

Russia and Nuclear Weapons

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Many US analysts in and out of government maintain that nuclear weapons are increasingly irrelevant both politically and militarily. Allegedly at best they can only deter other nuclear weapons and in any case conventional capabilities are fast achieving a comparable capability, rendering their military-strategic utility increasingly dubious. A huge and growing literature speaks to the supposed “senselessness” of nuclear weapons that are allegedly increasingly devoid of military utility and are becoming great power status symbols at best.¹ Unfortunately this ethnocentric view is not grounded in the so called “real world” about which these analysts sometimes speak disdainfully. Rather it is often rooted in the wish to be rid of, deligitimize, or at least minimize the utility of nuclear weapons. Certainly the idea that nuclear weapons perform no discernibly useful military mission is rooted in theoretical exercises not (fortunately) empirical evidence. At the same time much of this writing suffers from an excessive focus on US policy and strategy and the corresponding neglect of other states’ thinking and experience.

Analysis of Russia’s nuclear agenda, not to mention nuclear issues in other nuclear powers or proliferators, suggests, as this author noted a decade ago, that even if numbers decline, the range of missions is increasing as is the overall importance of nuclear weapons for Russia.² Moreover, close examination of Russian defense issues, both in their domestic and foreign policy context, suggests that very strong objective and subjective forces are driving Russia to enhanced reliance upon nuclear weapons for a host of critical (as seen from Moscow) political and military missions. These factors exist irrespective of numbers for no Western analysis known to this author has calculated how many nuclear weapons Russia actually needs or for what missions (a common failing as well among much writing on US forces). Consequently regardless of the numbers of

nuclear weapons Russia may have in 2020 or 2030, it is also unlikely that the new arms control treaty will lead Russia to embrace of the idea of global zero despite many favorable statements by Russian leaders concerning this goal.³ Indeed, the evidence to date suggests that Moscow will be reluctant to consider further reductions in nuclear forces without a sizable reduction in what it considers to be threats to it. Those threats first comprise the US/NATO and China. Beyond that they also comprise the new nuclear proliferators. Since the new Russian defense doctrine openly expects the advent of new nuclear powers, the advent of these proliferators, many of whom are concentrated in Russia's neighborhood, will provide added reasons for not reducing the number of nuclear weapons or Russia's reliance on them.⁴

This conclusion obviously contradicts the rather rosy expectations of many US analysts that the great powers can safely and unilaterally reduce nuclear weapons without experiencing any adverse consequences. The fact that advocates of global zero are surprised and dismayed by the lack of support from other nuclear governments for this program underscores their wishful thinking and refusal to look soberly at the real evidence of other governments' actual policies. Instead they prefer to universalize their self-proclaimed rectitude as well as the supposedly obvious inutility of nuclear weapons.⁵ Meanwhile Russian writing, obviously not without its own shortcomings, remains centered about the real possibility of fighting wars from an inferior strategic position. For example, a recent Russian article describing the need for a fundamentally new universal armored vehicle states that,

We must not neglect the preservation of the capabilities for the restoration of the combat capability during an exchange of nuclear strikes by the weapons and equipment (VVT) system. **After the employment of weapons of mass destruction, a troop grouping must rapidly take heart, rid itself of**

radioactive contamination, restore its combat capability, and continue to accomplish the combat missions. If that will not occur, the permissibility of the conduct of a preventive nuclear strike by Russia, which is declared in the new Military Doctrine, simply doesn't make sense. The 1980s field regulations examined these variants of the developments of events. Today rehearsals of operations to restore combat capability after employment of nuclear weapons are actually not being conducted. ⁶ (Bold Author)

At the same time an analysis of Russia's current thinking about nuclear issues reveals ongoing and vigorous high-level debates about nuclear weapons. This debate is evidently linked to the domestic struggle for primacy between the factions around Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev. In other words one vital subjective factor that will drive future Russian thinking about nuclear weapon, policies, and strategy is the identity of the chief decision-maker (whatever his title). For in a system devoid of checks and balances, and any democratic control over the armed forces and where many military men (and maybe civilian elites) still harken for a military leadership like that of Stalin in World War II, the personality, outlook, and thinking of the leader is of much more critical importance than is the case in more structured and accountable polities.⁷ This point is even more compelling when we realize that the structure of Russian politics means that this absence of democratic controls in defense policy generates a constant temptation to use military forces to solve political problems.

This debate on nuclear weapons is not only visible in the controversies surrounding the recent defense doctrine of February 2010.⁸ Indeed, it precedes the publication of the doctrine. It involves several questions revolving around nuclear weapons. First it comprises the question of using nuclear weapons in a preventive or even preemptive mode in smaller or so called local wars that have hitherto been purely conventional wars. The public debate began in earnest in October 2009 when Nikolai

Patrushev, Secretary of Russia's Security Council, told an interviewer that the forthcoming defense doctrine will be amended to allow for the possibility of preventive and preemptive first strikes, including nuclear strikes, even in the context of a purely conventional local war and even at the lower level of operational-tactical, as opposed to strategic, strikes.⁹ This triggered a major public debate over those questions that paralleled the private debate among Russia's leaders. Although ultimately the published doctrine omitted to say these things, the citation above about armored vehicles suggests that for many Patrushev's views are nevertheless reflected there.¹⁰

Second, a concurrent and related debate also broke out into the open between Putin and Medvedev as to whether or not Russia needs to build more offensive nuclear weapons than it had originally planned to meet the alleged challenge posed by US missile defenses in Eastern Europe. Even as Medvedev was hailing the progress being made to negotiating this treaty and said that a final version was close at hand, Putin decided to show who was boss and to play to the hawks' gallery. On December 28, 2009, in Vladivostok he said that,

The problem is that our American partners are developing missile defenses, and we are not, --- But the issues of missile defense and offensive weapons are closely interconnected ... There could be a danger that having created an umbrella against offensive strike systems, our partners may come to feel completely safe. After the balance is broken, they will do whatever they want and grow more aggressive ---. In order to preserve a balance, while we aren't planning to build a missile defense of our own, as it's very expensive and its efficiency is not quite clear yet, we have to develop offensive strike systems.¹¹

But at the March 5, 2010 expanded session of the Defense Ministry Collegium Medvedev made it clear that Russia does not need to increase its offensive nuclear capability any further than was originally planned.¹² Thus the divisions between the two men on this issue are out in the open. But their resolution will take place in a tough context for

innovative and non-belligerent policymaking where strong trends for greater reliance on nuclear weapons (regardless of quantity) will exist.

In the domestic context the recent admission that the effort to build a professional army had proved to be a failure and that Russia is returning to conscription has profound objective consequences for overall defense policy.¹³ Indeed, Russia is even radically cutting the number of contract positions in ways that do not affect (so it says) its combat capability.¹⁴ As regards nuclear issues, this failure means that Russia has had to forsake the dream of a professional highly educated and motivated army capable of fighting a high-tech conventional and most likely local war. While there will undoubtedly be pockets of excellence, the ensuing Russian army will be unable to fully optimize the use of high-tech systems and will be plagued by low moral, educational, and health levels, large-scale draft evasion, and corruption. This outcome suggests that Russia may well have to invoke nuclear forces in many cases to substitute for what would otherwise have been a much more robust high-tech conventional capability and deterrent.

Russian defense industry's concurrent failure to modernize to the point where it can satisfy both the government and the armed forces' demands for serial production of reliable high-tech weapons and platforms and system integration capabilities reinforces this likely outcome and suggests that Russia will only partially realize its plan of a comprehensive modernization of the armed forces by 2020. Here again rather than modernize the armed forces by 10% a year to 2020 as previously planned, Medvedev is now demanding that 30% of the armed forces weaponry be modernized by 2015, a sure sign of continuing failure.¹⁵ What makes this outcome even more likely is the fact that due to the impact of the current crisis on the backward and overly statist Russian

economy budgetary spending will be constrained at least through 2015 if not 2020.¹⁶ Indeed, the recently approved State Armament Program from 2011-2020 spends only 13 trillion rubles to rearm the armed forces, a figure that the Acting Defense Ministry Chief of Armaments, Lt. General Oleg Frolov claimed to allow for modernization only of the strategic nuclear forces, air, and air defense forces, leaving the navy and army underfinanced.¹⁷ Not surprisingly the military demands another 23 trillion rubles to modernize the army through 2020 to modernize all of the armed forces and their accompanying infrastructure.¹⁸ This pressure is already forcing the Finance Ministry to make concessions to the military, for instance whereas defense spending stood at 2.6% of GDP in 2010, in 2011-12 it will increase to 2.9% of GDP and 3% in 2013 after which it will grow to 3.1%, leading to increased purchases of weapons and hardware.¹⁹ Even so defense spending is going to be clearly constrained for the foreseeable future.

Even taking rising defense budgets into account, the inefficiency of much of that spending, the inherent pressures in the Russian economy to large-scale inflation, especially in the raw materials sector, the ineptitude of the defense industrial sector, and its vulnerability to the theft of 30-40% of the defense budget which has not decreased despite a vigorous anti-corruption campaign suggests a corresponding and ongoing structural inability to realize the plans for modernizing the Russian armed forces by 2015 or by 2020.²⁰ Moreover, given the constraints on the budget Russia will probably not be able to afford the necessary outlays for this comprehensive technological modernization of the armed forces and will have to utilize nuclear capabilities. Those capabilities too are under pressure as the Bulava's sorry experience indicates (the Bulava is Russia's new SLBM and as of April 2010 it has failed on all of its first 12 tests). So we may likely see

Russia assigning to its nuclear forces a broader range of missions than might otherwise be executed or invoked by conventional forces.²¹

The National Security Context

But beyond these domestic factors that generate considerable pressure to continue relying on a possibly smaller, albeit somewhat improved nuclear deterrent (assuming Russia overcomes Bulava's problems which is by no means clear) the imperatives and fundamental drives of both external trends and overall Russian national security policy point strongly in the direction of enhanced reliance on nuclear weapons for broader missions. The three external trends are the US move to missile defenses, the rise of China, and at least in some quarters an increased concern about missile and nuclear proliferation, a phenomenon that Russia actually expects to increase by 2020 if its new defense doctrine is a reliable guide.²² But these phenomena are perceived and mediated through a unique cognitive and ideological landscape that underlies and drives Russian national security policy.²³

Bluntly stated, Moscow approaches the question of its security from the belief that while a major war is not likely, smaller wars, quite likely over access to resources, especially energy, around its border are not only likely, but increasing in likelihood and are approaching Russia's borders. Furthermore these wars can easily grow into major conflagrations where nuclear use could well be contemplated or even implemented.²⁴ Indeed, Russian elites believe that if Russia lacked nuclear weapons NATO would then feel emboldened to intervene in some variant of a Kosovo scenario in those conflicts.²⁵ In other words it is the possession of nuclear weapons that alone gives Russia the means to declare the CIS off limits to foreign powers, maintain psychological and political

equality with the US, assert Russia's identity as a great power, and most crucially back up that claim and demand with a real force that ensures not just Russia's strategic independence as an international actor, but even more to the point, its identity as a truly sovereign state, i.e. one that makes policy strictly on the basis of its own calculation of national interest, not the actions of other states.²⁶

Furthermore, official documents like the new defense doctrine and the 2009 national security concept explicitly state that the incidence of major power reliance on force and the bypassing of the UN is rising, making the outbreak of wars more rather than less likely.²⁷ Thus Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov told the Defense Collegium in 2009 that,

The military-political situation has been characterized by the US leadership's striving to achieve global leadership and by an expansion and buildup of military presence of the United States and its NATO allies in regions contiguous with Russia. The American side's aspirations were directed toward gaining access to raw-material, energy, and other resources of CIS countries. Processes aimed at crowding Russia [out] from the area of its traditional interests were actively supported. International terrorism, religious extremism, and the illegal arms trade seriously influenced the military-political situation. They have been manifested more and more often in countries bordering on Russia. Georgia's attack on South Ossetia was a direct threat to RF national interests and military security. This attempt to settle the conflict by force was aimed first and foremost at destabilizing the situation in the Caucasus. **On the whole the analysis of the military-political situation permits a conclusion about the growing likelihood of armed conflicts and their potential danger to our state.**²⁸

Not only did Serdyukov buy this General Staff threat assessment, he intensified it by saying that the likelihood of threats to Russia in the form of wars and military conflicts is increasing. Yet when he spoke the share of modern armaments in the armed forces only makes up 10% of their arsenal and only 19% of defense spending was earmarked for re-equipping the army and navy in 2008 in line with that being a third

priority behind organizational reform and maintenance of the nuclear forces.²⁹ So the priority of the nuclear deterrent while Russia undergoes modernization is already evident from here. Neither has that priority changed since 2008 despite the current financial crisis. If anything that crisis will reinforce that trend.

But beyond that presupposition of actual military-political conflict with the West (and China-the threat that dare not speak its name), a constant factor in the relationship with the West irrespective of its political temperature at any time is the fact that both sides' nuclear forces remain frozen in a posture of mutual deterrence that implies a prior adversarial relationship that could easily deteriorate further under any and all circumstances and devolve into that kind of shooting war.³⁰ This point is critical. **The problematic nature of the bilateral relationship, just as was the case during the Cold War, -- albeit less intensely today -- is not due to deterrence. Rather deterrence is a manifestation of a prior, underlying, comprehensive, and fundamental political antagonism in which Russia has settled upon deterrence as a policy and strategy because that strategy expresses its foundational presupposition of conflict with America and NATO.**³¹

The fundamental basis of the rivalry with Washington is political and stems from the nature of the Russian political system which cannot survive in its present structure without that presupposition of conflict and enemies and a revisionist demand for equality with the United States so that it is tied down by Russian concerns and interests. From Russia's standpoint the only way it can have security vis-à-vis the U.S. and Europe given that presupposition of conflict is if America is shackled to a continuation of the mutual hostage relationship based on mutual deterrence that characterized the Cold War, so that

it cannot act unilaterally. At the same time, Europe must be intimidated by the specter of Russian military power which, given present realities, means nuclear weapons. To the degree that both sides are shackled to this mutual hostage relationship, Russia gains a measure of restraint or even of control over US policy. For, as Patrick Morgan has observed, this kind of classic deterrence “cuts through the complexities’ of needing to have a full understanding of or dialogue with the other side. Instead it enables a state, in this case Russia, to “simplify by *dictating*, the opponent’s preferences.”³² (Italics in the original) Thanks to such a mutual hostage relationship Russian leaders see all other states who wish to attack them or even to exploit internal crises like Chechnya as being deterred. Therefore nuclear weapons remain a critical component in the ensuring of strategic stability and, as less openly stated, in giving Russia room to act freely in world affairs.³³

Indeed, Moscow sees its nuclear arsenal as a kind of all-purpose deterrent that has deterred the US and NATO from intervening in such conflicts as the Chechen wars and Georgia. Nevertheless its military and political leaders, e.g. Serdyukov, the doctrine which is now official policy, and Colonel-General Nikolai Solovtsov, Commander in Chief of the Strategic Missile (Rocket) Forces in 2008 all charge that threats to Russia are multiplying. Thus Solovtsov argued that,

Some potential threats to the defense and security of the Russian Federation, including large-scale ones, remain, and in some sectors are intensifying. Moreover, the possibility cannot be ruled out that major armed conflict could arise near Russia’s borders, which will affect its security interests, or that there could be a direct military threat to our country’s security. This is graphically illustrated by the military aggression unleashed by Georgia overnight from 7 to 8 August against South Ossetia.³⁴

While such statements represent the fantasy world of the Russian military where threats are always rising despite the plain evidence of Western demilitarization and omit to mention that Georgia neither attacked Russia nor in fact started the war that was a Russian provocation, his remarks do amply underscore the importance of deterrence and the permanent sense of being under threat that drives Russian policy. Hence the need for deterrence, primarily, though not exclusively, of the United States at the price of accepting that Russia too is deterred from a nuclear strike on the U.S. (or Europe or China).

In return for accepting that it too is similarly deterred, Russia, however postulates as one of the fundamental corollaries of its policy and strategy that Moscow must retain a capability to intimidate and destroy Europe with its nuclear and other missiles. Hence the continuing aforementioned reliance upon tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) no matter the cost. Thus while Germany, Poland, and Norway have called on the US to remove its TNW from Europe, Russian military leaders like Lt. General Yevgeny Bushinsky, former head of the Defense Ministry's International Legal Department, argue that Russia should only enter into negotiations on TNW in case of parity in conventional armaments between Russia and the US, i.e. never.³⁵ This is because TNW are Moscow's deterrent in a situation of conventional inferiority like the present.³⁶ Worse yet, the navy plans to introduce new TNW in the form of nuclear cruise missiles on its submarines.³⁷ And in any case as Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt has stated regarding Russian threats in the Baltic, "According to the information to which we have access, there are already tactical nuclear weapons in the Kaliningrad area. They are located both at and in the vicinity of units belonging to the Russian fleet,"³⁸ This means that Russia has

effectively violated the Bush-Yeltsin Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991-92 barring TNW from naval vessels. Finally Chief of Staff General Nikolai Makarov has publicly stated that Russia will retain its TNW as long as Europe is “packed with armaments” as a guarantee of Russian security and that priority funding will be directed to Russia’s nuclear arsenal.³⁹

In other words, believing a priori that Europe is the site of a presumptive enemy action against it, Russia demands as a condition of its security that the rest of Europe be insecure. Russia’s defense doctrine openly says that the United States and NATO represent the main threats to Russian security and that Washington will continue to seek military supremacy and disregard international law for a generation.⁴⁰ Furthermore, unlike the United States, Russia is engaged in a comprehensive modernization and renewal of all of its nuclear weapons, clearly in the belief that it needs to deter America by military means, and maybe even to fight using such weapons. Consequently there will be enormous opposition to any plans for further reductions or curtailment of this modernization program.

Likewise, Moscow has consistently said that the deployment of U.S. missile defenses in Europe and Asia will disrupt existing balances of strategic forces and undermine global and regional stability.⁴¹ Moscow also tried hard to link the new treaty to the removal of missile defenses from Central and Eastern Europe.⁴² In addition Russia’s leaders openly contend that one cannot discuss European security without taking into account the missile defense issue or the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty.⁴³ Certainly Russian officials see the weaponization of space, the integration of space and terrestrial capabilities, missile defenses, the Reliable Replacement Weapons

(RRW), and the U.S. global strike strategy as a part of a systematic, comprehensive strategy to threaten Russia. As Pavel Podvig has observed,

One of the consequences of this is that if the promises held by the revolution in military affairs materialize, even incompletely, they may significantly lower the threshold of military intervention. And this is exactly the outcome that Russia is worried about, for it believes that the new capabilities might open the way to a more aggressive interventionist policy of the United States and NATO that may well challenge Russia's interests in various regions and especially in areas close to the Russian borders.⁴⁴

So in response Moscow must threaten Europe. Indeed, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov recently repeated the now habitual but no less mendacious charge that missile defenses in Europe, systems that allegedly used to be regulated by bilateral agreements to maintain parity are now being introduced close to Russia's borders, thereby rupturing that parity in Europe and elsewhere.⁴⁵ During his 2008 trip to Poland, Lavrov went even further, saying that,

For many decades, the basis for strategic stability and security in the world was parity between Russia and the United States in the sphere of strategic offensive and defensive arms. However, in recent years, the US Administration chose a course towards upsetting that parity and gaining a unilateral advantage in the strategic domain. Essentially it's not just about global missile defense. We also note that the US has been reluctant to stay within the treaties on strategic offensive arms, and that it is pursuing the Prompt Global Strike concept, and developing projects to deploy strike weapons in outer space. This, understandably, will not reinforce the security of Europe or of Poland itself.⁴⁶

Lavrov then went on to say that if Poland, under the circumstances, chose a "special allied relationship" with Washington then it would have to bear the responsibilities and risks involved and that Moscow, in principle, opposed having its relations with third parties being a function of Russian-American disputes.⁴⁷

Thus Russia's arms control posture also represents its continuing demand for substantive if not quantitative parity as well as for deterrence with a perceived adversarial

United States in order to prevent Washington from breaking free of the Russian embrace and following policies that Russia deems antithetical to its interests.⁴⁸ Moreover, that parity is calculated not just globally but in regional balances as well so that Russia also demands a qualitative or substantive parity with America at various regional levels, most prominently Europe. Russia's demand for restoring parity at both the global and regional levels entails not an unreachable numerical parity, but rather a strategic stability or equilibrium where both sides' forces remain mutually hostage to each other in a deterrent relationship and where the United States cannot break free to pursue its global or regional interests unilaterally or what Moscow calls unilaterally.

Several practical strategic consequences flow from this posture. First, under all circumstances Russia must retain the capability to intimidate Europe with nuclear weapons and hold it hostage in some sense to that threat. Therefore the elite unanimously believes or professes to believe that any missile defense is a threat because it presages a network covering Europe that will negate its threat and counter its first-strike capability even though Lavrov admitted that the present stage of developments do not threaten Russia.⁴⁹ This is particularly true as the Obama Administration's plans envisage extending the adapted phased construction of missile defenses throughout Europe by 2020.⁵⁰ This Russian elite unanimity puts the new treaty into jeopardy even before it is ratified because Russian statements about missile defenses mean that should Russia decide that US missile defense programs go beyond Russia's definition of strategic stability within the treaty's limits and threaten Russia's strategic deterrence forces it can withdraw unilaterally from the treaty.⁵¹ Thus key members of the Duma like Speaker Boris Gryzlov threatened to block ratification if this legally binding linkage is omitted.⁵²

Russian demands also relate to the fact that according to former Secretary of State George Shultz and former Secretary of Defense William Perry, the Russians they have talked to still believe their country is encircled (their word) by hostile or potentially hostile forces in both the east and west. Therefore they are very loath to reduce nuclear missiles any further. Indeed, many of them still express the idea of repealing the INF treaty and building intermediate range nuclear forces and intermediate range ballistic missiles (INF and IRBMs respectively) to counter this threat.⁵³ As if on cue, Lavrov immediately afterwards called, as have previous supporters of repeal of the INF treaty, for a universal treaty banning intermediate and short-range missiles, a propaganda point if there ever was one, but one aimed also at China, not just the West.⁵⁴

Consequently Russian demands for nuclear weapons also relate to the fact that Moscow cannot conceive of defending itself against the threats it perceives, mainly from NATO, but also from China, without continuing to build, renew, and modernize nuclear weapons. And its capacity for doing so is visibly open to questions, a fact that creates many dilemmas for Russia's strategic leadership. Certainly its continuing program to build new nuclear missiles and usable nuclear weapons like low-yield and fusion weapons shows what it thinks of President Obama's quest for a global zero for nuclear weapons as does the new doctrine's expectation that there will be more nuclear powers by 2020.⁵⁵ Therefore it regards any US missile defense, whether in Europe or Asia, as being a constant threat to its strategic stability and vital interests.

Second, Russia's military is clearly unwilling to accept the notion of no linkage between offenses and defenses. It claims that the US reshaped its missile defense posture in Europe, in September 2009 "because, according to our clear assessment, this area

would definitely create risks for Russia.”⁵⁶ But since then this Russian demand to curtail even the new adaptive phased Obama program for missile defenses became the principal obstacle to conclusion of the treaty.⁵⁷ It has also become a matter of public contention within Russian politics. Putin’s aforementioned remarks from December 2009 underscore that point.⁵⁸ Putin’s demands relate both to the domestic power struggle in Russia and the Russian hawks’ demand that they be free to build nuclear weapons without constraint. Thus it appeared that Russia’s hawks were willing to obstruct the treaty to gain total freedom of action to build offenses against a nonexistent threat.⁵⁹ Putin, Defense Minister Serdyukov, and the General Staff all argued for slowing down negotiations to insist on linking offenses to defenses and maintain the primacy of Putin’s line on these issues over Medvedev’s apparently less confrontational approach. And they did so regardless of the fact that doing so placed chances for Senate ratification at greater risk.⁶⁰

Indeed, during the final stage of negotiations Russia demanded that the treaty include a joint statement signed by both sides stating Russia had the right to terminate the treaty should it deem US missile defense programs to be dangerous.⁶¹ This too would have doomed the treaty in the Senate. Russia has also stated in the treaty-related documents its right to unilaterally withdraw from the new agreement if it believes U.S. missile defense deployments upset "strategic stability."⁶² In reply to this revelation,

In a not-yet-released letter obtained exclusively by The Cable, Arizona Sens. Jon Kyl and John McCain, and Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman, warn National Security Advisor James L. Jones, "Even as a unilateral declaration, a provision like this would put pressure on the United States to limit its systems or their deployment because of Russian threats of withdrawal from the treaty."⁶³

Therefore even a unilateral Russian statement of its views could become grounds for increased Senatorial opposition to the treaty. And should the treaty fail to be ratified that

would only justify these Russian hawks' arguments still further. Since the U.S. government has just stated that it will complete the construction of a pan-European missile defense by 2018 Russia could easily activate its threat to withdraw from the treaty on those grounds.⁶⁴

Nevertheless despite the risks to the reset policy the Russian military remains unappeased on this issue. Russian Chief of Staff General Nikolai Makarov warned that,

The factor of parity should be accompanied by the factor of stability, if the U.S. missile defense begins to evolve; it will be aimed primarily at destroying our nuclear missile capabilities. And then the balance of force will be tipped in favor of the United States ---With the existing and maintained parity of strategic offensive means, the global missile defense being created by the U.S. will be able to have some impact on the deterrence capabilities of the Russian strategic nuclear force already in the medium term. --- This may upset the strategic balance of force and lower the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons. Although missile defense is a defensive system, its development will basically boost [the] arms race.⁶⁵

Neither is this just rhetoric. As one recent assessment of the obstacles encountered during the negotiations charged, Washington told Moscow that if it did not move forward on the treaty the Administration might take Russia off its priority list and move the issue from the President to some lower level official. Whether or not this conversation occurred it was described as an ultimatum. This article also points out that current Russian nuclear programs aim to overcome or even neutralize US missile defenses.

The impression is that the Kremlin no longer believes in America's military omnipotence. Russia responded to the ultimatum with a maiden flight of its latest T-50 fighter and rearmament of its anti-aircraft defense system with T-400 Triumph complexes (this may be referring to what we call the S-400 SAM-author). To all appearances, Triumphs are ASAT weapons also capable of intercepting and destroying inbound ballistic warheads. Continuation of Bulava missile tests was proclaimed as well. Work on the missile will be brought to its logical end, sooner or later. Specialists are even working on a concept of the future strategic bombers that will replace TU-95s and Tu-160s one fine day.⁶⁶

When it had to back off from this point due to President Obama's steadfastness in regard to missile defenses Moscow then demanded that the US pledge not to do anything unilaterally, evaluate threats jointly with Russia based on corresponding reports from experts of both countries within the framework of the joint threats evaluation mechanism, and make decisions of the deployment of theater and eventually global missile defenses against ICBMs exclusively on that basis. Moscow also wants Washington to confirm that it will discuss missile defenses once this treaty is ratified.⁶⁷ Russia thus still seeks a veto on US force decisions. When seen in the context of Russian politics and overall defense policy this is a most instructive episode.

Third, since Moscow rigorously adheres to this mutual hostage concept it cannot trust the US and any US unilateral advance in defenses must be compensated by greater Russian offensive capabilities. The following citations demonstrate this deep-rooted belief in the mutual hostage relationship, deterrence of the enemy, and the action-reaction process regarding armaments among the Russian political and military leadership. First, Lavrov told an interviewer in February 2007 that,

Our main criterion is ensuring the Russian Federation's security and maintaining strategic stability as much as possible. --- We have started such consultations already. I am convinced that we need a substantive discussion on how those lethal weapons could be curbed on the basis of mutual trust and balance of forces and interests. We will insist particularly on this approach. We do not need just the talk that we are no longer enemies and therefore we should not have restrictions for each other. This is not the right approach. It is fraught with an arms race, in fact, because, it is very unlikely that either of us will be ready to lag behind a lot.⁶⁸

Here Lavrov signaled Russia's unwillingness to leave a mutually adversarial relationship with America and its presupposition of mutual hostility as reflected in both sides' nuclear deployments. Similarly Alexei Arbatov ridiculed the Bush Administration's view, stated

by Ambassador Linton Brooks that because the two sides are no longer adversaries, detailed arms control talks are no longer necessary, as either naiveté or outright hypocrisy.⁶⁹

Since then Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov recently stated that,

Issues of strategic offensive and defensive arms are inextricably linked. To deny this relationship is meaningless because it is the essence of relations between the countries that have the appropriate potential in both areas. An augmented capacity of one of the parties in the realm of missile defense is automatically echoed in the form of plans and decisions of the other party in the realm of strategic offensive arms. And not even obliquely, but in the most direct way what is happening in the field of missile defense and US relations with its East European allies on this topic has an impact on our START follow-on negotiations. Without recognition of the relationship between strategic and offensive defensive arms, there can be no such treaty, it cannot take place.⁷⁰

Likewise, Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov told the Munich Security conference in February 2010,

It is impossible to speak of reducing nuclear potentials in earnest while a state that possesses nuclear weapons is developing and deploying systems of defense against means of delivery of nuclear warheads that other states possess. It is like the sword and shield theory, where both are continuously developing with the characteristics and resources of each of them being kept in mind.⁷¹

Putin's aforementioned remarks fit right into this outlook.

The problem is that our American partners are developing missile defenses, and we are not, --- But the issues of missile defense and offensive weapons are closely interconnected ... There could be a danger that having created an umbrella against offensive strike systems, our partners may come to feel completely safe. After the balance is broken, they will do whatever they want and grow more aggressive.⁷²

Fourth, given these conditions and the danger (as listed in the new defense doctrine) of NATO enlargement, and the threat of missile defenses coming closer to Russia, Moscow feels it is being placed under mounting military-political pressure or at least professes to do so even though it undoubtedly knows that NATO is hardly an

offensive threat and that the US missile defenses cannot threaten its systems.⁷³ Therefore it has been ready for at least a decade to threaten going first with nuclear weapons even against conventional strikes if the threat to its interests is dire enough. Thus in 1999 Colonel General Vladimir Yakovlev, CINC of Russia's nuclear forces, stated that: "Russia, for objective reasons, is forced to lower the threshold for using nuclear weapons, extend the nuclear deterrent to smaller-scale conflicts and openly warn potential opponents about this."⁷⁴

Consequently Russia sees nuclear weapons as warfighting weapons and both doctrinal statements and exercises confirm this. Moreover, it has incorporated nuclear warfighting scenarios into its exercises in Europe. In an otherwise unremarkable 2008 interview General Vladimir Boldyrev, then Commander in Chief of Russia's Ground Troops, described the missions of Russia's tank troops as follows,

Tank troops are employed primarily on main axes to deliver powerful splitting attacks against the enemy to a great depth. Having great resistance to damage-producing elements of weapons of mass destruction, high firepower, and high mobility and maneuverability, they are capable of exploiting the results of nuclear and fire strikes to the fullest and achieving assigned objectives of a battle or operation in a short time.⁷⁵

Indeed, from Boldyrev's remarks we may discern that he, and presumably his colleagues, fully expect both sides to use nuclear weapons as strike weapons in combat operations. The comments above on armored vehicles point in the same direction.⁷⁶ This process of conventionalizing nuclear weapons, in and of itself, substantially lowers the threshold for nuclear use just as Moscow did in 1999. Since then others have amplified upon this point. For example, Solovtsov stated that new military uses for nuclear weapons are coming into being. Thus,

The radical changes that have occurred since the end of the Cold War in international relations and the considerable reduction of the threat that a large-scale war, even more so a nuclear one, could be unleashed, have contributed to the fact that in the system of views on the role of nuclear arms both in Russia and the US, a political rather than military function has begun to prevail. In relation to this, besides the traditional forms and methods in the combat use of the RVSN, a new notion “special actions” by the groupings of strategic offensive arms has emerged. --- Such actions mean the RVSN’s containment actions, their aim to prevent the escalation of a high-intensity non-nuclear military conflict against the Russian Federation and its allies.⁷⁷

In other words, though there is no threat or a diminishing threat of large-scale war a new mission for nuclear weapons will be their use in actions during such a war to control intra-war escalation. It is not surprising that Solovtsov argued for increasing the forces under his command, but it also is the case that such dialectical reasoning makes no sense unless one postulates an a priori hostility between East and West and grants Russia the right of deterrence that it has unilaterally arrogated to itself over other states who have never publicly accepted it. Indeed, the new calls for renovating the nuclear forces and having a solution guaranteeing nuclear deterrence in all cases has now become policy even if America deploys its global defense system and moves to a defense dominant world.⁷⁸

Makarov’s aforementioned statement concerning retention of TNW could take place in potential European contingencies, e.g. in the Baltic or in a war with China.⁷⁹ Proof of the former possibility appeared in the Russian combined arms exercises entitled Ladoga and Zapad 2009 which were divided in two to avoid CFE treaty monitoring and which prominently featured nuclear strikes against a so called Polish-Lithuanian offensive against Belarus which was defended by both native and Russian forces. Given the manifestations here of an old fashioned Soviet tank offensive but using newer arms, the presence of nuclear strikes, and the new C3I organizations developed by Russia in its

reforms since 2006, (and presumably information warfare operations) it is hardly surprising that Baltic littoral states feel threatened and demand more security.

Beyond that Russia is buying new nuclear missiles whose main attribute is their ability to evade U.S. missile defenses and as part of its prioritization of its nuclear forces will buy and deliver to the forces over 70 strategic missiles, over 30 short-range Iskander missiles and a large number of booster rockets and aircraft.⁸⁰ Moscow will also spend \$35.3 billion on serial production of all weapons in 2009-11 (1 trillion rubles) and virtually double the number of strategic missile launches to 13 for 2009.⁸¹ This procurement policy represents both a quantum leap in Russian capabilities if it can be consummated and also would constitute a major step in a new action-reaction cycle of procurements based on the old Cold War paradigm. Indeed, these dynamics could lead to a new arms race, especially if Russia insists that any new treaty first eliminate the missile defenses in Eastern Europe as a condition of its acceptance and consummation or now withdraws from the new treaty because of US missile defenses.

Patrushev's October 2009 remarks that triggered the debate, are fully consonant with the military's viewpoint. Patrushev told an interviewer that the forthcoming defense doctrine will be amended to allow for the possibility of preventive and preemptive first strikes, including nuclear strikes, even in the context of a purely conventional local war and even at the lower level of operational-tactical, as opposed to strategic, strikes.⁸²

Soon afterward Lt. General Andrey Shvaichenko, Commander in Chief of Russia's Strategic Forces (RVSN) stated on December 16 2009 that,

In a conventional war, the RVSN and the strategic nuclear forces ensure that the opponent is forced to cease hostilities on advantageous conditions for Russia by means of multiple preventive strikes against the aggressors' most important facilities. --- Regional instability in immediate proximity to the borders of Russia

and the CIS countries does not make it possible to completely rule out the risk that our country may be pulled into military conflicts of various intensity and scale.⁸³

Here Shvaichenko went beyond the previous line that nuclear weapons may be used to defend Russia's vital interests in a first-strike mode if the vital interests of the country are at risk or deemed to be at risk as stated in the 2000 military doctrine.⁸⁴ That posture translated into a peacetime strategy of using Russia's nuclear forces as a deterrent against any aggression launched against either Russia or its CIS neighbors or against Russia if it made war upon those states as in Georgia's case in 2008.⁸⁵ In other words, the nuclear warning's strategic political purpose is to demarcate a theater of both military and peacetime operations wherein Russia would have relative if not full freedom of action to operate as it saw fit, free from foreign interference. In political terms it not only represents a "no go" sign for potential enemies, it also is an attempt to intimidate NATO allies that they will be targets of Russian nuclear strikes if they try to invoke Article V of the Washington Treaty should Russia move on the Baltic States or undertake similar kinds of attacks.

In those remarks we therefore see a hidden or at least unnoticed mission of nuclear weapons for Russia. They serve to demarcate its sphere of influence, by setting up a no go zone for foreign military entities for the Russian elite almost unanimously believes that without such weapons the whole of the CIS would be open to NATO intervention in a crisis. Thus if Russia is to have a sphere of influence there it must extend its deterrence umbrella throughout that sphere to make its claim credible and with that its claim to great or even superpower status.

Neither is Russia's professed readiness to use nuclear weapons confined to land-based systems. Vice-Admiral Oleg Burtsev, the Navy's Deputy Chief of Staff, told RIA Novosti that, "Probably, tactical nuclear weapons will play a key role in the future," and that the navy may fit new, less powerful nuclear warheads to the existing types of cruise missiles. "There is no longer any need to equip missiles with powerful nuclear warheads," Burtsev said. "We can install low-yield warheads (possibly fusion weapons? - author) on existing cruise missiles."⁸⁶ This is clearly something that is clearly unacceptable as a threat to European security.⁸⁷ Certainly we cannot assume this to be mere rhetoric for as Bildt has told us Russia has already deployed TNW on its Baltic Fleet's ships.⁸⁸ In apparent confirmation of Bildt's remarks is the following episode from 2006.

In responding to a question from Putin on the number of nuclear submarines currently deployed worldwide, Ivanov stated: "At this moment...we have eight nuclear submarines deployed. Of them, five are strategic submarines and three are multipurpose submarines, but all of them are deployed with nuclear weapons. The ships have different missions – intercontinental, that is, and multipurpose, but on board of each of them are nuclear weapons." Since general purpose (attack) submarines do not carry SLBMs, Ivanov's comments appeared to indicate that these vessels, which prior to the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives had carried tactical, nuclear-armed cruise missiles and nuclear-armed torpedoes, were again carrying weapons in either or both of these categories.⁸⁹

The worst aspect of these deployments and plans stated here is that they point to the General Staff and government's strategy as being one of supposedly limited nuclear war. Key officials confirmed this interpretation, conceding limited nuclear war as Russia's officially acknowledged strategy against many different kinds of contingencies.⁹⁰ And Ilya Kedrov, in his discussion of armored vehicles above, also ratified his understanding of the doctrine as affirming this strategy.⁹¹ In September 2008, at a roundtable on nuclear deterrence, General Solovtsov noted that Russia was giving

explicit consideration to the concept of “special actions” or “detering actions of the RVSN aimed at the prevention of escalation of a non-nuclear military conflict of high intensity against Russia.” Solovtsov further stated that,

These actions may be taken with a view to convincingly demonstrating to the aggressor [the] high combat potential of Russian nuclear missile weapons, [the] determination of the military-political leadership of Russia to apply them in order to make the aggressor stop combat actions --- In view of its unique properties, the striking power of the Strategic Missile Forces is most efficient and convincing in the deescalation actions.⁹²

This strategy also openly reflects Moscow’s bizarre, unsettling, and unprecedented belief that Russia can control escalation and nuclear war by initiating it despite forty years of Soviet argument that no such control was feasible. Meanwhile current procurements display a reliance on new, mobile, survivable, and allegedly indefensible nuclear weapons even as numbers fall. For example, Russia seeks to keep its mobile missile systems of the nuclear forces invisible to foreign reconnaissance systems while also developing means to suppress those reconnaissance and surveillance systems.⁹³ Accordingly, as Russian officials regularly proclaim, nuclear procurements are intended to develop missiles against which America has no defense, e.g. mobile missiles, MIRVs, and fusion, low-yield nuclear weapons that can also be used on the battlefield.

Thus nuclear weapons are warfighting weapons. Moscow’s threats from October 2009 not only follow previous doctrine, they expand on it to openly admit that limited nuclear war is its option or hole card. If Russia should decide to invade or seize one or more Baltic State then that would mean it is prepared to wage nuclear war against NATO and the US to hold onto that acquisition although it would prefer not to or thinks it could get away with it without having to do so. The idea behind such a “limited nuclear war” is that Russia would seize control of the intrawar escalation process by detonating a first-

strike even in a preventive or preemptive mode and this would supposedly force NATO to negotiate a political solution that allows it to hold onto at least some of its gains. Apart from the immensity of Moscow's gamble that NATO will not have the stomach to retaliate for nuclear strikes which for Moscow will be carried out to inflict a "preset" amount of damage that it believes will signal its "limited" intent, Moscow is essentially engaging in a game of nuclear chicken or blackmail. In fact the real risk here is that the West will not acquiesce but rather that it will retaliate or even escalate, further adding to the inherent unpredictability of any conceivable nuclear war scenario.

A recent article by Vipin Narang analyzing Pakistan's nuclear posture outlined three differing nuclear postures among nuclear powers, i.e. their operational rather than rhetorical nuclear doctrine. That posture and doctrine generate deterrent power against all potential enemies and can be used to develop different levels of ability to deter varying contingencies as well as to induce nuclear and other political forms of restraint among adversaries. Russia's nuclear posture which aims to deter both conventional and nuclear threats through varying levels of threatened response or first-strike use of nuclear weapons exemplifies the process.⁹⁴ Russia's declared nuclear posture therefore falls into the category of an "Asymmetric Escalation Posture". This posture conforms with numerous statements by Putin et al that Russia's responses to US missile defenses and NATO enlargement will be asymmetric in nature. Hence the threat of first-strike use. This posture has the following characteristics and entails the recommendations that follow the depiction of those characteristics below.

The asymmetric escalation posture is geared for the rapid and asymmetric first use of nuclear weapons against conventional attacks to deter their outbreak, operationalizing nuclear weapons as usable warfighting instruments. A state with this posture must therefore have sufficient tactical and potentially survivable

second-strike strategic weapons to absorb potential retaliation. Although peacetime deployments can be centralized, to credibly deter conventional attacks, an asymmetric escalation must have the ability to disperse and deploy assets extremely quickly and to enable their release on the battlefield through pre-delegative procedures to military end-users in the event of a crisis; (in Russia's case its mobile missiles typify this first requirement and little or nothing is known in the unclassified literature as to whether it has pre-delegated end-user release-author) it is thus the most aggressive option available to nuclear states. To credibly threaten first use, this posture must be largely transparent about capabilities, deployment patterns, and conditions of use. The asymmetric escalation posture may have the most significant deterrent effect at all levels of conflict intensity, given the costly signal of credibly threatening early first use of nuclear weapons against even conventional attacks.⁹⁵

It should be clear to us in this context what Moscow seeks to deter as well as to defend. Obviously Moscow seeks to deter a US nuclear strike in defense of its allies. But beyond that obvious concern is the fact that for Moscow it is of paramount significance to deter the US concept of global strike which entails both conventional and nuclear strikes from land, sea, and air based platforms and for which by its own admission it has no sufficient defense. As the Russian military commentator Petr Belov recently observed, this resort to nuclear weapons indicates that Russia can no longer guarantee a retaliatory response to aggression or defend against a conventional strike. Moreover, he believes that a fierce struggle that could culminate in a war can develop around attempts to seize Russia's natural resources (this by the way is enshrined as an official view in the 2009 national security concept).⁹⁶ Therefore to prevent foreign precision-guided munitions from destroying Russia's C3I network the order may be given to launch these weapons either to preempt such attacks or in a preventive mode.⁹⁷

Russia's exercises fully reflect these plans (and not only in the West⁹⁸). The Zapad 2009 and Ladoga exercises, bifurcated in half to avoid foreign inspections, were part of a nation-wide series of exercises in August-October, 2009 from the Arctic to the

Black Sea and culminated in a simulated nuclear strike on Poland, probably for reasons given by Belov above.⁹⁹ The 2009 exercises built upon Stabilnost' 2008 and earlier exercises that had clearly involved using nuclear weapons in a first-strike mode for in the period September 28-October 10, 2009 Russia's strategic missile (RVSN) forces, i.e. the nuclear forces conducted drills to launch massive nuclear strikes using the Topol-M and Stiletto RS-18 ICBMs and apparently striking "army assets."¹⁰⁰ It is noteworthy that this apparently represented a change from the 2004 exercises where the Russians used TNW in a first-strike mode because they could not otherwise stop a conventional offensive. In other words, now it is equally as likely that they will use ICBMs or SLBMs against the US or Europe for those purposes rather than TNW.¹⁰¹ Since Russian leaders acknowledge that large-scale exercises are both a show of strength and a training exercise, the significance of those exercises and their component operations, as well as ongoing nuclear war exercises is quite evident to all observers.¹⁰²

Finally we must understand that Russian rhetoric is not just rhetoric but actual policy. Recent deployments of the SS-26 Iskander missile (that comes in both nuclear and conventional formats) in the Leningrad Military District where it could threaten Finland and the Baltic States suggest not just a desire to deter NATO but also the continuing desire to intimidate Russian neighbors.¹⁰³ And should Russia divine a threat in Europe it reserves the right to place these missiles in Kaliningrad from where it could threaten Poland and even Germany as well.¹⁰⁴

Beyond the Doctrine

From an optimistic standpoint we can say that Medvedev successfully overrode the hawks and signed the treaty.¹⁰⁵ Moreover he rebuffed both Putin and the military on

the idea of an expanded nuclear program. Thus at the March 5, 2010 expanded session of the Defense Ministry Collegium Medvedev made it clear that Russia does not need to increase its offensive nuclear capability any further than was originally planned.¹⁰⁶ Clearly this directly contradicted Putin's public remarks cited above in December 2009, underscoring the continuing divisions between Putin and Medvedev and within the Russian military-political elite. Beyond those debates the fact of Putin's intervention on behalf of the military and attempt to use them to check Medvedev is no less striking. First of all it represents another in a series of ongoing efforts to assert the supremacy of military orientations in Russian national security policy over all other imperatives while simultaneously representing another attempt to politicize the military in the context of the visible rivalry between Putin and Medvedev as well as their respective entourages. Such trends are dangerous in and of themselves and even more so where nuclear weapons and Russia's most crucial foreign policy relationships are involved.

Second, Administration officials have stated that Medvedev told them in private what Putin said in public and that the two were in very close policy coordination and lockstep.¹⁰⁷ Yet the public record, and not just the issue of building more nuclear weapons, clearly belies such contentions underscoring a wide range of disagreements between Medvedev and Putin on a broad range of both domestic and foreign policy issues.¹⁰⁸ While debates over policy and pressure being brought to bear upon policymakers are the normal state of politics everywhere, the sheer scope of issues in which such discordance is manifest in Russian politics clearly points to ongoing tensions within Russia. What this means for the treaty is that it depends for its survival and endurance on the domestic balance of power in Russia because the Russian military and

Putin are already publicly on record that the US missile defense program as it is represents exactly the kind of threats that Makarov and so many before him have invoked as justification for leaving the treaty. Indeed, one could argue as well that the Republican and conservative opposition here represent an analogous case of the fragility of the reset policy and the limits to it. So here we see the real fragility of the reset policy.

Furthermore, these facts of Russian domestic political life contravene that Administration argument that Russia's statement is essentially for domestic posturing and that every treaty contains a withdrawal clause (as did the ABM Treaty when the US withdrew from it). Every treaty does contain a withdrawal clause but this Russian statement essentially represents a loaded gun held against the temple of this treaty given the potential for a reversal of the domestic balance of forces in Russia since the military has already argued as did Putin that missile defenses in and of themselves represent a threat to vital Russian interests like the stability of its deterrent and strategic stability. Indeed, the overall Russian reception of this treaty was not enthusiastic and its critics allege that just as the 1991 START treaty was detrimental to Russia so is this treaty. And they emphasize the failure to constrain US missile defenses in particular.¹⁰⁹

Therefore the doctrine's statements that,

The Russian Federation reserves the right to utilize nuclear weapons in response to the utilization of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction against it and (or) its allies, and also in the event of aggression against the Russian Federation involving the use of conventional weapons when the very existence of the state is under threat.”

may be less than meets the eye.¹¹⁰ In fact, this represents only the public formulation of the deeply contested nuclear use issue. As Patrushev forecast, a classified document on

nuclear use was signed along with the doctrine but obviously not released for discussion.¹¹¹

The Asia-Pacific and China

Until now we have focused on Europe but similar dilemmas plague Russian strategists when they look at Asia. Here Moscow sees Washington as trying to bring its military forces closer to Russian borders in both Europe and Asia. So this is not only a question of NATO enlargement but also of the enlargement of America's Asian-Pacific alliances.¹¹² Certainly, from Moscow's standpoint its perception is a valid one and it may also have merit in more objective analyses. For example, David McDonough's analysis of U.S. nuclear deployments in the Pacific Ocean states that,

The increased deployment of hard-target kill weapons in the Pacific could only aggravate Russian concerns over the survivability of its own nuclear arsenal. These silo-busters would be ideal to destroy the few hundred ICBM silos and Russia's infamously hardened command-and-control facilities as well as help reduce any warning time for Russian strategic forces, given their possible deployment and depressed trajectory. This is critical for a decapitation mission, due to the highly centralized command-and-control structure of the Russian posture, as well as to pre-empt any possible retaliation from the most on-alert Russian strategic forces. The Pacific also has a unique feature in that it is an area where gaps in Russian early-warning radar and the continued deterioration of its early-warning satellite coverage have made it effectively blind to any attack from this theatre. This open-attack corridor would make any increase in Pacific-deployed SLBMs appear especially threatening.¹¹³

Similarly, already in 2003 when the first reports of the Pentagon's interest in new low-yield and bunker busting nuclear weapons became public, Russian analysts warned that even if such programs were merely in a research stage they would add to the hostile drift of Russo-American relations.¹¹⁴ Events since then have only confirmed this assessment and their warning.

A second major concern is the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance in the twin forms of joint missile defenses and the apparent consolidation of a tripartite alliance including Australia and South Korea, if not India. For both Russia and China one of the negative consequences of the DPRK's nuclear and missile tests has been the strengthened impetus it gave to U.S.-Japan cooperation on missile defense. The issue of missile defense in Asia had been in a kind of abeyance but the North Korean nuclear tests of 2006. These tests, taken in defiance of Chinese warnings against nuclearization and testing, intensified and accelerated the Japanese and American collaboration on Missile defenses as the justification for them had now been incontrovertibly demonstrated. But such programs always entail checking China, which naturally is considerably annoying to Beijing.¹¹⁵ Therefore China continues to criticize U.S.-Japan collaboration on missile defenses publicly.¹¹⁶ Perhaps this issue was on Chinese President Hu Jintao's agenda in September 2007 when he called for greater Russo-Chinese cooperation in Asia-Pacific security.¹¹⁷

Russian experts long ago noted that the military balance there was unfavorable to Russia and specifically invoked the specter of Russia losing its nuclear naval potential there.¹¹⁸ That nuclear naval potential remains precarious as Moscow recently admitted that its submarines conducted a total of three patrols in 2007.¹¹⁹ In fact in the Pacific, according to Japanese sources, Moscow is deploying formerly retired ships like the nuclear powered Admiral Lazarev, a decommissioned Kirov class cruiser, to counter the rise in Chinese power and deter threats ranging from an outbreak of war in Korea to growing Chinese naval and strike power along with US buildups.¹²⁰ To overcome these weaknesses and threats, and thanks to Russia's economic resurgence (largely energy-

driven however) then President Vladimir Putin and Ivanov announced a planned strategic upgrade for the Pacific Fleet specifically aiming to address this problem and make the Fleet Russia's primary naval strategic component.¹²¹ This policy reversed the prior naval policy that made Russia's Northern Fleet the strategic bastion for anti-American scenarios in the 1990s, testifying to an enhanced threat perception in Asia despite the recent Russian show of force in the Arctic and calls to incorporate Arctic scenarios into Russia's armed forces' training and doctrine.¹²² Here we should understand that Russia's forces, particularly those in the North and the Far East may be deployed on a "swing basis" where either the Fleet, or air forces in one theater moves to support the fleet or air forces in the other. Russia has carried out exercises whereby one fleet moves to the aid of the other under such a concept.¹²³ Likewise Russia has rehearsed scenarios for airlifting ground forces from the North to the Pacific in order to overcome the "tyranny of distance" that makes it very difficult for Russia to sustain forces in Northeast Asia. And the revival of regular air patrols over the oceans have clearly involved the Pacific-based units of the Long Range Aviation forces as well as some of the Air forces based in the North and Arctic who fly in the areas around Alaska.¹²⁴ Indeed, nuclear exercises moving forces or targeting weapons from the North to the Pacific or vice versa have also occurred.¹²⁵ To the degree that Arctic Missions become part of the regular repertoire of the Russian armed forces they will also to some degree spill over into the North Pacific.

Indeed, Russia's heightened threat perception in Asia resembles its perception of European threats. Just as in regard to the perceived threat of U.S. missile defenses in Europe Putin proposed that Russia and America share operation of the Gabala and Krasnodar radar and missile defense bases, and by so doing create a real strategic

partnership that would “revolutionize” world politics, so too in Asia Moscow wants to participate in shaping strategic relationships there.¹²⁶ But at the same time it warns that if it is not heeded it will go its own way. In Asia that means, at least as regards missile defenses, enhanced cooperation with China. As Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr’ Losyukov said in 2007,

We would like to see a non-circuited system. Besides, we might make our own contribution to it, too. Then we would have no reason to suspect this system is targeted against us, -- If it is true that the system being created is expected to ward off some threats posed by irresponsible regimes, then it is not only Europe, the United States or Japan that one should have to keep in mind. When some other countries’ concerns are kept outside such a system, they may have the feeling threats against them are growing, too. Consequently, the systems to be created must accommodate the concerns of other countries concerned.¹²⁷

Clearly the other countries to which he refers are Russia and China. Thus it is not surprising that Russia publicly criticized the U.S.-Japan collaboration on missile defenses and the linking of Australia to the U.S.-Japanese alliance about which it had previously been silent. Here Moscow has adopted China’s argument for certainly the U.S. alliance system is not primarily targeted on Russia. Such arguing on behalf of mainly Chinese interests suggests that as part of the Sino-Russian partnership we are beginning to encounter the phenomenon that many Russian analysts warned about, specifically that Russia ends up following China’s line. But this may well be because Russia perceives that Washington will not grant it the admittedly self-inflated status that it claims for itself either in Europe or in Asia. Interestingly enough, while China, according to most analysts, had been seen as desisting from challenging the U.S. missile defense program by a vigorous program of building nuclear weapons, Russia seems ready to do so even though the utility of that program for its overall interests, which normally focus on getting the West to include it as a major international actor, is decidedly moot.¹²⁸

Russian opposition to an American missile defense system goes back a decade and Russia argued against its appearance in Asia, using every available Asian security forum for that purpose back then.¹²⁹ By 2005 it also was coming to view the placement of such defenses in the Asia-Pacific as part of the US alliance system as part of an effort to create a bloc isolating it, even though it still was not yet opposed to that system as of 2005.¹³⁰ And now, as it increasingly appears that its earlier hopes that a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem would undermine Washington's justification for Asian missile defenses will be dashed, it may have decided to go on the offensive in Asia just as it has in Europe.¹³¹

While Western and U.S. scholars and policy, seen from Moscow, tend to marginalize Russia as an actor in Asia, Russia has made up its mind to react.¹³² It perceives U.S. nuclear policy and strategy as part of an overarching strategy to isolate and threaten it and is responding accordingly, asymmetrically as promised. Thus its response is partnership, if not alliance, with China, pressure on Japan to desist from targeting Russia with its missile defenses coupled with alternating offers of economic incentives for partnership in the region, and the nuclearization of the Pacific Fleet to ensure robust deterrence and a second-strike capability

Neither are Russian military analysts or planners unaware of the possibility of Chinese military threats even though they do not discuss them often. These threats are usually discussed by people who are critical of the partnership with China or profess to believe, as is apparently now the case, that they have at least ten years before China can be a real threat and that China is not now a real threat to Russia.¹³³ Even so, at least some writers have pointed out that the rise in China's capabilities could go beyond a

conventional threat to Russian assets in Siberia and Russian Asia. For example, there are multiplying signs that the no first use injunction in Chinese military doctrine is neither as absolute a ban on first use as China has previously proclaimed and that it is under pressure from younger officers there.¹³⁴ Thus China is now debating retention of its no first use posture regarding nuclear weapons and such weapons appear to be playing a more prominent role in Chinese strategy than was hitherto believed to be the case. China is building a hitherto undisclosed nuclear submarine base in the Pacific and a major nuclear base in its interior, moves that suggests consideration of a second strike capability but that can also put much pressure on Russia's Pacific Fleet and Russian Asia.¹³⁵ The following 2004 analysis took into account both the limited nuclear capability China had then and the possibilities that could ensue based on those forces' ongoing development.

Despite the significant qualitative makeup of the current Chinese nuclear missile potential, its combat capabilities are quite limited; it would hardly be adequate to destroy highly protected command and control posts and could not substantially degrade Russia's ground and sea-based strategic nuclear forces. However, this potential would be capable of substantially degrading the Russian Federation Armed Forces group in the Far Eastern theater of Military Operations and of doing major damage to the population and economy not only in the Far Eastern and Urals regions, but even in the Central Region of European Russia. According to available data, so far China does not have missile systems with MIRVed warheads, but the upsurge in activity related to the building of antimissile defense systems could accelerate its development of that type of weapons system, including antimissile defense countermeasures. It should be noted that the PRC's economic and technological potential is quite adequate for a quantitative and qualitative breakthrough in the area of its strategic offensive weapons development.¹³⁶

Given the aforementioned discoveries of growing Chinese interest in and capabilities for using nuclear weapons that suggests consideration of a second strike capability and can

also put much pressure on Russia's Pacific Fleet and Russian Asia we might well see a rethinking of Russia's nuclear strategy in Asia.¹³⁷

Thus Moscow is already increasingly ambivalent about the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty of 1987-88 (INF Treaty). While this part of a heightened ambivalence about most of the Gorbachev-era's arms control treaties and very much tied to the consequences of NATO enlargement; the concern about this treaty reflects Russian concerns about China's (and Iran's) missile buildup. As Russian officials from Putin down have argued, other countries to Russia's south and east are building such missiles but America and Russia are debarred from doing so. In October 2007,

Mr. Putin said that Russia would leave the INF treaty unless it was turned into a global agreement to constrain other states, including those "located in our near vicinity". He did not identify any country but Iran and North Korea are within the range covered by the treaty. Dmitri Peskov, a Kremlin spokesman, later acknowledged that China, India and Pakistan had medium-range missile capabilities. He insisted that Mr. Putin was concerned about an imbalance of regional security rather than any specific threat.¹³⁸

But these remarks also reveal that Moscow cannot publicly reveal or confront its true threat perceptions and instead blames Washington for its failure to take Russian interests into account. Thus while Moscow had "privately told Washington it wanted medium range missiles to counter Iranian threats, it publicly argued that the lack of Iranian missiles meant the US did not need a defense system."¹³⁹

As part of this debate General Vladimir Vasilenko raised the issue of withdrawal from the treaty after Sergei Ivanov did so in 2005 though it is difficult to see what Russia gains from withdrawal from that treaty.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, withdrawal from the INF treaty makes no sense unless one believes that Russia is genuinely -- and more importantly -- imminently threatened by NATO, or Iran and China, but most of all by the U.S.' superior

conventional military power, and cannot meet or deter that threat except by returning to the classical Cold War strategy of holding Europe hostage to nuclear attack to deter Washington and NATO. Similarly with regard to China and Iran, absent a missile defense, the only applicable strategy would be to use nuclear weapons to deter them, but this means admitting that these supposed partners of Russia actually constitute a growing threat to it. Furthermore, it is by no means clear that Moscow could regenerate production for both intermediate and intercontinental ballistic missiles as their plant for such production systematically misses production goals. Thus withdrawal from the treaty could actually further diminish Russian security, not enhance it.¹⁴¹ Therefore the desire to leave the INF treaty and reactivate missile production of IRBMs represents only the interests of the defense and defense industrial sectors, not necessarily Russia's state interest.¹⁴²

Vasilenko also stated that the nature and composition of any future U.S./NATO missile defense would determine the nature and number of future Russian missile forces and systems even though admittedly any such missile defense systems could only defend against a few missiles at a time. Therefore,

Russia should give priority to high-survivable mobile ground and naval missile systems when planning the development of the force in the near and far future. --- The quality of the strategic nuclear forces of Russia will have to be significantly improved in terms of adding to their capability of penetrating [missile defense] barriers and increasing the survivability of combat elements and enhancing the properties of surveillance and control systems.¹⁴³

Obviously such advocacy represents a transparent demand for new, vast, and unaffordable military programs, similar to the demand for reactivating production of IRBMs regardless of consequences. But in that case, Russia's government and military, are, as Nikolai Sokov suggested, thereby postulating an inherent East-West enmity that is

only partially and incompletely buttressed by mutual deterrence.¹⁴⁴ That posture made no sense in today's strategic climate, especially when virtually every Russian military leader repeatedly proclaims, as did Chief of Staff General Yuri Baluyevsky through 2006, that no plan for war with NATO is under consideration and that the main threat to Russia is terrorism, not NATO and not America.¹⁴⁵ But since then, as is apparent to everyone, NATO and America have become enemy number one. Nevertheless at the same time, that posture also openly warns Beijing and Tehran of Russian suspicions concerning their ambitions and capabilities.

Russia's reaction to Asian military challenges comprises both conventional force reforms and nuclear strategies. Here we restrict ourselves to nuclear issues. The Pacific Fleet will be the main fleet and one of two nuclear fleets, suggesting that the main mission of the fleet is to provide a reliable second-strike deterrent and for the non-nuclear vessels to protect the "boomers" (nuclear armed submarines) and prevent hostile forces from coming within their range. In other words Russia is following a deterrence strategy here as in Europe. Meanwhile Russia's long-term rearmament program apparently envisions the renewal of the submarine fleet as nuclear propelled multirole submarines, in an effort to save money. Three missions for them will be anti-submarine warfare, anti-aircraft carrier missions (mainly against US carrier battle groups), and attacking surface ships and transports. And they will be armed with precision conventional weapons to be a strategic non-nuclear deterrence force.¹⁴⁶

The drive to the Arctic also presupposes the use of both Pacific and Northern Fleets, in particular the latter, which is also a nuclear armed fleet, as a swing fleet that can go to challenge enemies from the North Pacific, presumably from bastions there. Just as

that fleet has a bastion or bastions in the Kola Peninsula, so too does the Pacific Fleet have its bastions which the Northern Fleet or elements thereof may be tasked to help defend. Alternatively the Northern Fleet and Russian Air forces based in the high north will be used to sweep the North Pacific of enemy air and naval assets. Nonetheless and even though the Far East is very much a naval theater, Moscow's main investments through 2010 will evidently go not so much to the Navy as to nuclear weapons (to redress Russia's conventional inferiority vis-à-vis the U.S. and Chinese threats) and to air and air defense in order to forestall a Kosovo-like aerial campaign.¹⁴⁷

At the conventional level, apart from ongoing reinforcement or resupply of the forces with what is hoped to be more advanced conventional weapons and improved training and quality of the manpower (a very dubious assumption given the inability and refusal to build a truly professional army) reform also entails experiments in new force structures and rapid reaction forces. While conventional forces in the Far East will have no choice but to fight at the end of a precarious supply line in an austere theater, Moscow is endeavoring to develop a functioning mechanism of rapid response and airlift (the idea of the swing fleet also plays here) from the North or interior of Russia to threatened sectors of the theater. And this program of airlift and rapid air mobility can also apply to nuclear forces.¹⁴⁸

Second, Russia, as in Central Asia, is building an integrated, mobile and all arms if not combined arms force, consisting of land, air and sea forces capable of dealing with failing state scenarios, insurgencies, terrorism, scenarios involving large-scale criminal activities, and ultimately conventional attack. Third, if, however, the scale of the threat overwhelms or is too large for the conventional forces, doctrine evidently continues to

point to the use of nuclear weapons (probably tactical or what Moscow calls non-strategic nuclear weapons-NSNW) in a first-strike or possibly even preventive mode as stated by Baluyevsky.¹⁴⁹ On January 20, 2008 he stated that,

We do not intend to attack anyone, but we consider it necessary for all our partners in the world community to clearly understand ... that to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia and its allies, military forces will be used, including preventively, including with the use of nuclear weapons.¹⁵⁰

Russian commentators noted that he was speaking entirely within the parameters of established Russian doctrine and that he essentially conceded the failure of conventional forces to provide adequate defense and deterrence at the high end of the spectrum of conflict.¹⁵¹ But beyond that Baluyevsky invoked the use of nuclear weapons in a first or preventive strike to defend allies. While he probably meant largely the CIS states to which Moscow has extended an unsolicited nuclear umbrella, in the context of Russia's Asia-Pacific territories his remarks bring us to the political dimensions of Russia's efforts to overcome the strategic challenges it faces there. Here again we see the inclination to threaten limited nuclear war as part of the deterrence strategy.

China's rise presents Russia with difficult choices especially given its nuclear naval deficiencies. Russia must take account of the growing pressure on China to abandon its no first use policy and China's increased nuclear and apparent second-strike capability, even as it must reduce its nuclear forces.¹⁵² This downward pressure on the Far East's regional arsenal was already apparent in 2004-05 and if Baluyevsky's remarks are to be taken seriously it is likely that the Northern Fleet's nuclear forces and Russia's NSNW will become more important for consideration of deterrence or first strike in the Asian as well as European theater. As of 2004

Currently, about 20% of the deployed Russian strategic nuclear forces remain in the Eastern part of Russia. As strategic forces shrink, the pace of reductions in the region is the fastest. In particular, three of the four divisions of the Russian Strategic Forces that have been disbanded since 2000 were located here. And the reductions will continue. Most likely, the SS-18 base at Uzhur will be closed down after 2010. The future of the SS-25 mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) is also uncertain, as they are getting older. The submarine base on the Kamchatka peninsula will likely no longer host strategic submarines once the last Delta-III nuclear submarines will be retired. Thus, perhaps, the only place where strategic forces will remain in this part of Russia is Ukrainka, the home of strategic bombers. As deployment of strategic nuclear forces in the Eastern part of Russia is curtailed, non-strategic nuclear weapons in the region may be assigned a stronger role. According to the author's assessment, nearly one third of the 3,300 Russian non-strategic weapons are assigned for deployment with general-purpose forces in the Siberian and Far Eastern military districts. All of these weapons are currently kept at central storage facilities of the 12th Directorate of the Russian Armed Forces. In case of hostilities they can be deployed with surface-to-surface, surface-to-air, air-to-surface, anti-ship, antisubmarine missiles, and other dual-use means of the Ground, Air, and Naval Forces.¹⁵³

However, if nuclear missions grow in importance and likely consideration, that will inhibit North Korea's disposition to give up its existing nuclear weapons not to mention foregoing new nuclear weapons. Similarly Japan and South Korea will either be further tempted to go nuclear or cleave ever more to Washington who would likely increase its regional military presence under such conditions.¹⁵⁴ Therefore a purely military and very considerable nuclear strategy leads Russia into a strategic dead end here. A political strategy is essential and even paramount in Russia's endeavors to defuse potential security challenges here.

Conclusions

No issue deserves serious, rigorous, and sober thought based on evidence from the actions of governments other than the US more than nuclear weapons do. The foregoing analysis shows that much US writing about the inutility or "senselessness" of nuclear weapons is misplaced, unfounded, and based on a failure to take account of the evidence

of other governments' thinking and policies. And Russia is by no means the only government whose programs must be taken into better account. Those who argue that nuclear weapons are only good for deterring nuclear attacks might profit by more serious study of Russia, Pakistan, China, and Israel to cite only a few example. They might also remember that in 1987 Iraq launched chemical missiles against Iran in defiance of international agreements and that Iran, not irrationally drew the appropriate conclusions from those attacks.

If we are to make progress towards the noble goal of abolition and enhanced global security a more rigorous understanding of contemporary international relations, strategy, and politics is needed, not more moralism or wishful thinking. It is clear that for many states nuclear weapons serve many useful purposes apart from gaining big power status or retaining it. We cannot make progress here until we realize that for whatever reason they feel genuinely threatened, and not just psychologically deprived. A sober unsentimental analysis would confirm that point rather than stigmatizing these states as being somehow benighted as in Paul Warnke's memorable phrase as apes on a treadmill. Apart from the policy significance of Russia for the US, its strategic posture needs to be understood and not just brushed aside.

If Russian leaders are to decrease their reliance on nuclear security they must feel that their security is enhanced thereby, a conclusion that is not readily apparent to them at present. If we are to persuade them of the rightness of that course of reducing their reliance on nuclear weapons, like it or not we must understand their perspective and take it seriously. For, otherwise, as has all too often been the case, we will continue to talk at or past each other. Russia demands that it be taken seriously. While doing so might not

and probably should not lead to approval of their policies or thinking; taking Russian nuclear postures seriously means engaging with their strategy and policies, not dismissing them outright or worse, deprecating our own capabilities on the basis of a hoped for end that is not grounded in empirical validation. Until such time as we or others can persuade other states that they do not need nuclear weapons to defend themselves against us or anyone else the mere repetition of the incantation that nuclear weapons serve no useful purpose in utter defiance of the facts, is merely an invitation to a disaster.

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