

Differing Conceptions of 21st Century Great-Powerness as a Major Obstacle to Deep Reductions in U.S.-Russian Nuclear Arsenals

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[W]e should not tempt anyone by allowing ourselves to be weak. We will, under no circumstances, surrender our strategic deterrent capability. Indeed, we will strengthen it.

Putin, Vladimir. "Being Strong. Why Russia Needs to Rebuild Its Military." *Foreign Policy* (February 21, 2012).

Russia's Strategic Culture

- History
 - **Presupposition of threat**
- Geography

→ **Militarized strategic culture**

See: Ermarth, Fritz W. "Russian Strategic Culture in Flux: Back to the Future?" In *Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, by Kerry M. Kartchner, Jeffrey A. Larsen, and Jeannie L. Johnson, 85–96. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.



Russia's Identity



- Great Power
- Messianism

See: Duncan, Peter J. S. *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism and After*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2000.

E.g.: Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (2008):

*Russia (...) as a country possessing a **major potential** and significant resources **in all spheres of human activities**, vigorously developing relations with leading States and associations throughout the world (...) **exerts a substantial influence upon the development of a new architecture of international relations.***

*The Russian Federation possesses **real capacity** to play a **well-deserved** role **globally.***

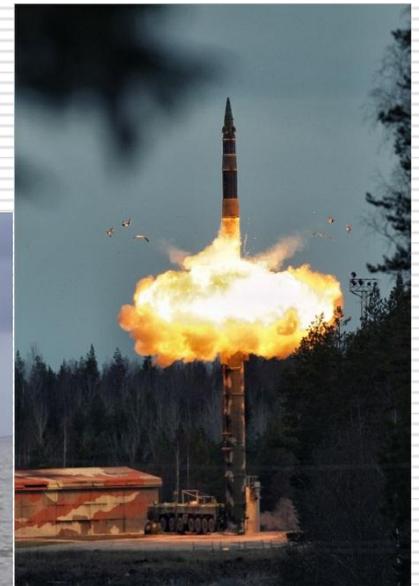
Russia's Strategic Nuclear Modernization

- 1997: Silo-based Topol-M (SS-27 Mod.1) deployed
 - 2005: Bulava SLBM first flight-tested
 - 2006: Mobile (TEL) Topol-M (SS-27 Mod.1) deployed
 - 2007: Sineva SLBM (SS-N-23 M1) deployed
 - 2009: PAK DA strategic bomber announced
 - 2010: Mobile Yars (SS-27 Mod.2) deployed
 - *2013 and Beyond*: Yars-M, another new MIRVed ICBM, rail-mobile ICBM, Layner SLBM, nuclear-tipped ALCM, new SSBNs...
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Russia's Strategic Nuclear Modernization

- Since 2009, Russia has been actively and ***simultaneously*** building new weapon systems for ***all*** three legs of its triad.

Why?



Russia and Nuclear Weapons

**Identity as a Great Power + Messianism +
Militarized Strategic Culture =**

= Desire to be **admired** as a military great power

- Nuclear weapons = "best" weapons
 - Russia's "state-of-the-art" NW: better precision, longer ranges, higher speeds, lower yields, shortened boost phase, MIRVed, more maneuverable...
 - Russia's defense industry: "our pride"
See: Vladimir Putin, "Being Strong: National Security Guarantees for Russia," *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, February 20, 2012.
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Russia and Nuclear Reductions



- A much more sensitive matter than for the United States
- Risk of losing an important part of its identity (status)



US and Nuclear Reductions

- Great power status not derived from NW
- ***Externally*** imposed limits on nuclear zero policy
X
- Russia: major limits are ***internal***
(psychological)

Result: very different intensity of the desire to achieve nuclear zero/deep reductions

Conclusion

In the absence of a **demilitarizing transformation** of Russia's strategic culture and its identity, we may conclude that **as long as nuclear weapons** are regarded as the ultimate, and in a sense, the most effective weapons, Russia's desire and genuine willingness to negotiate their reductions will be very weak, if not entirely lacking.

*It is already clear that **nuclear deterrence will retain its leading role and importance in the structure of the Russian armed forces, at least until we develop new types of weapons, new-generation assault systems, including high precision weapons.***

Putin, "Being Strong: National Security Guarantees for Russia."

Thank you.

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