

A Study in US-Russian Cooperation in Nuclear Arms Control

Hojung Do*, Sunyoung Chang

^aKorea Institute of Nuclear Non-proliferation and Control, 1534 Yuseong-daero, Yuseong-gu, Daejeon, ROK

^{}Corresponding author: hojungd@kinac.re.kr*

1. Introduction

Can cooperation exist between adversarial states? In the 20th century, the US and the Soviet Union struggled to maintain superiority over one another, especially in the nuclear front. However, the two states also worked together to limit and reduce the very nuclear weapons they strived to develop. Then what condition facilitates such cooperation? Using a cooperation framework, this paper argues that compatibility of national security strategy played a key role in the successful ratification and implementation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) and its subsequent treaties.

2. Methods and Results

In this section, cooperation through policy coordination will be described using Keohane's framework. The initial framework is based on explaining how international regimes are created and whether it can be done without a hegemon. However, it could be applicable to cases where adversarial states seek to cooperate in order to construct a binding and lasting precursor to an institution, a treaty.

2.1 Cooperation Framework

This paper seeks to analyze how cooperation is negotiated through policy adjustment between two adversaries. It seeks to analyze how perception of its adversary's national security strategy influenced policy coordination between US and Russia. It also seeks to explain how it influenced the successful implementation of each of the START treaties.

The framework (Figure 1) on constructing an international regime through cooperation is introduced in Keohane's *After Hegemony*. An international regime can be defined as "implicit or explicit principles, norm, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actor's expectations converge in a given area of international relations [1]." The cases— START I, II, III, SORT and New START— do not fit into the realm of an international regime since it is only between the US and Russia. However, it can be perceived as a precursor to an international regime since it requires established norms and binding rules.

Also, the treaty's significance should be understood within the context of nuclear weapon states. The nuclear non-proliferation regime itself is asymmetrical in nature because only five states officially possess

nuclear weapons while the vast majority do not. Hence, it is difficult to achieve non-proliferation of nuclear weapons if the nuclear weapon states (US, Russia, China, UK and France) continue to build new and technologically sophisticated arms. US and Russia possessed the world's largest nuclear arsenal in 1991 and still do today. A nuclear arms reduction treaty between the two meant that much of the nuclear arms would either be destroyed or made obsolete. This in turn lent credibility to the nuclear non-proliferation regime as a whole since those who possessed the most weapons decided voluntarily to reduce them.

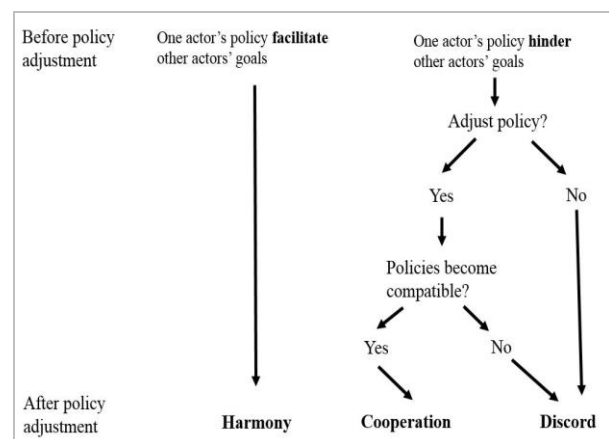


Fig. 1. Keohane's framework of harmony, cooperation and discord depends upon an actor/state's behavior in adjusting its policy and whether it is compatible with other actors/states.

To explain briefly, Figure 1 shows how policy adjustment and perception of policy compatibility can lead to cooperation or discord. Keohane defined harmony as a situation where an actor's policy, made to further its own self-interests regardless of other actors, is perceived as facilitating other actors' goals. However, harmony should not be regarded as similar to cooperation since the latter is a "reaction to a conflict or potential conflict [2]".

Cooperation requires actions to be brought into conformity through what Lindblom (cited in p.51) stated as "policy coordination," or the process of negotiation [2]. Subsequently, cooperation is highly political since it requires communication, negotiations and inducements among actors involved. When actors adjust their actions with regard to others' objectives or goals, cooperation occurs. In contrast, discord occurs when one actor's behavior hinders other actors' objectives, which induces the aforementioned actor to

either refuse to change or attempt to modify its policy which is not compatible with other actors [2].

Which factor influenced the policy coordination between US and Russia in nuclear arms control? Specifically, if the US policy made regardless of other states hinders Russia's goals, how did they reach an accord? This paper argues that the compatibility of both states' national defense strategy is the most decisive factor in cooperation.

2.2 US-Russian Cooperation in Nuclear Arms

Table I: US-Russian Nuclear Arms Control

	START I	START II	START III	SORT	New START
Warhead Limitations	6,000	3,000~3,500	2,000~2,500	1,700~2,200	1,550
Entry into Force	Dec. 5, 1994	NA	NA	June 1, 2003	Feb. 5, 2011
Implementation Deadline	Dec. 5, 2001	NA	NA	NA	Feb. 5, 2018
Expiration Date	Dec. 5, 2009	NA	NA	Feb. 5, 2011	Feb. 5, 2021
Policy Compatibility	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

Fig. 2. Application of START I, II, III, SORT, and New START to policy coordination framework

The successful implementation of START and its successors depended on how each state perceived linking the ABM Treaty (Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty) to the continuity of START. Where policy was compatible meant that either the US agreed to comply to the treaty as in START I or US had withdrawn from the treaty but Russia perceived US missile defense strategy as less of a threat as in SORT and New START. Whereas incompatibility meant Russia's insistence on US complying with ABM Treaty hindered US's missile defense system—National Missile Defense.

2.3 Compatible National Security Strategy

START I began with two presidents who believed in nuclear disarmament: Regan and Gorbachev. Such convictions were confirmed during the Reykjavik Summit in October 1986 but willingness to communicate did not lead to negotiations. This was because Soviet Union (Russia) demanded the US not withdraw from the ABM Treaty (Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty). However, this interfered with the Regan administration's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) which planned to employ technology that would "render nuclear weapons impotent [3]."

Despite contention on the compliance of the ABM Treaty START I entered into force due to two factors. First, the decline of the SDI program with the

inauguration of the Bush administration allowed US to adjust its policy to agree to Russia's demands. Specifically, Bush announced a change in the SDI program from a "defense against a large-scale ballistic missile attack to limited ballistic missile strikes [4]." Second, Russia reserved the right to withdraw from START I should the US withdraw from the ABM Treaty. This meant Russia linked the continued cooperation of START I with US developing ballistic missile that could potentially threaten Russia.

SORT was a compromise treaty between the US and Russia in it occurred in the wake of US's withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. The US argued that both states did not require a new treaty(SORT) but agreed due to Russia's insistence. In return, the US did not compromise on its priority objective which was freedom of choice on the fate of its decommissioned warheads. Such compromise is reflected in the differences between SORT and START I.

SORT was different from START I as it provided a more flexible warhead limitation. It limited operationally deployed warheads which in the case of US's Peacekeeper ICBMS, for example, were already planned for retirement. In contrast, START I limited warheads through declared attribution to the means of delivery be it ICBM, SLBM, or Heavy Bombers. It allowed flexibility for both US and Russia since it did not contain any specific verification or compliance provisions. Both sides could also determine the composition and structure of its strategic forces within the limit of 1,700-2,200 strategic nuclear warheads.

Putin's announcement in October 2004 that in the near future, Russia will possess arms capable of surmounting all current anti-ballistic missiles systems shows its perception towards US missile defense system. This was first in response to US's withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. It showed that Russia was not as threatened by US's withdrawal from the ABM Treaty as it was when START I began. It also signaled to the US that Russia had the means to secure technology that could deter potential US ballistic missile attacks.

Like START I, New START includes on-site inspections and continues the exchange of telemetry (missile flight-test data). However, it does not "meaningfully limit missile defenses or conventional long-range strike capabilities" due to these policy adjustments between the two countries [5]. New START combines both US's policy goals of developing its missile system and Russia's objectives of making sure the system does not threaten Russia.

In December 2010, the US Senate passed the resolution to ratify New START. It contained 14 conditions, 3 understandings and 12 declarations which clarify the position of the US Senate. For example, Condition 14 stipulates that New START does not limit the deployment of US missile defense

system. Also, Declaration 12 stipulates that the right of the US government to modernize and maintain its nuclear triad regardless of the treaty.

In January 2011, the Russian Duma also ratified New START with several conditions. For example, the bill states the New START can proceed only if planned US missile defense systems do not diminish Russian capabilities. Also, Article 4 clause 2 argues that deploying US strategic conventional forces without prior permission could constitute a breach in the treaty [6].

2.4. Incompatible National Security Strategy

START II was a complementary treaty to START I in that it was to remain in force for the duration of START I. Like START I, it was bound by the ABM treaty which the US wished to withdraw from. This was because the US wanted to build strategic missile defenses and lower offensive nuclear force levels. In 1996, Clinton announced a reorientation of the National Missile Defense which placed emphasis on theater missile defenses (TMD) to be deployed to counter existing short-range missile threats. The National Missile Defense Act of 1997 required the US to deploy a national missile defense system by 2003, which required the modification on the ABM Treaty. In May 2000, Putin signed the START II ratification resolution which was contingent upon US approval of the START II extension protocol and ABM Treaty related documents. However, the Bush administration argued that existing ABM Treaty hindered its own national security policies and decided to withdraw in 2002.

START III was also linked to START II as both countries adopted a Joint Statement in 1997 to start negotiations as soon as START II entered into force. It limited each country for no more than 1,700-2,200. It also suggested the inclusion of the destruction of strategic nuclear warheads and limitations on tactical nuclear weapons, which would have progressed nuclear arms control had it been implemented. However, with US's withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, Russia also withdrew from START II. This stopped any further negotiations on START III and moved discussions onto SORT.

2.5. Case Analysis

Why did US and Russia make an effort to cooperate for START I, New START and partially SORT when the two states meandered during START II and III? This paper argues that US's anti-ballistic missile capabilities lie at the heart of policy compatibility. The US was the first to develop nuclear weapons although the Soviet Union quickly narrowed the gap. However, it

has always feared that the US's anti-ballistic missile capabilities could paralyze its nuclear defense capabilities. Hence any nuclear arms reduction treaty between the two states depended much upon whether the Soviet Union could trust the US not to attack whilst proceeding with arms reduction.

START I was able to proceed since both states agreed to adhere to the ABM treaty. In contrast, START II and III was never implemented because of US's national security policy – the National Missile Defense. The US refused to stay in the ABM treaty while Russia refused to continue negotiations should US withdraw. Hence SORT was a partial cooperation, where the US withdrew from the ABM treaty which Russia grudgingly accepted on the condition that they ratify SORT. With the end of the Cold War, Russia's confidence in its defense system improved which allowed both states to ratify and implement New START.

3. Conclusions

Since cooperation depends on the compatibility of each state's defense policy, it is also highly political. During the course of negotiating START I, II, III and SORT, US and Russia disagreed on the ABM treaty in purview of US missile defense policies. This was because it rendered Russia's nuclear weapon capabilities obsolete while the US sought to pursue it for national security reasons. The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review and Trump administration's announcements to modernize its nuclear weapons are viewed as a source of potential conflict that may lead to another stalled attempt like START II or III. However, despite disagreements such as US withdrawing from the ABM Treaty, both states still managed to successfully ratify and implement START I, SORT and New START.

This framework may be applied to South Korea and North Korea's cooperation efforts in future studies. Both Korean leaders have expressed willingness to communicate and hold a North-South dialogue. However, like the US and Russia, both are adversarial states with different security objectives. For example, Seoul argues for a complete denuclearization while Pyongyang argues for the removal of US troops on Korean soil. The cooperation framework can be applied to analyze the compatibility of these divergent security policies and whether it can lead to future cooperation.

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