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THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION AND ARMS CONTROL

Abstract

Did the Biden administration pick up at least some of the pieces of the broken liberal international order caused in some part by his predecessor Trump? Has he been acting according to his and his party's promises during the presidential-elections campaign or has he stood by his predecessor's decisions? And especially how much was done or "repaired" in the realm of arms control? These are the questions authors will try to answer in this paper. They will draw their conclusion by analyzing theoretical assumptions that lie behind the Trump's and Biden's approach toward the international institutions, including arms control, historical analysis of Trump's legacy regarding international institutions, content analysis of Biden's and Democratic Party's promises and their comparison with the Republican attitudes. In assessing how much was done in the first year of Biden's mandate in the realm of arms control, authors conclude that the results are mixed – in some cases Biden followed Trump's decisions and in some other he completely changed the approach.

Keywords: *Biden administration, US Democratic Party, international institutions, arms control, the US foreign policy*

INTRODUCTION

"Who will pick up the pieces?" was the title of the 2019 Munich Security Conference which referred to the ongoing crisis of multilateralism and the liberal international order, partly caused by the then US President Donald Trump. March of unilateralism, largely

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reflected in the unilateral US withdrawals from trade, climate, human rights and arms control international institutions, was motivated by Trump's desire to get better deals for the US or end the bad ones which constrained US freedom of action and contributed to other states' wellbeing at the expense of US. However, it caused severe rifts in the relationship with the allies (except Israel and some of the Eastern Europe "conservative democracies") and significantly eroded US credibility, finally leading to Trump's loss at the presidential elections in 2020. New President Biden came to the office under the flag of renewed US leadership which is to be conducted primarily through and not outside the international institutions. He was the one to "pick up the pieces" and consolidate US partnerships, leading them to the new great competition with the autocracies to win the 21st century. How much of this did he achieve in this first year of his mandate? Has he been acting according to his and his party's promises, or has he stood by his predecessor's decisions? And especially how much was done or "repaired" in the realm of arms control? These are the questions we will try to answer in this paper.

In order to understand the basic difference between Trump's and Biden's foreign policy approach, especially the one toward arms control, it is necessary first to distinguish between the underlying theoretical assumptions on the role and purpose of international institutions in relation to national interests. The first part of the paper is thus devoted to the discussion of the realist and liberal perspective of international institutions, including arms control. More faith in the "real promise" of international institutions is one of the features of Biden's, as well as, previous democratic administrations. This will be demonstrated through the historical analysis of Trump's legacy regarding multilateralism and content analysis of the 2020 Democratic Party Platform and various Biden's speeches during the campaign and after the elections. The basic attitudes of Democrats are compared to those of Republicans, showing the clear difference in the position toward the international institutions. The third part of the paper will then explore how much of the promised during the campaign was delivered until October 2021, especially regarding arms control. Although a lot was promised, not that much was actually done, if we exclude the extension of the 2010 Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START) which was a significant accomplishment for the preservation of strategic stability. Regarding other issues, including the nuclear weapons policy, missile defense, possible return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the policy toward North

Korea and the Open Skies Treaty, the Biden administration did conduct reviews, or is still conducting them with mixed results. In some cases, such as the Open Skies Treaty and, for now, modernization of the nuclear arsenal, Biden continued Trump's decisions, and in some other cases, such as the Iranian and North Korean nuclear issues, he changed the approaches from Trump's comprehensive to a step-by-step pragmatic approach but for now without any accomplishment.

INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTER OF ARMS CONTROL

As the only country with nuclear weapons in the 1940s, the US was from the beginning devoted to the development and support for the non-proliferation norm. The creation of the non-proliferation regime was essential for the maintenance of US dominance and national security. On the other side, other countries, non-nuclear weapons states tried to disarm the US and put nuclear weapons under international control. When these countries, such as the USSR developed their own nuclear weapons, non-proliferation was supplemented with arms control, both in the form of international institutions.

The arms control regime is a kind of an international institution created for a specific set of problems and an area of state activity, and thus depends on ones beliefs on the possibilities, purposes and effectiveness of states' cooperation and its institutionalization. International institutions can be defined in various ways but one common feature of all definitions is that they comprise set of principles and rules that regulate states' behavior, which is not always based on cooperation, but also coordination. In a wider sense they also include ideas, patterns of action and interaction (Holsti 2004, 18-22), as well as identities and interests (Wendt 1992, 401). This means that institutions constrain activities, shape expectations and prescribe actors' roles (Keohane 1988, 383). Not all international institutions have their organizational dimension, but when they do, they are labelled as international organizations. However, the basic question remains how the international institutions work under the condition of anarchy?

Unfortunately, there is no single answer to this question, but it depends on the prioritization of a specific theoretical set of assumptions, such as those of realism, liberalism, constructivism, neo-Marxism or some other. The same is true for the assessment of the purpose and role of arms control. The Chinese view on arms control, and generally international institutions, for example, cannot be understood without knowledge about Marxist theory of international relations and especially the concepts of hegemony and counter-hegemony and the

role of international institution in them (Kostić 2017). For the purpose of this paper, two assumptions are particularly relevant. The first one is that of realism that the best way to ensure survival in the anarchical system is to be the most powerful state in the system and gain that power at the expense of others, since international relations are a zero-sum game. In that sense, critics of arms control agreements see them as dangerous and unnecessary constraints of a state's freedom of action in the competent world and doubt that arms control can reduce the likelihood of deliberately starting a war, which depends of political considerations (Brooks 2020, 85). The second one is liberal one that in the contemporary world no country, including the US, can solve global problems alone, and that international institutions do contribute to peace, stability and common interests, and instead of constraining actually serve as the multiplier of a state's power in the form of so called soft power (Park 2020, 326). Dunne, for example, mentions that according to Woodrow Wilson, "peace could only be secured with the creation of an international organization to regulate international anarchy. Security could not be left to secret bilateral diplomatic deals and a blind faith in the balance of power." (Dunne 2020, 7). In this way, belief in the „false promise of international institutions“ (Mearsheimer 1994, 7) would give poor chances for the rationale and purpose of arms control, since the main logic behind it is to create stability through predictability, confidence, coordination and consultation, constraint of military might, avoidance of arms race and reduction of risks of certain weapon use. But, as with other international institutions seen from the liberal lances, the main contribution of the international institutions to stability is that it forms the framework of network of reciprocity, which in turn creates what Robert Axelrod called "the long shadow of the future." (See Nye 2020).

One of the biggest obstacles of international institutions, including arms control remain the problems of cheating, relative-gains and sustainability. The Republican US administrations were, for example, more prone to amplify the problem of cheating and to undertake unilateral measures, such as withdrawals, to cope with it. The recent examples include the US withdrawal from the INF Treaty in 2019, allegedly because Russia had been "cheating for years" (Toms et al. 2019), as well as the Open Skies Treaty in 2020 because of the Russian flight restrictions and use of the treaty contrary to its purpose (to gather intelligence) (Reif and Bugos 2020). Regarding overstressing these issues, the Trump administration also believed that the reason for Russian cheating is their attempt to gain military advantage (Wolfsthal 2020, 103). Likewise, the 2016 Republican Party Platform, for example

stated, that “a New START, so weak in verification and definitions that it is virtually impossible to prove a violation, has allowed Russia to build up its nuclear arsenal while reducing ours.” (RP 2016, 41). Trump also withdrew US from several agreements for the reasons that they were “unfair” for the US in the way that they contributed more to the US competitors, such as China or the EU. Finally, regarding the sustainability of international institutions, one state’s the view of some international institution will depend on whether it is still good for the purpose, financial capacities, technological developments (if it is outdated) and political context. Trump administration, for example, complained about the prospects of sustainability of NATO and thus asked for more financial contributions from NATO allies (up to 2% of their GDP) in order to share a fair burden of collective defense (David 2018).

In the next section we will devote more attention to the positions and unilateral measures taken by the Trump administration regarding arms control, and Biden’s position regarding it before the presidential elections, when he was a Senator, and during the presidential-elections campaign.

THE REPUBLICAN LEGACY AND DEMOCRATS PROMISES

Dilemma of increasing power without losing it

The 2015 US National Security Strategy (NSS) states that “the question is never whether America should lead, but how we lead.” (WH 2015, 2-3). Essentially, it seem like the US strategy is influenced by a constant paradox of how to maintain and increase *power* without losing *it*? This paradox is actually referred to the different notions of power. The Republican belief that the US *hard* power can only be preserved and amplified by withdrawal from international institutions which drain US economy and human resources has always affected the US *soft* power or its ability to lead, which is, as believed by Democrats, most effectively done through international institutions. Today, this difference is best described in President Joe Biden’s first speech after winning the presidency in November 2020, in which he said that the US should “lead not by example of power, but power of our example.” (WRAL 2020).

While the previous Republican administrations, especially Trump’s, believed that international institutions constrained the US ability to act and preferred unilateral solutions and bilateral arrangements without much consultations with allies (as was the case

with Bush and Trump administrations), the others preferred multilateral solutions, although not excluding completely the possibility of unilateral measures if the vital US interest are endangered, and acting through the consultations with allies and institutions (such as Obama's and Biden's administrations). Trump saw institutions such as the World Health Organization (WTO) as Lilliputians' means to constrain the American giant from using the power it would have in any bilateral negotiation (Nye 2020). On the other side, Democrats perceive international institutions and alliances as power maximizers, not minimizers, since they enable and not constrain freedom of action. This logic can be seen in the words of the March 2021 US Interim National Security Strategic Guidance that because the "United Nations and other international organizations, however imperfect, remain essential for advancing our interests, we will re-engage as a full participant and work to meet our financial obligations, in full and on time." (WH 2021, 13). It also states that by restoring US credibility and reasserting forward-looking global leadership, the US will ensure that America, not China, sets the international agenda and that contemporary international institutions will reflect "universal values, aspirations, and norms" rather than an authoritarian agenda (*Ibid.* 13, 20). On the other side, Republicans tended to put more emphasis on hard power, and their 2016 Party Platform stated that it is committed to rebuilding the US military into "the strongest on earth, with vast superiority over any other nation or group of nations in the world." (RP 2016, 41).

The difference between Republicans and Democrats practice of policy also had great consequences on the US relationship with allies, and in the former case it significantly weakened it, while in the latter it was strengthened. The 2020 Democratic Platform, for example, mentioned that "President Trump promised he would put "America First", but that Trump's America stands alone" (DP 2020, 72). In their perspective, the alliances represent an "enormous strategic advantage" that US rivals cannot match. According to the Platform, alliances multiply US influence, spread its reach, lighten the burden, and advance US shared interests and priorities much further than the US could ever do alone (*Ibid.* 74). In the 2021 US Interim National Security Strategic Guidance it is written that "When we strengthen our alliances, we amplify our power and our ability to disrupt threats before they can reach our shores." (WH 2021, 4). This difference between Republicans and Democrats has also had consequences on the Russian preferences in the way that it usually supported those administrations that weakened NATO, such as Trump's, and campaigned against Democrats that sought to renew alliance confidence and strength,

although it made arrangements exactly with these administrations (New START was signed during the Obama's administration and extended at the beginning of Biden presidency).

Regarding arms control, as with other international institutions, there are those who underline the "false promise" of arms control and those who put more faith in the arms control capability to contribute to national security interests. Republicans often fall within the first category, while the Democrats show more faith in the "real promise" of international institutions, including arms control. In this domain, the basic tension in the US policy is between those who believe that deterrence and strategic stability based on mutual vulnerability still work, and those that put more emphasis on defense, and the need to overcome the Cold War model of strategic stability with Russia, due to new threats and the advancing proliferation. It also seems that highlighting deterrence meant more emphasizes on arms control with moderate modernization, something which was pursued by the Democrats, while putting spotlight on defense meant sidelining arms control and favoring a more robust arms modernization, including those technologies and systems that might disrupt strategic stability, such as national missile defense, mostly pursued by the Republicans. Wolfsthal, for example, notes that "(I)t is no longer a given that differing parts of the American national security establishment remain committed to the concept of mutual vulnerability or to the idea that the goal of U.S. strategic nuclear doctrine should be to create conditions in which neither the United States nor Russia (nor any other state) has an incentive to use nuclear weapons first or early in a crisis or conflict." (Wolfsthal 2020, 104-105). This tension is also visible in the strategic documents of Republican and Democratic presidents. The Trump administration remained committed to the funding, development, and deployment of a multi-layered missile defense system, modernization of nuclear weapons and their delivery platforms, end of the policy of Mutually Assured Destruction, and rebuilding of relationships with US allies, who understand that as long as they are under the US nuclear shield, they do not need to engage in nuclear proliferation (RP 2016, 42). This administration also emphasized the need to "abandon arms control treaties that benefit our adversaries without improving our national security." (*Ibid.*). Following this, the Biden administration announced a pledge to "head off costly arms races and re-establish [US] credibility as a leader in arms control." (WH 2021, 13). In this realm, Democrats believe that the sole purpose of US nuclear arsenal should be to deter—and, if necessary, retaliate against—a nuclear attack, and they campaigned for reducing the role of and expenditure

on nuclear weapons. They wanted to cut Trump's plans to build new kinds of nuclear weapons, especially low-yield non-strategic nuclear weapons and consider them "unnecessary, wasteful, and indefensible." (DP 2020, 81). Also, when it comes to arms control the difference exist regarding two important treaties: while the Republicans would not support signing/ratification of the UN Arms Trade Treaty and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, Democrats were mostly supportive of it, including during the 2020 presidential election campaign.¹

Trump's legacy regarding international institutions

One of the most highlighted legacy of the Trump administration is the contribution to the so called "crisis of multilateralism." This includes both formal and informal multilateralism i.e. international institutions, including organizations such as the UN, and group meetings such as G7 or G20. Nye writes that in the 2016 election, 'Trump campaigned on the argument that the post-1945 multilateral institutions had let other countries benefit at American expense' and that Trump casted the post-1945 liberal international order as a villain (Nye 2020). He also said that "it was not until Trump that an administration became broadly critical of multilateral institutions as a matter of policy." (*Ibid.*). But in doing so, Trump did act according to its pre-election promises and Republican Party election platform.

In the first year of his mandate Donald Trump announced withdrawal from several international organizations and treaties which were officially completed until the end of his mandate. In June 2017 Trump announced withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement, only seven months after it came into force, because it was "unfair to the US, leaving countries like India and China free to use fossil fuels while the US had to curb their carbon." (McGrath 2020). In October 2017 Trump administration filed its notice to withdraw from UNESCO, and officially did so in January 2019 due to the alleged anti-Israel policy of the organization (PBS 2019). It was again done against the great majority of states calling US not to withdraw, including the UK and the EU allies. Due to the "mismanagement" of its COVID 19 pandemics response and concerns over the independence of the organization from

1) The 2016 Republican Platform states the following: "We do not support the U.N. Convention on Women's Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the U.N. Arms Trade Treaty, as well as various declarations from the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development", (RP 2016, 51). On the other side the 2020 Democratic Platform stated that the "Democrats commit to strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, maintaining the moratorium on explosive nuclear weapons testing, pushing for the ratification of the UN Arms Trade Treaty and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and extending New START", (DP 2020, 81).

China, Trump first announced halting of the funding of the WHO, and in May 2020 he declared that the US would “terminate” its relationship with the organization (BBC 2020). In the area of trade, immediately after taking office Trump pulled the US out of Trans-Pacific Partnership, because it would take manufacturing and service jobs out of the US, and favored bilateral negotiations and deals with Pacific Countries and in 2018 replaced NAFTA with the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA), originally negotiated bilaterally between US and Mexico (Dudar and Shesgreen 2018). The Trump also withdrew from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) because of the anti-Israel policy and halted US contributions to the United Nations’ aid program for Palestinian refugees due to the “disproportionate share of the burden of UNRWA’s costs.” (*Ibid.*).

Regarding arms control, one of the Trump promises during the presidential election campaign was that he would abandon the JCPOA, describing it as “the worst deal ever.” (*Ibid.*). Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from the JCPOA in May 2018, because Iran continued to enrich uranium, develop ballistic missiles, and overall the agreement “failed to protect America’s national security interests.” (*Ibid.*). It was done despite allies concerns, objection and refusal to follow further US measures as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) assessment that Iran had been in compliance with the JCPOA. The only way in which the Trump administration would consider renegotiating the JCPOA was if Iran would completely renounce their intent to develop nuclear weapons (*Ibid.*). The only treaty the Trump pulled US out from with the support of its NATO allies was the INF Treaty, although, at first, allies tried to save the deal by pushing Russia to come into compliance (NATO 2019). Still aware of the so-called Euro-missile crisis, the Europeans were afraid that the Europe might again become a battlefield between the US and Russia and place of their renewed arms race and confrontation (Borger and Roth 2018). In February 2019 the Trump administration announced the suspension of the 1987 INF Treaty and the full withdrawal took place six months later, because of the alleged Russian non-compliance with the Treaty provisions. At the end, in 2020, Trump pulled the US out from the Open Skies Treaty, again contrary to the allies concerns, owing to alleged Russian non-compliance. All of this made extension of the New START Treaty important, but by the end of Trump’s mandate, this had not happened due to the various conditions he set beforehand.

One of the most prominent figures in ending US arms control agreements was John Bolton, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security under President Bush and the National

Security Adviser under President Trump. Cirincione even labelled him as a “serial arms control killer.” (Cirincione 2019). He mentioned that Bolton was responsible for the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and the Agreed Framework with North Korea under the Bush administration, and later on from the JCPOA and the INF Treaty under Trump (he took office in April 2018) (*Ibid.*). Cirincione further reminded that in 1999, Bolton decried the liberal “fascination with arms-control agreements as a substitute for real non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction” because for “Bolton and others like him, these agreements are part of the effort by the global Lilliputians to tie down the American Gulliver” while the US must protect its nation “with military might, not pieces of paper.” (*Ibid.*). This shows the moving of the emphasis from non-proliferation to counter-proliferation, including pre-emptive attacks during Republican administrations. In 2014, Bolton wrote that the Moscow’s arms-control treaty violations “give America the opportunity to discard obsolete, Cold War-era limits on its own arsenal, and upgrade its military capabilities to match its global responsibilities.” (Bolton and Yoo 2014). On the INF Treaty, Bolton said to the Russian President Putin days after the announcement of the US withdrawal: “There’s a new strategic reality out there. This is a cold war bilateral ballistic-missile-related treaty — in a multipolar ballistic-missile world.” (Shesgreen 2018). Adding to the Russian cheating, Bolton actually said that the agreement was outdated or outmoded anyway, because of the “new strategic environment” which largely includes concern over China’s intermediate ballistic forces. Fortunately (or not), John Bolton was dismissed from his position before the last remaining nuclear arms control agreement between the USA and Russia was set to expire. Bolton regarded the New START as “flawed from the beginning” because it “did not cover short-range tactical nuclear weapons or new Russian delivery systems.” (Reif 2019). Bolton even wrote that he “planned to withdraw the US signature on the Comprehensive Test Ban treaty (CTBT), paving the way to nuclear testing, if he had stayed on at the White House” because it is necessary to be certain of the reliability of the US deterrent (Borger 2020).

If the greatest strength of international institutions is to endure and thus to create a framework of predictability, confidence and reciprocity, this is exactly where the Trump’s actions hit and blew the international order. Perceived as a framework of exercising US leadership his actions also damaged the US credibility and reliability, especially among the partners and allies, who in return started to develop their own strategies (for example strengthening strategic autonomy in the EU or replacement of the TPP with the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-

Pacific Partnership). It is why the Biden campaign was oriented toward the renewal of American leadership, especially through, not outside, the international institutions. But, what has actually been done in the first year of Biden's mandate and did he stand up to his and Democratic Party promises? It is the topic of the next section of this paper.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION AND ARMS CONTROL: BETWEEN PROMISES AND REALITY

The 2021 US Interim National Security Guidance announced that the US "will move swiftly to earn back our position of leadership in international institutions, joining with the international community to tackle the climate crisis and other shared challenges." (WH 2021, 11). And surely, on the first day of his presidency President Biden returned the US to the Paris Climate accord and announced it would return to the UN Human Rights Council because, as the Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said, the decision to withdraw in 2018 "did nothing to encourage meaningful change, but instead created a vacuum of US leadership, which countries with authoritarian agendas have used to their advantage." (Deutsche Welle 2021) Instead of withdrawal and abandoning international institutions, which was Trump's tool or a way to bring necessary changes to international institutions, the Biden administration had chosen to fight for the reforms that suit US through them.² Biden also announced and conducted a review of Trump's decisions to withdraw from the JCPOA and the Open Skies Treaty, as well as numerous decisions regarding the improvement of the US nuclear arsenal, nuclear weapons and missile defense policy. He also promised to address the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons, reduce the role of nuclear weapons in the US national security strategy, but on the other hand to preserve strong and credible extended deterrence commitments to the US allies, head off costly arms races and re-establish US credibility as a leader in arms control (WH 2021, 13). Indeed, only a few days after being sworn into office and two days before its expiration, Biden and Putin extended the New START unconditionally for another five years. But, now we will have a closer look at some elements of Biden's approach to arms control in order to assess its accomplishments compared to what was promised.

2) The 2020 Democratic Platform states that "Democrats believe that American security and prosperity are enhanced when the United States leads in shaping the rules, forging the agreements, and steering the institutions that guide international relations. We believe the system of international institutions we built and led over the past seven decades has generated an enormous return on our investment... We will work to modernize international institutions to make sure they are fit for purpose in the 21st century." (DP 2020, 74)

Arms Control Policy

In the middle of 2021, the Biden administration formally began a review of the US nuclear weapons policy and the work on the new Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) which will be finalized early in 2022, in conjunction with the National Defense Strategy (Reif 2021). According to Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense Dalton the new NPR will focus on “maintaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent, ensuring strategic stability, and reducing risks of mistake and miscalculation in crisis and conflict.” (*Ibid.*).

The Biden administration policy regarding arms control and nuclear weapons remained committed to strategic stability based on mutual assured destruction, second strike capabilities, moderate nuclear weapons modernization programs and arms control with Russia and, if possible, China. It is committed to the non-proliferation policy as well as measures leading to nuclear disarmament. In his speech at the 2021 Munich Security Conference, Biden referred to the risk of the global proliferation of nuclear weapons as one of the central issues of his administration, and stressed the need for diplomacy and cooperation on this subject at the international level (WH Biden speech 2021). However, his administration, still, does not accept the “no-first policy”. In contrast with Republicans, the Biden administration will also continue to be committed to the maintaining of the moratorium on explosive nuclear weapons testing and pushing for the ratification of the UN Arms Trade Treaty and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

After the extension of the New START with Russia in February 2021, Biden signed the US-Russian statement on strategic stability at the June 2021 Summit and committed the US to further strategic arms control. According to its promises, the Biden administration will be committed to multilateral non-proliferation policy, with respect of allies’ interests, instead of unilateral measures and counter-proliferation measures pursued by previous Republican administrations. Also, regarding nuclear modernization programs, the Biden administration promised to cut all unnecessary additions made by President Trump to the Obama-era program, which in the context of signing and gaining support for ratification in Congress of the New START committed itself to an overhaul of nearly the entire nuclear arsenal in 2010 and to the replacement of its long-range delivery systems for all three legs of the nuclear triad.³ The Biden administration will continue this process. No matter the promises, and although the review of Trump’s era requests is

3) The 2021 Democratic Platform states that The Trump Administration’s proposal to build new nuclear weapons is “unnecessary, wasteful, and indefensible.” (DP 2020, 81).

in progress, following its first budget request in May 2021, the Biden administration will continue with robust modernization of nuclear forces, but with the difference of preserving its link (and long-time bargain in US administration) with strategic arms control.

Strategic and non-strategic arms control

In February 2021, only two days before its expiration, the US and Russian Presidents Biden and Putin extended unconditionally the last bilateral nuclear arms control treaty for another five years. Also at the June 2021 Summit in Geneva the two Presidents signed the Joint U.S. Russia Statement on Strategic Stability and continuation of Strategic Stability Dialogue (previously, the last round of such a dialogue was held in August 2020 under the Trump administration in the lead up to the expiration of the 2010 New START). This document confirmed the commitment to nuclear arms control and the principle that nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. It also expressed the intent of both parties to continue with the Strategic Stability Dialogue in an integrated, deliberate and robust way. This Dialogue would seek to establish the framework for future arms control and risk reduction measures (WH Joint Statement 2021). In the framework of this agreement, on 28 July 2021 the US and Russia deputy foreign ministers held “substantive and professional” talks on arms control and other strategic issues and agreed on another round of talks to be held in September 2021 (Al Jazeera 2021). This round took place on 30 September 2021 and two sides agreed to set up two working groups focused on principles and objectives for future arms control and capabilities and actions with strategic effects, which will convene ahead of a third plenary meeting (Reuters 2021).

Three points can be added here having in mind the Joint statement and points of contention in the previous 2019 and 2020 rounds of US-Russia strategic dialogue. First, is there going to be continuation of strategic arms control or only nuclear? By laying out in the Joint Statement their commitment to nuclear arms control, the question arose whether they intent to comprise all nuclear weapons, consisting both strategic and non-strategic weapons, into their future negotiation, or to maintain under control and subject to reduction only strategic weapons, including conventional and unconventional. The former comes to mind if we consider that at one point of time Trump’s special envoy for the extension of New START Bilingslea said that two parties reached agreement to freeze all nuclear arsenals, which the Russian side denied (Gould 2020). The issue of comprising all nuclear weapons under arms

control with Russia gained particular importance after the Ukraine crisis, when the US started to believe that Russia adopted, and is acting in accordance with the “escalate-to-deescalate” doctrine. As believed, this doctrine includes the lowering of threshold for the use of Russian nuclear weapons in regional conflicts, and served as the catalyst or excuse for the development of low-yield nuclear options for the US nuclear forces during the Trump administration. This point also opened the question of whether the US conventional Prompt Global Strike would be involved in some way in the negotiations and limitations, as it is a cause of worry for Russia. Some authors believe that in US-Russia discussions over non-strategic weapons, the removal of US nuclear weapons from European countries could be used as a US bargaining chip (Smetana, Onderko and Etienne 2021). Having in mind Trump’s legacy and even speculations that the US might deploy formerly banned intermediate-range missiles to Europe in order to make Russia negotiate on non-strategic weapons, NATO leaders reiterated that the alliance has “no intention to deploy land-based nuclear missiles in Europe.” (Reif and Bugos 2021). NATO also confirmed its position to reject Putin’s proposal of a moratorium on missiles formerly banned by the INF Treaty, because it is “not credible and not acceptable.” (*Ibid.*).

Second, what does the assertion contained in the Joint Statement, that the future Dialogue will be integrated, deliberate and robust mean exactly? Will it then include negotiations not only on strategic weapons, but also non-strategic, missile and space defense, cybersecurity, and various forms of delivery vehicles, such as hypersonic glide vehicles? The answer to this question is affirmative. During 2019 and 2020 the US expressed its desire to address Russian non-strategic nuclear weapons and bring China into the arms control process. In June 2020, in the framework of the strategic stability dialogue, the US and Russia agreed to form three working groups: on nuclear warheads and doctrine, verification, and space systems (Reif, and Bugos 2021b). In September 2021 they actually agreed to form two: on the principles and objectives for future arms control and on capabilities and actions with strategic effects (where we could expect discussion on missile defence, including space based elements, US Prompt Global Strike and other long-range conventional capabilities, as well as non-strategic weapons and artificial intelligence). This could be expected since for example, the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov said on 9 June 2021 that “anything that affects strategic stability must be discussed during a dialogue,” including “nuclear and non-nuclear, and offensive and defensive weapons.” (*Ibid.*). A few days later Deputy Minister Ryabkov added that “The parties may decide to adopt a package of interrelated arrangements and/

or agreements that might have a different status if necessary. Moreover, it might be possible to design some elements in a way to make the room for others to join.” (*Ibid.*). Also, at a news conference after the June 2021 Summit, Biden said that the dialogue would “work on a mechanism that can lead to control of new and dangerous and sophisticated weapons that are coming on the scene now that reduce the times of response, that raise the prospects of accidental war.” (Reif, and Bugos 2021c). From the overall context of the June 2021 Biden-Putin meeting we can conclude that the future arms control dialogue would include once again all those factors (including weapons and actors) that might affect strategic stability and second strike capabilities of the two parties. In that way it may take the form of some new Nuclear and Space Talks that were conducted in 1985 and connected the START, INF negotiations and weaponization of space issues (see: Dietl 2018).

Thirdly, in the Joint Statement there is no mention of the multilateralization of strategic arms control, but only a note that the two parties will “lay the groundwork for future arms control”, which is the confirmation of the strategic stability model that favors parity-disparity relationship (parity among US and Russia and large disparity compared to other nuclear weapon states - NWS) and do not adopt the possibility for multilateralization of strategic arms control on an equal footing. But as we saw from previous statements and for various reasons both parties are interested in including China (USA) and the UK and France (Russia) into nuclear arms control talks (Kostić 2020).

Missile defense

At this moment strategic arms control talks continue to take place without a treaty on missile defense limitations. The balance between offensive and defensive weapons has always been a precondition for strategic arms control and the connection between the two is also contained in the preambles of the strategic arms limitation and reduction treaties, including the New START. Following Regan’s proposal on Strategic Defense Initiative in 1983, and rejection of the MAD concept, subsequent Republican administrations tended to deploy strategic missile defense. On the other side, Democratic administrations were keen to preserve the strategic stability between the USA and Russia based on MAD (which means that the deployed interceptors cannot hit Russian Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) or diminish Russian strategic deterrence), which is why President Obama in 2013 aborted the deployment of the fourth phase of the European Phased Adapted Approach (EPAA). Also, the administrations of Republicans

and Democrats were not equally sensitive to the question of alliances and multilateralism in general, which is also proven by the development of the US Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) in Europe, and bilateral agreements with Poland and Romania. It subsequently became the US contribution to the NATO BMD. The Europeans feared that the demise of strategic stability based on the concept of mutual vulnerability or assured destruction between the US and Russia would constrain and limit the ability and credibility of their nuclear deterrent (Tertrais 2009, 9). The end result was the deployment of the three phases of the EPPA which preserves the mutual assured destruction on the strategic level (between the USA and Russia and regarding the strategic offensive arms), but protects the US forces in Europe and its allies from a potential rogue nation's ballistic missile of short range attack. However, it is proved in November 2020 that the US does not need to develop the fourth phase of the EPAA since the SM 3 Block IIA interceptors that are already deployed can hit ballistic missiles of intercontinental range.

Since 2002 and the demise of ABM Treaty, Russia has tried on numerous occasions to bring the US into a new agreement on missile defense, but all attempts were unsuccessful. When Putin proposed a moratorium on previously banned INF missiles after the US withdrawal in 2019 and NATO rejected it, Moscow expanded it to include mutual verification measures focused on Aegis Ashore ballistic missile defense systems deployed at NATO bases in Europe and on Russian military facilities in Kaliningrad (Reif, and Bugos 2021a). Also, the Russian delegation brought up US missile defense during the strategic dialogue, but the US delegation responded by arguing that those defense systems are meant to counter threats from Iran and North Korea rather than Russia (Reif, and Bugos 2021c).

The Trump administration was led by the belief that all "missile defenses are stabilizing" and envisioned an "unrivaled and unmatched" missile defense system with a "simple goal" to defend against "every type of missile attack against any American target." (Barzashka 2021). Biden was never a proponent of protecting the US against long-range ballistic missiles, first of all because of his conviction that it would lead to a new arms race with Russia and China and disrupt strategic stability (Thompson 2021). He has always believed that deterrence worked and that arms control treaties, including the ABM, helped preserve peace (USS 2021). During the Regan administration he was against interpretation of the ABM Treaty so that a "strategic defense initiative" could be pursued, during George W. Bush, he opposed the administration's decision to withdraw from the same treaty and, as Vice President during the Obama administration he participated in a

wholesale dismantling of strategic defense programs inherited from the previous administration, including those aimed at intercepting ICBMs (Thompson 2021). However, having in mind the continuation of nuclear and missile programs of some other nations which the US consider hostile, such as Iran or North Korea, the US administration under Biden continues to seek protection against ballistic missiles, including intercontinental, that would not disturb the strategic stability equation with Russia. Having in mind Trump's administration robust plans for the development of layered missile defense and previously mentioned conviction of subsequent democratic administrations on the value of limited ballistic missile defense, in June 2021 the Biden administration has started the review process of missile defense policy and plans. The review will align with the National Defense Strategy, expected to be prepared by January 2022, and contribute to the Department of Defense approach to integrated deterrence (US DoD 2021). According to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for nuclear and missile defense policy Tomero, "the review will be guided by a handful of principles from defense against rogue states' intercontinental ballistic missiles to assure allies the U.S. continues to be committed to security partnerships." (*Ibid.*). On this issue, Barzashka argues that Biden "can neither fully embrace the Trump policy nor revert to preceding approaches." (Barzashka 2021).

For now, the Biden administration fiscal year 2022 budget request would continue the Trump administration's plans for missile defense, even the supplement to adapt the Aegis missile defense system and the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system, designed to defeat short- and intermediate-range missiles, and to intercept limited ICBM threats (Reif 2021b). It also allocated almost a billion dollars for the Next Generation Interceptors (NGI) missile defense programme in the fiscal 2022 budget (Hulsman 2021). But, it is believed that the NGI was accepted for reasons of nuclear and missile proliferation, primarily North Korea and Iran, and the June 2021 NATO Summit communique confirmed that its BMD system is not turned against Russia and does not have the capability to diminish Russian deterrence (NATO 2021). Also, the US Missile Defense Agency and Space Development Agency continue developing elements of a hypersonic missile defense system in order to defend against hypersonic weapons and other emerging missile threats (CRS 2021).

Non-proliferation *Iran*

In 2018 Trump decided to withdraw from the JCPOA, seeking a new broader deal that would encompass all US and Israeli concerns regarding Iran's military development and its nuclear program. At that time, as with the all previous cases of US withdrawal, Biden spoke against this decision. The basic distinction between Trump's and Biden's approach to the issue of Iran and North Korea nuclear programs can be described as comprehensive vs. step-by-step-approach.

The 2021 Democratic Party Platform stated that Democrats "will call off the Trump Administration's race to war with Iran and prioritize nuclear diplomacy, de-escalation, and regional dialogue." (DP 2020, 90). It rejected the regime change as the US goal in Iran and saw the JCPOA as the "best means to verifiably cut off all of Iran's pathways to a nuclear bomb" and only the beginning, not the end, of US diplomacy with Iran (*Ibid.*). The US withdrawal from this agreement, according to the Democrats, only isolated the US from allies and opened the door for Iran to resume its nuclear program that could lead it to obtaining nuclear weapons (*Ibid.*). It is why the Democrats saw the return to JCPOA as "urgent". However, this has not happened yet (October 2021).

The six rounds of talks to restore the JCPOA were held from April to June 2021 in Vienna. During these talks the USA and Iran negotiated only indirectly, with the mediation of the EU. The last round took place on 20 June, two days before the Iranian presidential elections. It is still unknown when the seventh round will take place, but both sides expressed willingness to continue with the process (Davenport 2021). However, after the USA withdrawal in 2018 Iran has conducted activities such as enrichment of uranium metal, which can be used in the core of nuclear weapons, in contradiction to the JCPOA and with the aim of forcing the USA to return to the Agreement and lift all sanctions imposed during the Trump administration. Additionally, the killing of a senior Iranian nuclear scientist in November 2020, allegedly by Israel, made the Iranian Parliament adopt new legislation which includes a requirement for uranium metal production—an action banned until 2031 under the JCPOA. Furthermore, the mid-April 2021 attack at the Natanz Fuel Enrichment Plant that knocked out some of the facility's centrifuges by blowing up the center's power supply, again with suspected Israeli involvement, led Iran to ramp up the rate of uranium enrichment to an unprecedented 60 percent, instead of previously intended 20 percent and well beyond the JCPOA's 3.67 percent cap (Rafati 2021). In this context, the US officials warned that if Iran nuclear program advances

“to the point where the non-proliferation benefits of the deal cannot be restored, the United States will change course” and restoration of the JCPOA would not be possible any more (Davenport 2021).

The Iranian request regarding the deal includes guarantees that what Trump did will never happen again and that the US will verifiably lift all sanctions imposed against Iran after the US withdrawal from the deal. However, the Biden administration noted that it cannot guarantee this (*Ibid.*). The USA under Biden wants to see build up on the JCPOA and to discuss not only the Iranian nuclear program, but the ballistic missile program and regional security in a step-by-step approach. For the US, robust IAEA verification and monitoring is essential for the conformation that Iran is not developing a nuclear arms program (Davenport and Masterson 2021). State Department spokesperson Ned Price said in a June 21 press briefing that the administration is confident that if the nuclear deal is restored, the United States will have “additional tools” to address issues outside of the nuclear deal, including ballistic missiles. He said Iran has “no doubt” about where the United States stands on follow-on diplomacy.” (*Ibid.*)

In June 2021, Iran elected a conservative cleric Ebrahim Raisi to be the country’s next president, but the Iranian position on the need to restore the JCPOA is not expected to change, since the supreme leader remained the same (*Ibid.*). However, the new Iranian president said that Iran’s ballistic missile program will not be a subject of negotiations and Raisi also asked why Iran should engage with the United States on a broader range of issues when Washington has not met its obligations under the nuclear deal (*Ibid.*). However, Biden said in his September 2021 speech in the UN that the US is “prepared to return to full compliance if Iran does the same” but that the US “remains committed to preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.” (Masterson 2021).

North Korea

Presidents of United States and North Korea Trump and Kim met three times, but failed to reach a comprehensive nuclear deal, although they signed a joint statement at the 2018 Singapore summit. In this Statement “President Trump committed to provide security guarantees to the DPRK, and Chairman Kim Jong Un reaffirmed his firm and unwavering commitment to complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” (NPR 2018). They also expressed their commitments to build new US-DPRK relationship, confidence-building measures and durable and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula (*Ibid.*).

As with previous arms control issues the new Biden administration made a review of the North Korea policy, in close consultation with allies Japan (which prefers deterrence) and South Korea (which prefers a diplomatic solution), as well as other states of interests such as Russia (Smith 2021). It decided to build on Trump's 2018 deal, but with a pragmatic step-by-step approach, thus abandoning the policy of comprehensive deal or grand bargain that Trump pursued. In April 2021, it was announced that the US policy toward North Korea will take a middle ground between former Presidents Barack Obama's "strategic patience" and Donald Trump's "grand bargain." (Snyder 2021). It will pursue a diplomatic solution, although with "stern deterrence", as said by President Biden (WH Address).

The Biden administration has also tried to pursue communication with North Korea, but unsuccessfully. During his visit to Seoul, US States Secretary Blinken accused North Korea of committing "systemic and widespread abuses" against its own people and said the United States and its allies were committed to the denuclearization of North Korea." (Smith 2021). In May 2021, President Biden also confirmed he wished to engage with North Korea diplomatically and by taking practical steps in order to reduce tensions and with the final goal of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula (*Ibid.*). The US position today is that it is interested in renewing nuclear arms talks "anytime, anywhere without preconditions." (D'Agostino 2021). However, in September 2021, after conducting the new weapons test, which involved allegedly a new hypersonic missile (although not without doubt), the North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has dismissed these offers since he consider them to be the US "show" aimed to cover up US "hostile policy" toward North Korea, but says he is open to improving ties with South Korea (VOA 2021).

Conventional Arms Control

In the realm of conventional weapons a major blow that happened during the Trump administration was the withdrawal from the Open Skies Treaty in 2020 because of Russia's non-compliance with the treaty obligations. This was again done without consent of US Allies, parties to the treaty. Having in mind the priority of the trans-Atlantic partnership and the benefits that European allies have from the Open Skies Treaty, and generally opposing unilateral withdrawals from international institutions as a mean to enhance security, president Biden was at the time against this withdrawal.

However, when he took office, Biden commenced a review of "matters related to the treaty" and held consultations with US allies

and partners, but the decision was the official notification to Russia on 27 May 2021 that the United States will not seek to rejoin the 1992 Open Skies Treaty (Reif and Bugos 2021d). This decision was justified by Russian limitation of the distance for observation flights over the Kaliningrad region to no more than 500 km from the border and prohibition of missions over Russia from flying within 10 km of its border with the conflicted Georgian border regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which is seen as continuation of non-compliance with the Treaty provisions (*Ibid.*). Further, the Biden administration saw Russia's behavior with respect to Ukraine, as "not that of a partner committed to confidence-building." (Lee 2021). The Biden administration's notification of not returning to the Treaty, was soon followed by the Russian announcement of withdrawal from the Treaty, which is to be completed by the end of 2021.

Additionally, the Biden administration will continue with the plans that were begun under the Trump administration to develop and field conventional hypersonic weapons to compete with Russia and China. It will also continue with the development and procurement of formerly forbidden intermediate-range missiles (Bugos 2021).

CONCLUSION

Underlying assumption of the Biden administration is that international institutions, as well as alliances, contribute more to the US leadership and national interest. Working through, and not outside, them contribute more to US national interests and increases chances of the US shaping the rules of the world order. Leading "by the power of example, and not example of power" has been the highlight of Biden presidential-elections campaign and during the first months in office.

During this period Biden was committed to renew US partnerships, return to some of the international agreements, and conduct reviews of all of Trump's choices regarding arms control. He returned the US to the Paris Climate accord and announced it would return to the UN Human Rights Council. He, also, extended the New START unconditionally for another five years and committed the US to future arms control with Russia. Biden administration undertook the review of Trump's decisions to withdraw from the JCPOA and Open Skies Treaty, as well as numerous decisions regarding improvement of nuclear arsenal, nuclear weapons and missile defence policy. However, the result of these reviews was mixed, despite Biden's promises during the campaign. Although regretting for Trump's decisions to withdraw the US from the Open Skies Treaty it finally notified Russia that the

US is not going to return to it. Also, despite considering Trump's withdrawal from the JCPOA as a big mistake and consider its restoring as urgent, the Biden administration has not yet done so, although several rounds of indirect talks were held in the first half of 2021. But, on this issue, as well as the issue of North Korea's nuclear program, the Biden administration did change the approach – from Trump's comprehensive path, which sought grand bargains, to a step-by-step approach which is seen as more pragmatic, leading to the goal through smaller steps. In the domain of nuclear arsenal modernization programs, missile defense and certain conventional weapons, the Biden administration did not yet reverse Trump's decisions. Instead, it remained committed to the robust modernization and significant budget requests in 2022.

The biggest undertaking that is under way for the Biden administration is the review of the US nuclear weapons and missile defense policies and the work on the new Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) which is expected to be finalized early in 2022, in conjunction with the National Defense Strategy. In this realm, Biden promised to address the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons, reduce the role of nuclear weapons in the US national security strategy, but to preserve strong and credible extended deterrence commitments to the US allies, head off costly arms races, and re-establish US credibility as a leader in arms control. The other great endeavor of Biden administration will be the conduction of Strategic Stability Dialog and prospects of involving China into the arms control talks. Strategic Stability Dialogue will be time-limited to five years, which is the period of New START extension and will probably consume most of US arms control efforts. However, in times described as great competition between democracies and autocracies to win the 21st century, the efforts to bring China into the arms control in order to curb its military, including nuclear, build up will also take a lot of efforts, but also primarily through the US-Russia talks, since without Russia's support US involve China alone. But, in order to do this something will have to be given – be it limitations on missile defense, inclusion of France and Britain as well into the strategic or nuclear arms control talks or involvement of conventional long-range capabilities into the arms control negotiations. However, what is clear for now is that the Biden administration will tend to preserve the gentle balance between gaining more military power and at the same time preserving its leadership role through international institutions and partnerships.

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БАЈДЕНОВА АДМИНИСТРАЦИЈА И КОНТРОЛА НАОРУЖАЊА

Резиме

Да ли је Бајденова администрација успела да поврати бар неки део либералног међународног поретка делом деградираног за време мандата Доналда Трампа? Да ли се Бајден понаша у складу са својим и обећањима своје странке за време изборне кампање, или се придржава политика зацртаних од стране свог претходника? И колико од тога је урађено у области контроле наоружања? То су питања на која ће аутори овог рада покушати да одговоре. Закључци ће бити донети на основу анализе теоријских претпоставки које се налазе у позадини Трамповог и Бајденовог приступа међународним институцијама, у шта спада и контрола наоружања; затим на основу историјске анализе Трамповог наслеђа у овом контексту, анализе садржаја Бајденових обећања и обећања Демократске партије за време кампање, у поређењу са ставовима Републиканаца. У процени резултата прве године мандата новог америчког председника у области контроле наоружања, аутори закључују да су резултати двозначни и разликују се од случаја до случаја: понегде, Бајден се придржавао политика које је усвојила Трампова администрација, док је у другим случајевима приступ потпуно промењен.

Кључне речи: *Бајденова администрација, Демократска партија САД, међународне институције, контрола наоружања, спољна политика САД*

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