global norms, complex alliances, and international institutions"(Gavin 160). They "acknowledge that abolition will not be easy, but they believe ridding the world of nuclear weapons is both a shared global interest and a moral imperative" (Gavin 160).

This thesis has shown that Obama can be attributed primarily to the agonist category. Even though he still acknowledges the power of deterrence like a sanguinist would, the ultimate goal of Obama was to find stability through control treaties - like New START - and by forging alliances through international institutions such as the Nuclear Security summits. To Obama it was a moral imperative to work towards a nuclear-free world. In turn, his agonist believes shaped the policies of nuclear disarmament between the U.S. and Russia. Trump can seemingly be found at the other side of the spectrum. Akin to a sanguinist he has shown to favor having the destructive powers of nuclear weaponry at his command, for they would

deter other nations from attacking the U.S. and thus stabilize international relations. In turn this may cause other nations, such as Russia, to maintain their nuclear arsenal as well, thus hampering the nuclear disarmament process. It has to be noted that being a sanguinist or agonist is not tied to being a member of the Democratic or Republican Party, for if we look, for example, at the actions of the two Bush Administrations, the first chapter has shown that they too favor the use of treaties over the extension and development of the nuclear arsenal.

The implications of the findings of this thesis are in line with the theories of Tannenwald and Gavin, meaning that the policies of an U.S. president can be predicted depending on where they end up in the nuclear taboo and agonist-sanguinist spectrum. If Trump maintains his current line of thinking, it is likely he will remain set upon the usage of nuclear weaponry as a deterrent and shall prove more likely to shy away from establishing treaties akin to Obama's New START. It has to be said, that while the president and his line of thinking have an important influence on the nuclear disarmament process, other factors also may interfere. Be it the actions of other players involved in the process, for example the aggression of Russia in Eastern Europe which asks for a firmer stance. The findings of this thesis also show that the nuclear disarmament policies instated by one president, in this case Obama, can easily end up being threatened by his successor. This means that, when it comes to nuclear disarmament between the U.S. and Russia, the results of and continuation of this process are greatly impacted by the person who is elected as president. If the world is in favor of further reduction of the nuclear weaponry of the U.S. and Russia, it must hope the American people elect an agonistic candidate as president.

This raises the question, one that others may be able to answer, whether power over this process should be taken away from the president to ensure the longevity of treaties and their chance at success. It would also be interesting to deduce whether Trump has consistently

adhered to his policies, convictions and ideals by the end of his time in the White House. To answer such questions, further research is in order.

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