

Background

No. 2338
November 9, 2009



Published by The Heritage Foundation

Dangerous Trajectories: Obama's Approach to Arms Control Misreads Russian Nuclear Strategy

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Abstract: *Russia still considers the United States its "principal adversary." Moscow relies on its nuclear weapons to compensate for its inferiority in conventional power relative to the U.S., NATO, and China. Russian political and military leaders are still captives of czarist and Soviet geopolitical thinking and military traditions. U.S. policy-makers need to understand this background and Russia's Soviet-style negotiating tactics when negotiating realistic and verifiable arms control agreements with Russia. The Obama Administration's wishful thinking and unilateral concessions will not produce a better nuclear treaty.*

As the Obama Administration negotiates a range of arms control initiatives with Russia, U.S. policy-makers need to critically examine Russia's views on nuclear weapons and doctrine. While successive U.S. Administrations have announced that Russia is no longer the enemy, Russia still considers the United States its "principal adversary," despite President Barack Obama's attempts to "reset" bilateral relations. U.S. national leadership and arms control negotiators need to understand Russia's nuclear doctrine and negotiating style as they are, not as the U.S. wants them to be.

U.S. nuclear policymakers need to protect the United States from nuclear threats; reduce the risk of nuclear conflict; and negotiate transparent, verifiable, and workable arms control agreements with Russia and other nuclear powers. It is in U.S. interests to convince Russia to adopt a similar agenda and to pursue

Talking Points

- While the Russian government publicly champions disarmament and arms control efforts, a careful review of Russian nuclear policy and statements by the military and security elite reveals Russia's strong and abiding commitment to nuclear weapons, including in warfighting.
- Russia relies on nuclear weapons more than the Soviet Union did, and the United States and NATO remain its proclaimed principal adversaries.
- Russia is in violation of existing arms control agreements and commitments, including START, and the U.S. intelligence community has accused Russia of violating nonproliferation agreements.
- The Administration should not pursue an overambitious arms control strategy by trying to conclude the START follow-on treaty on an unrealistic timetable. Nor should it make unilateral concessions to conclude negotiations and/or to prevent a new arms race.
- Instead, the U.S. should negotiate a verification and transparency protocol to the Moscow Treaty, which expires in 2012 and lacks detailed verification procedures.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/bg2338.cfm

Produced by the Douglas and Sarah Allison
Center for Foreign Policy Studies
of the

Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis
Institute for International Studies

Published by The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002-4999
(202) 546-4400 • heritage.org

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arms control and nonproliferation in areas where U.S. and Russian national interests coincide. A win-win strategy may conflict with 800 years of Russian history in which it fought regional and global powers, but the alternative—a new arms race reminiscent of the Cold War—is economically and politically unpalatable to both nations.

The Obama Administration's approach of unilateral concessions will not prevent a new arms race. Nor should the Administration pursue an overambitious arms control strategy. Instead, it should negotiate a verification and transparency protocol to the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT or Moscow Treaty). Meanwhile, the U.S. should not accept a Russian strategic posture designed to threaten the U.S. and its allies or the further reduction of Russia's threshold for using nuclear weapons. Rather, the U.S. should pursue a "protect and defend" strategic posture, which includes a defensive nuclear posture, missile defense, and nuclear modernization. Finally, the U.S. should propose a realistic, detailed, transparent, verifiable, and enforceable arms control and nonproliferation agenda with the Russian Federation.

Only by understanding the evolution and current state of Russia's nuclear doctrine and its approach to negotiations can U.S. decision makers develop a coherent policy toward Russia.

Looking Back to Look Forward

Russia's approach to arms control is a product of Soviet and subsequent Russian nuclear strategy. Russia integrates its nuclear strategy with arms control, missile defense, a lower threshold for the first use of nuclear weapons, nonproliferation, nuclear modernization, and development of next-generation weapons into a strategic posture that maximizes deterrence and warfighting capability at a minimal cost.

The Obama Administration has been preoccupied with pushing Russia to sign a successor to the

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) before the December 2009 deadline. The proposed treaty, which is opposed by a number of Members of Congress, would limit both countries to 1,500–1,675 warheads and 500–1,100 delivery platforms (land-based missiles, submarine-launched missiles, and strategic bombers).¹ The Moscow Treaty, signed by President George W. Bush and President Vladimir Putin in 2002, limits both sides to 2,200 warheads and 1,600 delivery vehicles until 2012, but its verification procedures are flawed.²

Russian national leaders, generals, and experts are still captives of the czarist and Soviet geopolitical thinking and military traditions.

The Obama Administration's arms control strategy to date has been deeply flawed. The Administration cancelled deployment of 10 ground-based missile interceptors in Eastern Europe and publicly embraced the "road to zero" (full nuclear disarmament), which is unrealistic in today's unstable and proliferating world. This approach, based on outdated 1970s arms control strategy and 1960s idealism and naïveté will not work because it does not account for Russian nuclear strategy, which is based on approximate parity between the two sides, Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), denial of missile defenses to the U.S., and nuclear warfighting capability.

The Burden of History

Twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, communist ideology is almost dead in Russia, but Russian great power ideology has replaced it. Russian national leaders, generals, and experts are still captives of the czarist and Soviet geopolitical thinking and military traditions.³ Theirs is a deeply suspicious and xenophobic worldview shaped by incessant wars against regional and global powers—from the Tatars to the Germans.

1. Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev, "Joint Understanding," July 6, 2009, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/The-Joint-Understanding-for-The-Start-Follow-On-Treaty (October 30, 2009).
2. *Ibid.* See also Andrei Shoumikhin and Baker Spring, "Strategic Nuclear Arms Control for Protect and Defend Strategy," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2266, May 9, 2009, p. 15, at <http://www.heritage.org/research/NationalSecurity/bg2266.cfm>.

In the 20th century, the USSR could compete with the United States only in the military arena. By the late 1960s, Russia had almost caught up with the United States in the size and sophistication of its nuclear deterrent. In all else the socialist camp lagged hopelessly behind the West, including consumer goods, popular culture, health care, and standard of living.⁴

Ostensibly, the purpose of the Soviet-era arms control was to lock the U.S. and the USSR into nuclear parity, reducing the chances of either side launching a first strike. Meanwhile, the USSR pursued illegal defense options and obtained a first-strike capability. At the same time, the Soviet Union pursued strategic challenges to the U.S. through Third World expansion, Finlandization of Europe, and intelligence-based influence operations (“active measures”).

Arms control agreements, such as the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, limited both offensive and defensive weapons. SALT I limited strategic nuclear forces on both sides and froze deployment of anti-ballistic missile defenses, but not research and development. The USSR had already deployed a missile defense system around Moscow, and the U.S. decided not to deploy one. Yet SALT I failed to stop the arms race. By 1981, Russia had almost quadrupled its arsenal to more than 8,000 warheads, while the U.S. had more than doubled its stockpile to more than 10,000 warheads.⁵

The follow-on Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), signed by President George H. W. Bush and President Mikhail Gorbachev on July 31, 1991, drastically cut the number of warheads to reflect the end of the Cold War. On May 24, 2002, President George W. Bush and President Putin signed the Moscow Treaty, the shortest and least detailed arms control agreement of the post-Cold War era.

Under Putin’s leadership, Russia is reviving its great power status by rebuilding its military, especially its nuclear component, and capitalizing on its massive energy resources.

The Moscow Treaty called for each side to reduce the number of nuclear warheads from the 6,000 under START to 1,700–2,200 operationally deployed warheads, but it did not limit the number of tactical nuclear weapons (TNW). Russia reportedly has several thousand TNWs. SORT abandoned qualitative and quantitative parity in offensive strategic nuclear capabilities and relied on less explicit verification and implementation arrangements, although the START verification provisions that applied to warheads and delivery vehicles remained in place. SORT allowed Russia to pursue nuclear modernization, eliminate obsolete or costly weapons systems, and design and produce more cost-effective and modern missiles.⁶

Today, Russia is pursuing an arms control regime that would allow it to accomplish these goals while keeping U.S. programs, such as global missile defense, in check or even discrediting them. It also designed to maintain Russia’s prestige and the semblance of strategic parity with the United States.

Restoring Russia’s Power

Under Putin’s leadership, Russia is reviving its great power status by rebuilding its military, especially its nuclear component, and capitalizing on its massive energy resources. Russia’s geopolitical clout is benefiting from Europe’s dependence on Russian energy exports.⁷

After the Soviet collapse, many in the upper echelons of the Russian elite retained the vision of global grandeur. As early as 1999, retired General

3. Andrei Shoumikhin, *Goals and Methods of Russian Arms Control Policy: Implications for U.S. Security*, National Institute Press, August 2008, pp. 7–10, at <http://www.nipp.org/Publication/Downloads/Publication%20Archive%20PDF/Russian%20Arms%20Control%20web.pdf> (November 2, 2009). See also M. Zolotarev, ed., *Istoria Voennoj Strategii Rossii* (History of Russian military strategy) (Moscow: Kuchkovo Pole, 2000).

4. Shoumikhin, *Goals and Methods of Russian Arms Control Policy*, pp. 12–18.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Makhmout Gareyev, a leading Soviet and Russian military thinker and former deputy chief of the Soviet general staff, stated:

One of the most important unifying factors is the idea of Russia's rebirth as a great power, not a regional power...but a truly great power on a global scale. This is determined not by someone's desire, not just by possession of nuclear weapons or by size of territory, but by the historic traditions and objectives met in the development of the Russian society and state.⁸

Today's Russia is continuing the strategic stance and policies that characterized the Soviet military, including MAD targeting plans, strategic bomber flights over the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans near U.S. and allied airspace, navy and air force visits to Venezuela and Cuba, and military base construction in the Arab world.⁹ The increasing militarization of Russian foreign policy has also brought a buildup of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear Weapons as a Policy Tool. The Russian elites view nuclear weapons as a warfighting tool and an instrument of foreign and security policy. In 2006, President Putin emphasized the importance of the nuclear arsenal:

When looking at today's international situation and the prospects for its development, Russia is compelled to realize that nuclear deterrence is a key element in guaranteeing

the country's security... The Russian nuclear weapons complex constitutes the material basis for this nuclear deterrence policy... Keeping the necessary minimum of nuclear deterrence remains one of the main priorities of Russian Federation policy in this arena.¹⁰

During the Cold War, the USSR pursued the "struggle for peace." The Soviet intelligence services recruited "useful idiots" and fellow travelers to

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mouth the disarmament propaganda for consumption by the West. Even today, the Russian leadership makes peaceful statements for dissemination abroad, which are often clearly contradicted by "true confessions" at home. For example, in 2003, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said:

What we say is one thing. That sounds cynical, but everything that we plan does not necessarily have to be made public. We believe that from the foreign-policy viewpoint it is better to say that. But what we actually do is an entirely different matter if we're talking about nuclear weapons. They are the chief components of our security, and there can be no doubt that attention toward them cannot be relaxed.¹¹

7. Ariel Cohen, "Europe's Strategic Dependence on Russian Energy," Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2083, November 5, 2007, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/bg2083.cfm>.
8. "Geopolitika i Russkaya Bezopasnost'" (Geopolitics and Russian security), *Krasnaya Zvezda*, July 31, 1999, p. 2, quoted in Stephen J. Blank, *Russia and Arms Control: Are There Opportunities for the Obama Administration?* Strategic Studies Institute, March 2009, p. 150, note 111, at <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/download.cfm?q=908> (October 30, 2009).
9. Ariel Cohen, "Russia Shields Syria," *Space War*, October 16, 2008, at http://www.spacewar.com/reports/Swords_and_Shields_Russia_shields_Syria_999.html (October 30, 2009), and Ariel Cohen, "Russia Plans Three Military Bases in Abkhazia," *EurasiaNet*, February 6, 2009, at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav020609g.shtml> (October 30, 2009).
10. Vladimir Putin, "Opening Address at Meeting on Developing Russian Nuclear Weapons Complex, March 30, 2006, quoted in Shoumikhin, *Goals and Methods of Russian Arms Control Policy*, p. 42.
11. "Defense Minister Ivanov on New 'Doctrine', Iraq Restoration, Corruption," *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, October 28, 2003, Foreign Broadcast Information Services document CEP2003,1027000215, quoted in Mark B. Schneider, "The Strategic Nuclear Forces and Doctrine of the Russian Federation," Chap. 14, in Bradley A. Thayer, ed., *Analyses of American National Security Policy: Essays in Honor of William R. Van Cleave* (Fairfax, Va.: National Institute Press, 2007), p. 144.

This statement reflects the old Soviet approach in which speeches for external consumption were understood as just propaganda. The USSR launched and operated dozens of front organizations to support the disarmament of the West, all of them ultimately run and/or supervised by the KGB.¹² At the same time, the Soviet intelligence apparatus was busy stealing Western technology to develop a superior nuclear arsenal.

Ex-Soviet intelligence officers, such as Putin and Ivanov, cannot easily forget their Soviet-era conditioning. Under their leadership, Russia's attempts to rebuild its regional and global power are founded on modernizing its nuclear weapons, updating its nuclear doctrine, and clinging to the nexus between missile defenses and offensive weapons in the arms control negotiations.

The Russian Strategic Objective: Parity with the United States. Since the Soviet victory in World War II and the occupation of Eastern Europe, Soviet leaders and later Russian leaders believed that the United States should treat their country as an equal, especially in the military realm. The constant barrage of demands for honor, recognition, and status has continued since the end of World War II, freezing the adversarial U.S.–Russia relationship in a posture of mutual deterrence. If the sides looked at each other without the prism of nuclear deterrence, the comparatively small size of Russia's economy (approximately one-ninth of the U.S. economy) would be visible to all. The American "adversary" is a projection of Russia's chronically insecure rulers. It is also a standing justification for Russia's bloated military, intelligence, and secret services budgets and a useful means of consolidating domestic support for the regime.¹³

However, additional threats have appeared on Russia's security horizon. In 1969, Soviet troops clashed with Chinese infantry in the Russian Far East.¹⁴ Today, China is numerically and economi-

cally superior to Russia, and it possesses long-range and intermediate-range nuclear-armed ballistic missiles. Furthermore, with Soviet and Russian assistance, North Korea and Iran have acquired intermediate-range ballistic missiles and are busy developing nuclear weapons, despite international pressure. Russia may eventually need to address these developing threats.

At the same time, qualitatively new weapon systems in Western military arsenals—including missile defenses, conventionally armed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), stealth technology, space systems, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)—highlight the Russian military's conventional inferiority. More than ever before, Russia relies on nuclear weapons, and the United States and NATO remain its proclaimed principal security concerns.

Dark Vision: The Kremlin's Threat Perception

When President Boris Yeltsin led an independent Russian Federation out of the ruins of the USSR in January 1992, official security doctrine proclaimed that Russia had no enemies. Yet that attitude was undermined by those, such as spy chief and later Foreign Minister and Prime Minister Yevgeny M. Primakov, who yearned for a multipolar world in which U.S. power would be diluted by Russia, China, India, and the Islamic world. The Russian military leadership articulated an anti-American strategy due to a combination of belief and pragmatism. It would also justify multi-billion dollar budgets for weapons modernization and much-needed reform.

After the confrontation with NATO in Kosovo in spring 1999, two rounds of NATO expansion, and the Iraq war, Russia's anti-American rhetoric escalated. Statements by Russian leaders from Putin on down demonstrated that the Russian national leadership still viewed the United States as Russia's *glavny protivnik* (principal adversary). For example,

12. "Soviet Active Measures—Sovietskie Aktivnye Meropriyatiya," Pseudology.org, August 1987, at <http://www.pseudology.org/information/Active/T02.htm> (October 30, 2009). For a more exhaustive list of the Soviet-run peace and disarmament active measures organization, see Shoumikhin, *Goals and Methods of Russian Arms Control Policy*, p. 27, note 103.

13. Blank, *Russia and Arms Control*, p. 7.

14. Damanski-Zhenbao, "Chronologia Sobytiï" (Chronology of events), at <http://www.damanski-zhenbao.ru/chronicals.htm> (October 30, 2009).

after the horrific 2004 terrorist attack in Beslan, Putin stated:

Some want to cut off a juicy morsel from us while others are helping them.

They are helping because they believe that, as one of the world's major nuclear powers, Russia is still poses a threat to someone, and therefore this threat must be removed.

And terrorism is, of course, only a tool for achieving these goals.¹⁵

Putin and his surrogates clarified that he blamed the West led by the U.S., despite the total lack of evidence that the West was involved in the barbaric hostage taking.¹⁶ Vladislav Surkov, Putin's chief of ideology, announced in the daily *Komsomolskaya*

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Pravda that Russia was being confronted by “[a]ctors that still live by Cold-War phobias” and that “[t]heir goal is destroying Russia and filling its immense space with multiple weak quasi-states.” He warned, “The enemy is at the gate. The front line crosses every city, every street, every house.”¹⁷

Putin also addressed the trauma caused by the breakup of the USSR, terming it “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century.”¹⁸ This trauma is at the root of the inferiority complex of today's post-Soviet Russian ruling elite, which demands symbolic compensation: oil, territory,

nuclear weapons, restoration of a Russian sphere of influence throughout the former Soviet Union and in areas of former Soviet influence, such as in the Middle East.¹⁹

Russian Nuclear Weapons: Defense on the Cheap. Russia views its nuclear deterrent as the most cost-effective way to preserve its security. Its formidable strategic triad consists of silo-based and mobile missiles of the Strategic Nuclear Forces, submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and strategic bombers. (See Table 1.) These are regulated by extant arms control agreements. In addition, Russia has thousands of TNWs, which are not regulated by such treaties. Russia sees these weapons as “nuclear equalizers,” compensating for Russia's conventional inferiority vis-à-vis the U.S., NATO, and China.

In November 2008, President Dmitry Medvedev threatened Poland with short-range Iskander missiles, while Chief of the General Staff Nikolai Makarov publicly proclaimed that Russia would retain its tactical nuclear weapons as a guarantee of Russian security as long as Europe is “packed with armaments.”²⁰ Prime Minister Putin has repeatedly promised to boost military allocations, including funding for nuclear modernization.

Nuclear Modernization and Military Reform. Putin has repeatedly reaffirmed that, despite the economic crisis, Russia will maintain a robust weapons procurement budget to purchase advanced military equipment, including nuclear weapons and space systems. Russia's defense procurement budget is \$37 billion for 2009 and will total \$114 billion over three years (2009–2011).²¹

15. BBC News, “Excerpts from Putin's Address,” September 4, 2004, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3627878.stm> (October 30, 2009).

16. Chris Stephen, “Putin Accuses ‘Complicit’ West of Harboring Chechen Terrorists,” *The Scotsman*, September 18, 2004, at <http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/beslanschoolsiege/Putin-accuses-complicit-West-of-2565158.jp> (October 30, 2009).

17. Vladislav Surkov, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, September 29, 2004, quoted in Sergei Medvedev, “Conspiracy Theory in the Construction of the New Russian Identity,” slideshow presentation at the 4th Convention of the Central and East European International Studies Association, Tartu, Estonia, June 25–27, 2006, slide 4, at <http://www.cceisaconf.ut.ee/orb.aw/class=file/action=preview/id=164134/Medvedev.pdf> (October 30, 2009).

18. BBC News, “Putin Deplores Collapse of USSR,” April 25, 2005, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4480745.stm> (October 30, 2009).

19. Medvedev, “Conspiracy Theory in the Construction of the New Russian Identity,” slide 18.

20. Blank, *Russia and Arms Control*, p. 3.

Russia's Strategic Nuclear Triad

Strategic Rocket Forces

Missile System	Deployment Area	Number of Missiles	Warheads per Missile	Total Warheads
R-36MUTTH/R-36M2 (SS-18)	Dombarovsky, Uzhr	59	10	590
UR-100NUTTH (SS-19)	Kozelsk, Tatishchevo	70	6	420
Topol (SS-25)	Teykovo, Yoshkar-Ola, Nizhniy Tagil, Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Barnaul, Vypolzovo	174	1	174
Topol-M silo (SS-27)	Tatishchevo	49	1	49
Topol-M mobile (SS-27)	Teykovo	15	1	15
TOTAL		367		1,248

Strategic Fleet

Submarine	Number of Submarines	Number and Type of SLBMs	Warheads per SLBM	Total Warheads
Project 667BDR (Delta III)	5 ^a	69, R-29R (SS-N-18)	3	207
Project 667BDRM (Delta IV)	6 ^b	96, R-29RM (SS-N-23)	4	384
Project 941 (Typhoon)	1 ^c	–	–	–
Project 955	1 ^d	16, R-30 Bulava	6	–
TOTAL	13	165		591

Strategic Aviation

Bomber	Number of Bombers	Number and Type of Cruise Missiles per Bomber	Total Cruise Missiles
Tu-95MS6 (Bear H6)	32	6, Kh-55 (AS-15A)	192
Tu-95MS16 (Bear H16)	31	16, Kh-55 (AS-15A)	496
Tu-160 (Blackjack)	13	12, Kh-55SM (AS-15B)	156
TOTAL	76		844

a – One of these submarines appears to be in the process of decommissioning.

b – Two submarines are undergoing overhaul.

c – This submarine has been refitted to carry the new Bulava missile system.

d – Yuri Dolgorukiy, the first submarine of this class, has not been equipped with missiles yet.

Source: Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces, "Current Status," October 9, 2009, at <http://russianforces.org/current> (November 3, 2009).

Table 1 • B 2338  heritage.org

Nevertheless, Russia is experiencing difficulties deploying the Bulava SLBM. Reportedly one *Borey*-class ballistic missile nuclear submarine is not armed with any missiles. Production of Topol-M mobile ICBMs is insufficient to maintain the numbers permitted by the START follow-on agreement and the number of deployed nuclear warheads may fall below 1,000. Another bottleneck of nuclear modernization is the age and the depletion of Russia's technical and scientific personnel.

As a part of its military reforms, Russia is drastically cutting the number of serving generals and officers. A senior policy adviser to the Minister of Defense told this author that the deep cuts in the officer corps and "paper" divisions are connected to the need to restructure the military away from its Soviet-era legacy toward the ability to deter foreign states and protect the long Russian borders, especially in the south and east.²¹ With its considerably smaller conventional forces, challenges in modernizing

21. "Putin poobeshchal ne ekonomit' na perevooruzhenii armii" (Putin promised not to economize on reequipping the military), *Lenta*, February 11, 2009, at <http://www.lenta.ru/news/2009/02/11/defense> (November 2, 2009).

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the military, and difficulties in deploying and integrating information technology and sufficient numbers of high-tech weapons, Russia will rely on a lower threshold for using nuclear weapons, including first strike.²³

Nuclear Use Threshold. Current Russian military doctrine provides for:

...nuclear forces capable of delivering required damage to any aggressor state or a coalition thereof under any circumstances. The Russian Federation retains the right to use nuclear weapons in response to use against it and/or its allies, of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as in response to wide scale aggression which uses regular weapons in a situation critical to the national security of the Russian Federation.²⁴

The 2003 document “The Priority Tasks of the Development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation” clarifies that the nuclear forces of the Russian Federation, in addition to the strategic nuclear forces (land-based missiles, submarines, and strategic bombers), include non-strategic nuclear forces, such as tactical nuclear weapons.²⁵

Russian experts do not fully exclude the possibility of the U.S. using force against their state, especially after the wars in Yugoslavia and Iraq. Russian

conventional forces clearly could not contain such a threat, so the “attention to nuclear weapons is a logical solution to the situation.”²⁶ Russian leaders assume that the U.S. will not risk the use of force as long as Russia has a credible nuclear deterrent. Furthermore, Russia might use nuclear weapons in a “wide-scale” war or in a regional conflict that escalated from a local war.²⁷ However, the Russian leadership has since lowered the nuclear first-use threshold even more.

Nuclear weapons could be used in the Far Eastern, southern, or western theaters of operations. Russian generals explain the lowered nuclear threshold as an answer to both conventional inferiority and as a de-escalation tool. In other words, they believe that limited use of nuclear weapons early in a conflict could force the other side to cease hostilities.²⁸

General Nikolay Patrushev is Secretary of the Russian National Security Council, the body in charge of military doctrine. He is also a Putin confidante and has served as the head of the FSB secret police, a KGB successor agency. Patrushev recently

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made an unprecedented statement in a interview with *Izvestiya*. He declared that Russia not only may use nuclear weapons preemptively in local conflicts, such as Georgia or Chechnya, but may deliver a nuclear blow “against the aggressor in a

22. Interview, source who requests to be unnamed, Moscow, September 2009.

23. A. S. Dyakov, E. V. Myasnikov, and N. N. Sokov, “Process sokrashchenia yadernyx vooruzhenij i kontrol’ nad nimi v rossijsko-amerikanskix otnosheniyax: sostoyanie i perspektivy,” (Process of nuclear weapons cuts and control over them in Russian-American relations: Conditions and Perspectives), Moscow Physical-Technical Institute, Center for Study of Problems of Disarmament, Energy and Ecology, 2006, p. 14.

24. Dyakov *et al.*, “Process sokrashchenia yadernyx vooruzhenij,” p. 15.

25. “Current Tasks of the Development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation,” quoted in Marcel DeHaas, “Russia’s Military Strategy: Preparing for the Wrong War,” April 24, 2006, at http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2006/20060424_cscp_online_dehaas.pdf (November 3, 2009).

26. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Schneider, “The Strategic Nuclear Forces and Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” p. 153.

critical situation...based on [intelligence] evaluation of his intentions.” The second half of the comment was removed from the newspaper’s Web site the following day without explanations.²⁹ Alexander Golts, a leading Russian military analyst, views this statement as further lowering the nuclear threshold, allowing Russia to launch a first strike based on the Russian intelligence evaluation of a potential adversary.³⁰ While some ascribed this declaration to bravado, Washington has reason to worry because Russia views the U.S. as its principal adversary.

Missile Defense and Weapons in Space. In the 1960s, the USSR developed and deployed a missile defense around Moscow. The United States pleaded with the Soviets to limit competition in missile defenses and concluded the 1972 ABM Treaty. The strategic stability paradigm based on MAD was thus locked in place.³¹ Today, Russia opposes the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM treaty in 2002, claiming that offensive and defensive strategic weapons are linked as they were in the 1970–1980s. Russia views the incremental deployment of U.S. missile defenses as detrimental to Russia’s long-term ability to counter a U.S. first strike against Russian strategic weapons. Russia vociferously opposed the third missile defense site in central Europe³² and is equally opposed to any militarization of space with offensive (nuclear) or missile defense systems beyond current communications, command, control, and intelligence systems. Russia regularly works with China and other states at the United Nations Disarmament Commission to impose an international ban on deployment of weapons in space.³³

Tomorrow’s Nuclear Weapons. Russian research into new categories of nuclear weapons is highly classified. However, publications indicate that the Russian military-industrial complex is developing precision low-yield nuclear weapons that are programmable to deliver yields less than the equivalent of 100 tons of TNT. According to former Atomic Energy Minister Victor Mikhaylov, Russia has also worked on developing penetrating nuclear weapons. Vladimir Belous, a retired general and nuclear expert, disclosed the development of fusion weapons that he characterized as mini neutron bombs. Other experts have emphasized that Russia has electromagnetic pulse (EMP) weapons capable of disabling all electronic systems in vast areas and that EMP research and development is continuing. According to Mikhaylov, Russia has emphasized development of high-precision and deep-penetration nuclear weapons, outstripping the U.S. in these areas.³⁴

Russian Violations of Arms Control. The U.S. Congress has been informed of numerous accusations of Russian violations of arms control agreements. For example, in 1991–1992, the U.S. and the USSR/Russia committed in the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs) to dramatically reduce the number of deployed tactical nuclear weapons. In 2009, the Strategic Posture Commission stated, “Russia is no longer in compliance with its PNI commitments.” Estimates of Russia’s TNW arsenal are classified, but observers place the number as high as 3,800—several times larger than the U.S. stockpile.³⁵

29. Vladimir Mamontov, “Meniaetsia Rossiya, meniaetsia i ee voennaya doktrina” (Russia is changing, and with it its nuclear doctrine), *Izvestiya*, October 15, 2009, at <http://www.izvestia.ru/politic/article3134180> (November 2, 2009).

30. Alexander Golts, “Uprezhdayushchee Bezumie” (Preventive madness), *Yezhenedel’ny Zhurnal*, October 15, 2009, at <http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=9542> (November 2, 2009).

31. Shoumikhin, *Goals and Methods of Russian Arms Control Policy*, pp. 14–15.

32. *Ibid.*, p. iii–iv.

33. Moscow reacted negatively to the U.S. decision to destroy a faulty intelligence satellite using a missile interceptor in January 2008. Experts speculate that Russia has had difficulty developing its existing anti-satellite (ASAT) capability. *Ibid.*, pp. v–vi and 52.

34. Schneider, “The Strategic Nuclear Forces and Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” p. 148.

35. Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, *America’s Strategic Posture*, United States Institute of Peace, 2009, p. 13.

The U.S. and Russia have also undertaken an informal moratorium on nuclear weapons tests. However, “the Russian nuclear labs continue an active underground test program at Novaya Zemlya [islands in the Arctic Ocean] which includes release of low levels of nuclear energy.” The U.S. interpretation of the testing moratorium involves a zero-yield standard; therefore, Russia is in violation of the arrangement.³⁶

A 2005 State Department report noted multiple Russian violations of START verification provisions. Specifically, the State Department asserted that Russia was testing multiple warheads on SS-27 ICBMs, which is forbidden under START. These provisions are at the heart of the START follow-on treaty that the Obama Administration is currently negotiating.³⁷

The U.S. intelligence community has accused Russia of violating nonproliferation agreements and arrangements by providing ballistic missile technology to Iran and North Korea. Kathleen Turner, Director of Legislative Affairs at the Office of the

Fifty years of nuclear talks indicate that the USSR/Russia customarily opens talks with maximalist negotiating positions, threatens to use nuclear weapons against neighbors, and launches demagogic public “peaceful initiatives” for external consumption.

Director of National Intelligence, stated that “individual Russian entities continue to provide assistance to Iran’s ballistic missile programs. We judge that the Russian-entity assistance...has helped Iran move toward self-sufficiency in production of ballistic missiles.”³⁸

While negotiating with the Kremlin, the U.S. team should keep in mind more than just these violations and deceptions. Fifty years of nuclear talks indicate that the USSR/Russia customarily opens talks with maximalist negotiating positions, threatens to use nuclear weapons against neighbors and launches demagogic public “peaceful initiatives” for external consumption. It then adopts a more pragmatic posture behind closed doors. Moscow would be highly suspicious of anything different from Washington. In this light, the Obama Administration’s early concessions are counterproductive and self-defeating because they may result in a worse end-game position for the United States.

What Congress and the Administration Should Do

As the deadline for START follow-on treaty negotiations approaches, U.S. policymakers and Congress need to focus on the long-term objectives rather than the short-term goal of simply concluding arms control agreements at any price. Specifically, the U.S. should:

- **Negotiate a transparent, verifiable, and enforceable protocol.** Members of Congress and weapons experts have raised concerns about the expedited negotiations and the advisability of concluding the START II treaty on an unrealistic breakneck timetable.³⁹ The U.S. and Russia should negotiate a verification and transparency protocol to the Moscow Treaty, which expires in 2012 and lacks detailed verification procedures. The START verification protocol, which some have proposed using in the interim, does not fit the Moscow Treaty. Thus, a new verification protocol that includes measures to monitor reductions in the number of operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads is needed.⁴⁰ A trans-

36. See *ibid.*, p. 83. Similar allegations were made by Dr. John T. Foster, Jr., a member of the Strategic Posture Commission.

37. Dr. Keith Payne, another member of the commission, testified before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. See also Baker Spring, “Rose Gottemoeller Should Concentrate on Her Day Job,” The Heritage Foundation, unpublished, September 2009.

38. Kathleen Turner, letter to Jeffrey T. Bergner, Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs, U.S. Department of State, March 1, 2007, at <http://www.npec-web.org/US-Russia/20070301-ODNI-RussiaAssistsIranMissileProgram.pdf> (November 2, 2009).

39. Spring, “Rose Gottemoeller Should Concentrate on Her Day Job.”

parent, adequately verifiable and enforceable protocol should be ratified by the U.S. Congress as a treaty document.

- **Pursue a “protect and defend” strategic posture.** The U.S. should pursue a “protect and defend” strategic posture that shifts away from retaliation-based configurations and toward a defensive posture adapted to the emerging international environment. Such a shift is particularly necessary in view of Russia lowering its threshold for using nuclear weapons. If Russia and the U.S. subscribe to a “protect and defend” posture, they would not target the population centers or economic infrastructure of each other’s countries.⁴¹ However, with the escalating Iranian nuclear threat and China’s nuclear buildup, the U.S. should not derail deployment of robust missile defenses in Europe and elsewhere. Finally, the Administration should follow the Strategic Posture Review recommendations to modernize U.S. strategic weapons systems selectively to address emerging nuclear threats.⁴²
- **Fight anti-Americanism with more effective public diplomacy.** The Russian state-controlled media and some in Moscow’s expert community are propagating a negative image of the U.S., repeatedly alleging that America wants to undermine Russian security. This often plays into the hands of those who seek to justify increased military budgets. Through the State Department and independent research institutions, the U.S. should promote a robust debate on U.S.–Russian relations, encouraging those who seek improvement. U.S. security experts should engage their Russian

counterparts and the media in in-depth discussions of common security threats, such as Afghanistan and radical Islamist terrorism. Through international broadcasters, Internet communities, joint conferences, and visits of American security experts to Russia, the U.S. should engage Russian opinion leaders in debating nuclear weapons, arms control, and other defense-related subjects. The U.S. should communicate to the Russian people the truth that America is not entertaining plans to attack Russia.⁴³

- **Propose a realistic, detailed, transparent, enforceable, and verifiable joint arms control and nonproliferation agenda.** The U.S. and Russia need to act jointly to prevent a renewed arms race and military confrontation. Instead, the U.S. should offer Russia an arms control and nonproliferation agenda that includes: (1) a bilateral transition to the “protect and defend” posture; (2) a Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty (SORT II), which would encourage nuclear forces that hold at risk the means of strategic attack; and (3) a strategic defense cooperation treaty, including coordinated ballistic missile defense and programs for common defenses against chemical and biological weapons, cruise missiles, and aircraft delivering weapons of mass destruction. Russia and the United States should also encourage third countries, especially China, to join an Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. Finally, the U.S. and Russia should continue to spearhead the multilateral cooperative effort to address the threat of nuclear-armed terrorism.

40. Shoumikhin and Spring, “Strategic Nuclear Arms Control for Protect and Defend Strategy,” p. 16.

41. The approach also takes into account the principle that both arms control and missile defense can play positive roles in enhancing the security of both countries. A series of nuclear simulation games conducted at The Heritage Foundation in 2008–2009 demonstrated that a strong missile defense would keep both sides more safe and secure, despite the Kremlin’s misgivings. See Nuclear Stability Working Group, *Nuclear Games: An Exercise Examining Stability and Defenses in a Proliferated World* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2005), at <http://www.heritage.org/upload/NuclearGames.pdf>. A forthcoming Heritage Foundation publication will report on an exercise that examines arms race and arms control issues in an abstract setting based on a greater Middle East where nuclear weapons have proliferated.

42. Senators Jon Kyl (R–AZ), John McCain (R–AZ), Richard Lugar (R–IN), Carl Levin (D–MI), John Kerry (D–MA), and Robert C. Byrd (D–WV) made this request in a letter to President Obama on July 23, 2009. See Jon Kyl, “Defense Authorization Bill,” July 27, 2009, at <http://kyl.senate.gov/record.cfm?id=316224> (November 2, 2009).

43. Tony Blankley, Helle C. Dale, and Oliver Horn, “Reforming U.S. Public Diplomacy for the 21st Century,” Heritage Foundation *Backgrounder* No. 2211, November 20, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/research/publicdiplomacy/bg2211.cfm>.

Conclusion

Nuclear weapons have been center stage in U.S.–Russian relations since the 1950s. The confrontation stemming from the arms race and the threat of nuclear destruction defined the Soviet and then Russian view of the United States as the “principal adversary.” Today, both countries can avert a new Cold War and move beyond the MAD paradigm of the 20th century.

New threats have arisen that concern both countries. These threats can be countered together without the extremes of a new arms race or a utopian (and potentially dangerous) approach toward total

nuclear disarmament. With a commitment to robust national defenses, prudent, transparent, and verifiable arms control and political–military cooperation, both countries can ensure security in the 21st century.

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