

Contextualizing and Engaging Russian Nuclear Policy

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Doctrine and Prestige

- Nuclear weapons remain a key pillar of Russia's national security and global status.
- Only military component that makes Russia a global power.
- Key foreign policy tool: threat mantra or bargaining chip.
- Russia fears any devaluation of its strategic nuclear force.
 - developing a new heavy, liquid-fueled, MIRVed ICBM.
- Yet importance Russia affords its nuclear arsenal detracts its attention from other threats.



Nuclear Arms Control



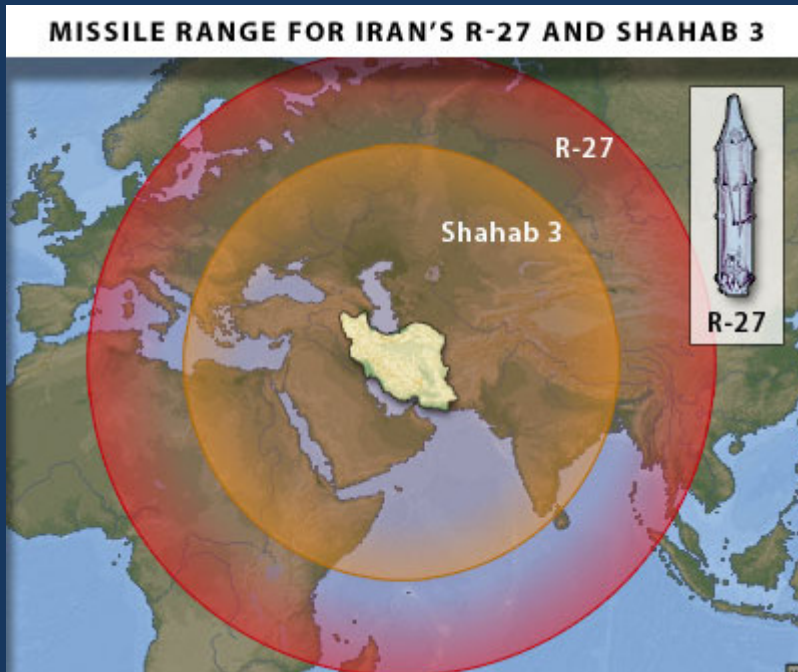
- Nuclear war is unrealistic.
- Thus interest in nuclear arms control lies elsewhere.
- Status, nuclear parity, and transparency vis-à-vis the U.S.
- Political cover for natural force obsolescence and degrading military-industrial complex.
- Maintain NPT leadership, support global disarmament, and prevent collapse of strategic arms talks.
- Pillar to engage on other issues: e.g., Afghanistan.
- Provides predictability to plan against worst case scenario.

Russian Military Reform

- Nuclear weapons compensate for a conventional military that will remain inferior.
- A reformed military is likely to *not* result in the reduction in the role of nuclear weapons.
 - retards Russian nuclear reductions.
 - nuclear arms will remain ultimate deterrent to superior militaries.
- Tactical nuclear weapons will play a greater role in deterring possible regional conflicts.
- Reform also aims to develop precision conventional arms which offer a more credible deterrent than nuclear arms.



Russia's Threat Perception



- Inconsistency: institutionally, NATO remains Russia's main threat even though war with NATO is unlikely.
 - particularly concerned with counterforce potential of U.S. prompt global strike.
 - but Russian national security doctrine only posits NATO *expansion* as a threat.
 - further, military reform aimed at non-NATO contingencies indicates that NATO is not in practice viewed as a main threat for Russia.
- Russia is hedging its bets on Iran.
 - does not perceive an imminent threat.
 - bipolar policy: appease the West but maintain constructive ties with Tehran.
 - gain economically.
 - “check” U.S. regional influence.
 - Moscow believes there is little it can do short of a military strike.

China: Russia's Paper Tiger

- Moscow's "eastern shift" driven by China's rise and pressing threats south and east of Russia's borders.
- China seen as a genuine concern:
 - perceived as an unpredictable, superior and expanding country.
- But conflict is highly unlikely:
 - little to gain from conflict.
 - China can obtain resources elsewhere.
 - China cannot be dealt with by force or nukes.
- Russia fears China's ability to achieve strategic parity and threaten its west.
 - China drives uncertainty in Moscow as to the future of Russia's nuclear arsenal.
 - arms talks with China are not practical now given differing security needs and disparities in the size and type of respective arsenals.



Russian Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW)



- No clear role in Russia's 2010 national security doctrine.
- Seen as a hedge to a possible Chinese conventional attack.
 - but location and type of deployed TNW does not reflect this rationale.
- Also seen as a counter-balance to NATO and U.S. prompt global strike.
 - unlike strategic, a tactical response would not necessarily lead to nuclear war.
- TNW cannot be used against the U.S., NATO or China.
- TNW offer no credible military or deterrent utility to Russia.
- TNW maintained to be bargaining chip in future nuclear arms talks.

Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD)

- **Test case for U.S. / NATO-Russian ties.**
- **Russia recognizes, however, that BMD is not a threat because:**
 - interceptors are too far, too short and too few
 - technological and economic difficulties facing US
 - even with BMD a nuclear attack is unlikely
- **Opposition driven by political posturing:**
 - precedent for sidelining Russia on security issues
 - resents a superior familiar foe it perceives as ignoring Russia
 - domestic politics: BMD threatens Russia and constrains its capabilities
 - Russian threats of an arms race are unrealistic



BMD: Prospects for Cooperation

- **Russia's BMD system is unreliable and currently incompatible with that of the envisioned U.S.-NATO system.**
- **Separate but coordinated BMD systems is the best arrangement.**
 - Russian demands for sectorial BMD and legal guarantees are nonstarters.
- **Agreement on phased deployment of PAA Phases III and IV in light of Iran's nuclear capabilities.**
- **First reconcile the purpose of a cooperative BMD system.**
 - Unique opportunity to transform U.S./NATO-Russian relations.
- **Technical cooperation helps surf ebbs and flows of relations.**
 - joint threat assessment, data exchange, and BMD exercises.
 - develop joint protocol on separate but coordinated decisions to intercept.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **Russia will never completely eliminate its nuclear arsenal.**
 - key to its “seat” at great powers table and compensates for its inferior military.
- **Much room for further strategic nuclear reductions.**
 - Hindrances: (i) U.S. Congress; (ii) Russian military; (iii) Russian fears of China.
- **U.S.-Russian TNW Treaty is a logical next step.**
 - (i) define NSNF; (ii) exchange data; and (iii) create verification regime.
- **Progress on conventional arms control in Europe would facilitate talks on an NSNF Treaty.**
- **Russian conventional military reform presents an opportunity to help Moscow reduce its dependence on nuclear weapons.**
- **U.S. and NATO must continue engagement with Russia and insofar as possible accommodate to Moscow’s concerns.**