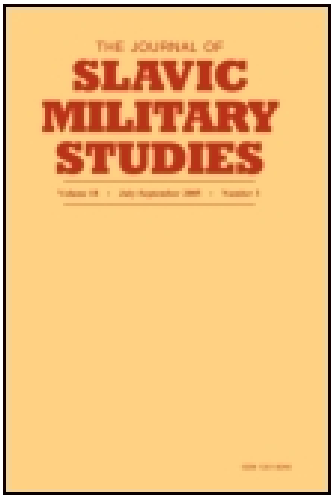

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Daniel Goure[a]
[a] The Lexington Institute
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Moscow's Visions of Future War: So Many Conflict Scenarios So Little Time, Money and Forces

DANIEL GOURE
The Lexington Institute

Like the United States and NATO, Russia is struggling to define the future security environment and shape a course to the creation of a relevant and effective military. Russia's strategic vision is of an uncertain, complex and quite dangerous word with threats ranging from internal subversion through intercontinental nuclear exchanges. The Russian military faces an impossible dilemma. It must address a broadening spectrum of prospective conflict scenarios with inadequate resources leading inevitably to the fielding

Daniel Goure is a vice president with the Lexington Institute, a nonprofit public-policy research organization headquartered in Arlington, Virginia. He is involved in a wide range of issues as part of the institute's national security program. Goure has held senior positions in both the private sector and the U.S. government. Most recently, he was a member of the 2001 Department of Defense Transition Team. Goure spent two years in the U.S. government as the director of the Office of Strategic Competitiveness in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He also served as a senior analyst on national security and defense issues with the Center for Naval Analyses, Science Applications International Corporation, SRS Technologies, R&D Associates and System Planning Corporation. Prior to joining the Lexington Institute, Goure was the Deputy Director, International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. At CSIS, Goure was responsible for analyses of U.S. national security policy, the future of conflict and warfare, the information revolution, counter-proliferation and defense industrial management. He directed analyses of emerging security issues with a special emphasis on U.S. military capabilities in the next century. Dr. Goure is a well-known and respected presence in the national and international media, having been interviewed by all the major networks, CNN, Fox, the BBC, *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Christian Science Monitor*, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Los Angeles Times*. He has been published extensively in over two dozen journals and periodicals. He is also an NBC national security military analyst. Dr. Goure holds Master's and Ph.D. degrees in international relations and Russian Studies from Johns Hopkins University and a B.A. in Government and History from Pomona College.

Address correspondence to Daniel Goure, The Lexington Institute, 1600 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 900, Arlington, VA 22209. E-mail: dgoure2001@yahoo.com

of inadequate capabilities. One reason that Russia clings so tenaciously to nuclear weapons is its recognition that it is the nation's central, even the sole, source of political relevance and military power.

INTRODUCTION

In many ways, the security situation facing Russian defense planners today is similar to that confronting their U.S. counterparts. U.S. defense plans speak of an era of uncertainty, even chaos, with the number, location and types of security challenges increasing. The future strategic landscape is one characterized as complex, technologically interconnected and politically fragmented. It is a world in which traditional political identities are weakening, many governments and states are losing their grip on legitimacy and power and power is being distributed more broadly than ever before. Technological advances are contributing to the velocity and intensity of changes to all the major markers of national power: economics, production, science and military capabilities. The IT revolution is not only changing the speed with which information is accumulated, organized and distributed, it is also changing the character of political discourse and international relations. Alliances, states, groups and even individuals will pursue competing agendas with all the resultant friction and potential conflict that implies. But they are likely to do it in new and different ways.

U.S. defense planning documents stress that the traditional division between war and peace has been blurred with greater emphasis in strategic plans placed on unstable or failing states and the need to improve the self-defense and even self-policing capabilities of friends and partners. There is still the need to prepare to deter if possible or fight, if necessary, both nuclear and large-scale conventional conflicts. However, U.S. defense documents are increasingly focused on the need to plan both for conflicts involving new adversaries employing traditional methods and means of fighting as well as old enemies equipped with new means. These so-called hybrid threats will involve a wide mixture of state and non-state actors and conventional and unconventional ways of warfare. In addition, there remains, of course, the threat posed by international terrorism.[1]

The number, variety and scale of future conflict scenarios are not the only inputs to the formulation of requirements for future U.S. military forces. Since the end of the Cold War, every U.S. administration has asserted a close

[1] Department of Defense (DoD), *Quadrennial Defense Review Report,* Washington, DC: DoD, February 2010, pp. 6–12; Kathleen Hicks and Samuel J. Brannen, 'Force Planning in the 2010 QDR', *Joint Forces Quarterly* 59(4), 2010, pp. 137–142; DoD, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, Washington, DC, January 2012, pp. 11–21.

relationship between the United States' place and role in the world and its military capabilities. Simply put, successive national security strategies and defense programs have agreed that the measure of a superpower is the ability to fight two major regional conflicts at the same time. Every administration has put its own spin on the two-war standard, sometimes repeatedly. The initial formulation was based on the concern that the United States might have to deal with aggression at the same time in both Southwest and Northeast Asia. Over time, the requirement evolved from maintaining the capability to defeat two conventionally armed aggressors to a more complex formulation in which the U.S. military was asked to be able to conduct a single campaign against a conventional adversary while also waging a long-duration counterinsurgency and stability campaign or protecting the homeland against attack and providing support to civil authorities.[2]

In his announcement of the Obama administration's new defense strategy in 2012, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta declared that

> Our strategy review concluded that the United States must have the capability to fight several conflicts at the same time. We are not confronting, obviously, the threats of the past; we are confronting the threats of the 21st century. And that demands greater flexibility to shift and deploy forces to be able to fight and defeat any enemy anywhere. How we defeat the enemy may very well vary across conflicts. But make no mistake, we will have the capability to confront and defeat more than one adversary at a time.[3]

Ironically, the preeminent threat scenario of the Cold War era, a theater-scale conflict with a near peer leading to a nuclear exchange has all but vanished from U.S. strategy and defense documents. In fact, very little attention has been given in U.S. defense papers to the prospects for conflicts involving other major powers, notably Russia and China. The so-called pivot to the Asia-Pacific region is the first explicit geostrategic acknowledgment of a requirement to deter China. Even so, discussions of scenarios have been couched in ways calculated not to draw attention to the possibility of China as an adversary.

U.S. defense policy emphasizes the complex nature of the international environment and the difficulty inherent in developing plans oriented around specific scenarios and adversaries. Future challenges may not even be readily apparent, and the shape they take today does not necessarily determine their form tomorrow. This uncertainty requires planners to look carefully at the world, considering a wide range of possibilities and evaluating their

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[2] Daniel Goure, *The Measure of a Superpower: A Two Major Regional Contingency Military for the 21st Century*, Heritage Foundation, February 14, 2014.

[3] Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta, 'Statement on Defense Strategic Guidance', The Pentagon, Washington, DC, 5 January 2012.

likelihood against the risks that they present. The primary challenge for U.S. defense officials going forward is to design and maintain a force structure of sufficient capacity and diversity to be able to address both the breadth of potential demands for military forces as well as the size of the most stressing scenarios.

In many ways, Moscow's thinking about the future of warfare and how to organize, train and equip the Russian military has followed a course similar to that in the United States. If anything, the loss of a central planning scenario struck Russian defense leaders even harder than their American counterparts. The collapse of the Soviet Union, liberation of the Warsaw Pact, eastward expansion of NATO and the rise of hostile non-state actors forced Moscow to confront a complex array of political and military challenges to Russian security.

An example of this mirroring phenomenon is the so-called Ivanov Doctrine, named after the former Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov. In a white paper published in 2003, the Ministry of Defense argued that the Russian military must be capable of addressing any contingency across the spectrum of conflict. In addition, paralleling the U.S. two major theater war force sizing construct, the white paper asserted the need for a military capability to deal with two simultaneous regional or local wars.[4] Elsewhere, Ivanov declared that

> Military preparedness, operational planning, and maintenance need to be as flexible as possible because in recent years no single type of armed conflict has dominated. The Russian armed forces will be prepared for regular and anti-guerrilla warfare, the struggle against different types of terrorism, and peacekeeping operations.[5]

At the end of the Cold War, the United States possessed the obvious advantage of being the world's sole superpower. Even after the military experienced a decade-long drawdown that began in the waning years of the Reagan administration, it was still unquestionably superior in virtually every dimension of power to any conceivable adversary or constellation of foes. National leaders, defense experts and academics discussed the emergence of a new era in international relations, one in which non-military instruments of power came to the fore. But they did so against the backdrop of unquestioned U.S. military preeminence.

This was not the case for the Russian military. At the end of the Cold War, the U.S. military conducted an orderly drawdown; the Soviet military essentially collapsed. In just three years, the size of the Soviet Armed Forces

[4] Stephen Blank, *A New Russian Defense Doctrine*, UNISCI Discussion Papers, Number 12, October 2006.

[5] *ITAR-TASS News Agency*, in Russian, 2 October 2003.

declined by some 50 percent; defense spending shrank by 75 percent over this period, and arms acquisitions plummeted by more than 90 percent. The Cold War-era Warsaw Pact alliance evaporated with most of its members rapidly embraced by NATO. The vaunted defense industrial complex ground to a near-total halt. In the words of one longtime observer of the Soviet and Russian militaries, 'In a mere six years, the world's largest and arguably most powerful military melted like the spring ice in Russia's arctic rivers as it breaks up, drifts in floes, and slowly disappears.'[6]

The Soviet Union had been a superpower because it was a military colossus. By the 1980s at the latest, there were few other aspects of the Soviet state that provided Moscow a consistent and global basis for exerting international leverage. From the dark days of 1991 to the present, Moscow has never wavered in its belief that military power continues to be a central, even the sole, measure of a nation's global status. To a certain extent, this perspective was a reflection of Russia's political and economic weakness. But it also acknowledged the basic realities of international relations and reflected a view of the nature of the international security environment as one dominated by instruments of leverage or coercion. From Moscow's perspective, the events of the past two decades have given Russian leaders no reason to change their view on the political value of military power.

A consensus within Russia's national security elites on the need for strength and the importance of a robust and capable military provides only limited guidance to defense planners. For what kinds of conflicts should the Russian military prepare, and what kinds of forces should be created? On these two questions there is reason to pity the poor Chief of the General Staff or Ministry of Defense (MoD) planner. Unlike the Soviet era, when there was a single central scenario, now there are many. In fact, if anything, the number of scenarios is expanding and within the various categories the subspecies are proliferating.

Beginning in the early 2000s and continuing for a number of years, the Russian government developed a rather extensive description of the challenges to Russia's security. The 2010 military doctrine laid out perhaps the longest and most involved definition of these threats.

- The desire to endow the force potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with global functions carried out in violation of the norms of international law and to move the military infrastructure of NATO member countries closer to the borders of the Russian Federation, including by expanding the bloc;
- The attempts to destabilize the situation in individual states and regions and to undermine strategic stability;

[6] William Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1998, p. ix.

- The deployment (buildup) of troop contingents of foreign states (groups of states) on the territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation and its allies and also in adjacent waters;
- The creation and deployment of strategic missile defense systems undermining global stability and violating the established correlation of forces in the nuclear-missile sphere, and also the militarization of outer space and the deployment of strategic nonnuclear precision weapon systems;
- Territorial claims against the Russian Federation and its allies and interference in their internal affairs;
- The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missiles and missile technologies and the increase in the number of states possessing nuclear weapons;
- The violation of international accords by individual states, and also noncompliance with previously concluded international treaties in the field of arms limitation and reduction;
- The use of military force on the territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation in violation of the UN Charter and other norms of international law;
- The presence (emergence) of seats of armed conflict and the escalation of such conflicts on the territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation and its allies;
- The spread of international terrorism;
- The emergence of seats of interethnic (interfaith) tension, the activity of international armed radical groupings in areas adjacent to the state border of the Russian Federation and the borders of its allies, the presence of territorial contradictions and the growth of separatism and violent (religious) extremism in individual parts of the world.

There are echoes to these themes in the Russian Military Doctrine's listing of main military threats. However, similar in character to policy statements from the U.S. Department of Defense, the Russian Military Doctrine focuses on classes of threats or changes in the state of military-technological balances, including the movement of forces near and around Russian territory.

- A drastic deterioration in the military-political situation (interstate relations) and the creation of the conditions for the utilization of military force;
- the impeding of the operation of systems of state and military command and control of the Russian Federation, the disruption of the functioning of its strategic nuclear forces, missile early warning systems, systems for monitoring outer space, nuclear munitions storage facilities, nuclear energy facilities, atomic and chemical industry facilities, and other potentially dangerous facilities;

- the creation and training of illegal armed formations and their activity on the territory of the Russian Federation or on the territories of its allies;
- a show of military force with provocative objectives in the course of exercises on the territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation or its allies;
- a stepping up of the activity of the Armed Forces of individual states (groups of states) involving partial or complete mobilization and the transitioning of these states' organs of state and military command and control to wartime operating conditions.[7]

These threats/scenarios can be aggregated into three main groupings. The first are those related to the growing military power of major states' military power against Russian interests and territory. Included in this category are efforts to undermine international law and institutions, thereby making the resort to force easier and the consequences less. The second are threats to Russia's territorial integrity and the stability of the states immediately around Russia. The third is the combination of failing states, sociopolitical conflicts and international terrorism.

Part of what makes the topology of Russian conflict scenarios so difficult to encompass is the particularly Russian view of the dynamics of international relations. It is hard for most outside observers to appreciate the extent of the trauma visited on Russia's current leadership of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, termed by Vladimir Putin as 'the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century'.[8]

This trauma, exacerbated by Russian economic and military weakness in the ensuing years, has only compounded a harshly negative, even paranoid, view of national security with its roots back to the beginning of the Soviet era. As one long-time observer of Russian politics, Therese Delpech, commented:

> The Soviet mind-set (suspiciousness, imperial syndrome, desire to preserve Central and Eastern Europe as zones of possible expansion, attempts to drive a wedge between the United States and Europe) is still alive 20 years after the end of the Cold War.[9]

At a superficial level, the Russian preoccupation with U.S./NATO actions is something of a parallel to U.S. concerns for the rise of a so-called peer competitor. It is interesting that the description of scenarios of concern in the new U.S. strategy is evolving in a way similar to that which we saw in the Russian military doctrine. The new U.S .strategy is moving away from

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7 *The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation*, 5 February 2010.

8 'Putin Deplores Collapse of the Soviet Union,' 15 April 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/4480745.

9 Therese Delpech, *Nuclear Deterrence in the 21st Century*, The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2012, p. 132.

a focus on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism scenarios and toward mid- and even high-level conflict. Recent joint planning documents such as AirSea Battle and the joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC) are centered on scenarios involving large-scale expeditionary power projection in an environment marked by the presence of advanced threats. These threats are commonly referenced under the heading of anti-access/area denial (A2/AD).

However, Russian formulations on security have taken this concern for the U.S. and NATO's political and military expansion to an unprecedented level. Russian commentaries are full of discussions of the deliberate efforts by the U.S. and its NATO allies to surround Russia, undermine it politically and economically, deploy advanced weapons within range of Russian territory and support the efforts by states on the periphery to take actions hostile to Russian interests. Many Russian threat assessments are framed in terms reminiscent of those employed during the late Soviet period. In many ways, it is as if the changes in the strategic environment that play so prominently in U.S. statements on security and defense policies has virtually no counterpart in Russian documents.[10]

The Kremlin clearly identifies NATO's viability and its potential enlargement as the main threat to its national security. The National Security Strategy makes it clear that Russia finds 'unacceptable the encroachment of the Alliance's military infrastructure to its borders', as well as NATO's attempts to 'assume global responsibilities which are inconsistent with international law'. It goes on to draw attention to the 'unsustainability of the existing global and regional security architecture oriented toward NATO'. Consider against this the view within the Alliance that envisions a revitalized and militarily stronger NATO engaged in more out-of-area operations.[11]

It is important to appreciate Russian views of potential conflict scenarios in the context of Russian leadership's sense of their own vulnerability. Unfortunately, and somewhat perversely, this pervasive concern about Russian weakness causes Moscow to behave in a certain way on the international stage that causes reactions that Russian leaders, not surprisingly, interpret as threatening. Secular demographic, social and economic trends argue that Russia's sense of its own weakness and, hence, vulnerability will only grow. Moscow is determined to take what little time it has and what few resources are available to try to leverage itself into a secure position as a coequal of the world's great and rising powers.

The most serious national security challenge to Russia is posed by the intersection of three trends. The first is persistent Russian weakness in almost all measures of national power. Russian weaknesses are often juxtaposed against Western and, in particular, U.S. strengths. The second is the continued

[10] Stephen J. Blank, 'No Need to Threaten Us, We Are Frightened of Ourselves: Russia's Blueprint for a Police State, the New Security Strategy', *The Russian Military Today and Tomorrow: Essays in Memory of Mary Fitzgerald*, U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies, 2009, pp. 105–107.

[11] *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2010*, 12 May 2009.

political and military strength of the Western Alliance and its ability, demonstrated in Libya, to rapidly deploy significant military power into surrounding regions. The third is the persistent efforts by states along Russia's periphery to maintain their independence. Virtually all Russian discussions of national security issues address several of these topics.

U.S. initiatives over the past decade under administrations Democratic and Republican have only strengthened Moscow's belief that the West is seeking unilateral advantage and Russia must make every effort to improve its military and political strengths in order to counter this trend. Even where international events seem to have direct bearing on Russian security, they are viewed by the Kremlin through the lens of Russian military weakness and political fragility.

> The worst-case scenario is not war with the West, but instability in the region separating Europe from Russia, Russia's wish to acquire Western recognition of "zones of influence," limited cooperation concerning Iran (even after Moscow's acquiescence to the May 2010 1929 U.N. Security Council resolution), and the destabilizing factor of arms sales or transfer of advanced equipment to third-party countries. The United States, for all the good words coming from Washington (including the famous "reset"), is not trusted, in particular after the military campaign over Kosovo (1999), the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty (2002), successive NATO enlargements, the Obama Administration's unwillingness to agree to new limits on missile defenses and the NATO campaign against Libya. This last is particularly galling to Moscow which sees itself as having been taken advantage of. Russia's abstention concerning the U.N. Security Council resolution imposing a no-fly zone over Libya in March 2011 was almost immediately followed by the expansion of the conflict.[12]

In his now famous pre-election article in *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, soon-to-be President Vladimir Putin described the current security situation in a similar fashion:

> New regional and local wars are breaking out before our eyes. There are areas of instability and artificially heated, controlled regions of chaos. These can be traced to deliberate attempts to provoke conflict in the immediate vicinity of the borders of Russia and our allies. We see how the basic principles of international law are devalued and destroyed, especially in the field of international security.[13]

An excellent example of how this sense of pervasive weakness results in a warped vision of future conflict scenarios was provided by an article in *Military Thought* on the Russian–U.S. competition. After discussing the

[12] Delpech, *op. cit*.

[13] Vladimir Putin, 'Strength Is the Guarantee of Security for Russia', *Rossiskaya Gazetta*, 20 February 2012.

disparities in the power relationship between the two states that favored the U.S., the author went on to describe a 'worst case' strategic scenario:

> The following American scenario for Russia, therefore, should not to be counted out: systematically reducing Russia's economic power and defense potential; turning it into a supplier of raw material for American economy; making its foreign and domestic policies serve America's interests; keeping the zone of the Russian Federation's geopolitical interests within the boundaries of its territory; making attempts to destabilize the sociopolitical situation in the Russian Federation by, for example, fueling antagonism between ethnic Russians and people of other nations living in Russia; and instigating religious conflicts between the orthodox Christians and Moslems.[14]

So serious have these challenges become that some Russian national security analysts now speak of a consensus among Russian elites on the need for an assertive political-military strategy designed to reverse these trends.

> Russia must restore itself as an economic, military and political superpower, which involves not only rebuilding its military, industrial and technological base, but also reestablishing absolute dominance in its "natural sphere of influence the former Soviet republics," that gained independence in 1991. All of Russia's neighbors are seen as potential adversaries, "especially pro-Western, nationalistic anti-Russian entities, like Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltic states." The present "Moscow consensus recognizes that Russia must dislodge, using soft power or direct military efforts against all neighboring anti-Russian regimes and limit Western influence. Since the US and the US-led alliance of Western nations actively oppose Russian efforts to reestablish its dominance, they are Russia's chief enemy.[15]

The Kremlin has struggled to present an image of Russian strength, particularly vis-à-vis the United States. Moscow has undertaken a number of what can only be described as stunts to demonstrate a continuing global role and some basic level of equivalence to the U.S. After a hiatus of some 20 years, the Russian military has returned to the Cold War pattern of exercises and activities. These heavy bomber aviation patrols engage NATO and U.S. air defenses, out-of-area naval deployments, including to Cuba and Venezuela, and joint and combined exercises.

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[14] Colonel A., Yu. Maruyev, 'Russia and the U.S. in Confrontation: Military and Political Aspects', *Military Thought* 203, 2009, p. 4.

[15] Pavel Felgenhauer, 'Russia Is Building an "Iron Fist" to Deter the West; A National Consensus in Moscow on Pursuing a Revisionist Strategy', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 13(19), Jamestown Foundation, 17 September 2012.

At the same time, Russian leaders recognize that their country is so weak relative to the U.S. and its allies that it cannot risk direct confrontation. But the logic of Moscow's threat assessments, particularly the firm belief that the U.S. and NATO are seeking positions of unilateral advantage and to weaken Russian security, forces them to attempt countervailing maneuvers. This necessitates that Russia look for ways of enhancing its own prestige and position in the world while simultaneously limiting the West's influence and access, particularly to regions of the world abutting Russia.

Senior U.S. national security officials came to recognize that as a result of Russia's economic and military weakness, Moscow had no choice but to rely increasingly on nuclear weapons for its security. As a U.S. defense official commented:

> There are aspects to their nuclear doctrine, their military activities that we find very troubling. If you read recent Russian military doctrine they are going in the other direction, they are actually increasing their reliance on nuclear weapons, the role in nuclear weapons in their strategy.[16]

Russian conflict scenarios need to be appreciated in the context of three factors. The first is pervasive military weakness, particularly in conventional and counterinsurgency capabilities. The second is an absolute conviction that the international security environment is increasingly hostile to Russian interests. The latter factor naturally would suggest the need for a stronger military and, in particular, a significantly improved conventional capability.

But perhaps the most important factor is the unsettled state of the Russian political system. The current regime has sought to create a sense of external threat in order to make the case for its own hold on power. Threat scenarios are at the service of political rather than military ends. It follows that there may be extreme divergence between the substantive nature of dangers to Russian security and the types of conflict scenarios on which political leaders and military planners focus.

> Maintaining Russia's superpower ambitions and the domination of the former Soviet space are now crucial to the reproduction of the political system and the self-perpetuation of power. In short, Russia's foreign policy has become an important tool for achieving the Kremlin's domestic objectives. And a key foreign policy objective is to create the image of a hostile international environment and demonstrate a strong reaction to which it can legitimize the hyper-centralization of Kremlin power, top-down governance, and its crackdown on political pluralism.[17]

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[16] Honorable Michelle Flournoy, 'Behind the Shine of Obama's New Nuclear Doctrine', RT.com, 6 April 2010.

[17] Lilia Shevtsova, 'The End of Putin's Era: Domestic Drivers of Foreign Policy', in *U.S.-Russian Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?* Washington, DC, Hudson Institute, 26 June 2007, p. 50.

Russian military doctrine has consistently divided the realm of conflict into four broad groupings. According to the 2010 Military Doctrine, these are

- armed conflict (basically, a small-scale clash between two states or within one state similar to the war in Chechnya);
- local war (war with limited goals that affects only the interests of the immediate participants—a good example is the 2008 Russian-Georgian war);
- regional war (war that involves significant forces, including naval and airspace, which affects a large region and perhaps even coalitions of states); and
- large-scale war (war with radical, far-reaching goals that involves all or most great powers; fundamentally, a new world war).[18]

A more useful discussion of Russian visions of future conflicts would divide the spectrum of possibilities into four broad categories. The first category is nuclear scenarios. While the prospects for a central strategic nuclear exchange has waned in the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union, this does not mean that Russian leaders are totally disregarding the possibility of conflicts in which nuclear weapons are employed, albeit in limited ways. Intertwined with the evolving Russian perspective on nuclear use scenarios is the question of U.S. and NATO deployments of advanced air and missile defenses. Russian sources have proposed a number of operational, tactical and technological responses to what they perceive to be a destabilizing threat.

The second category encompasses an array of conventional conflict scenarios along Russia's periphery. These include what Russian military doctrine defines as regional and local wars. Regional and local wars could include the limited use of nuclear weapons if Russia's adversary is a nuclear-armed state or a coalition such as NATO. One of the most important factors in this category is the development of 'weapons based on new physical principles' that allow regional wars to be conducted for strategic purposes.

The third category is what U.S. military writings refer to as counterinsurgency and stability operations. In contrast to the U.S. military, which has devoted enormous attention to this subject at all levels, and despite its own experience with counterinsurgency in the Caucuses, Russian military thought and scenario development gives relatively short shrift to this subject.

The fourth category is a new one: cyber conflict. Like their counterparts in the United States, Russian defense planners are struggling to encompass the role and place of cyber combat in the spectrum of conflict. Is this a

[18] Russian Military Doctrine, *op. cit*. p. 7.

separate domain of warfare or a part of the others, akin to electronic combat? Cyber techniques are certain to be employed in all types of conflicts. The question is whether this is simply a new means of warfare or constitutes a new form, one played out on a different and unique battlefield with different rules, behaviors and consequences than traditional forms of warfare?

THE LIMIT PLACE FOR CENTRAL STRATEGIC CONFLICTS

The combination of domestic weakness, limited international relevance and a sense of continuing, even increasing, external threats propel the Russian leadership to look for areas where they can shore up their situation. The truth is that Russia desperately needs nuclear weapons. It is a power on the international stage almost solely because it possesses nuclear weapons. The collapse of Russia's economy following the end of the Cold War, the parlous state of Russian conventional forces and the sense of proliferating threats results is, in the minds of the Kremlin oligarchs, a logical argument for increased reliance on nuclear weapons. It is no wonder that under these conditions, Russian leaders in general, and certainly the military, would view nuclear weapons as being the one capability that guaranteed Russia's ability to deter aggression. Indeed, it appears as if strategic nuclear weapons are the only factor that contributes to Russia having any relevance in the evolving international system.

Moscow's focus on the significant role of strategic nuclear weapons to Russia's national security stood in sharp contrast to the evolving U.S. view of the same subject. Even as the Clinton and Bush administrations sought to unhinge the relationship between foreign policy and nuclear weapons, successive Russian governments were determined to emphasize precisely how central the weapons remained. According to a Russian nuclear weapons expert:

> While the role of nuclear weapons in Western security thinking is more modest than it was during the Cold War, Russian strategic thinking is evolving in a different direction. Russian military, political, and bureaucratic elites consider nuclear weapons to be the main foundation of Russian security and see them as an instrument that ensures Russia's national interests . . . . As the second largest nuclear power in the world, Russia hopes to strengthen its international influence by relying on its nuclear assets.[19]

Because Russian security policy is based on the core belief that conflict among states, in general, and between Russia and the United States, in particular, is inevitable, and because Russia is incomparably weak vis-à-vis

[19] Yury Fedorov, *New Wine in Old Bottles: The New Salience of Nuclear Weapons,* IFRI, Fall 2007, p. 17.

the array of hostile powers it faces, Moscow views strategic nuclear forces as the essential tool for managing this state of perpetual conflict.

> 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, 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 United States, 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. In this fashion, to the degree that both sides are shackled to this mutual hostage relationship, Russia gains a measure of restraint or even of control over U.S. policy.[20]

One Western political scientist with extensive experience in Moscow made the connection between the retention of nuclear weapons and Russian political and psychological needs explicit.

> As the self-perceived isolated great power in a highly competitive global environment, Russia regards nuclear weapons as the mainstay of both its security posture and status among the major powers of the 21st century. Even though the likelihood of a war with its ex-Cold War adversaries—America, its European allies, and China—is extremely low, nuclear deterrence gives a measure of comfort to the Kremlin that Russia's vital interests will be respected under all circumstances by Washington and Beijing, whose military power and "combined national might," respectively, are now far greater than Russia's.[21]

Russian political-military writings have walked a careful line when it comes to public statements about the role of nuclear weapons in that country's national security. As discussed above, nuclear weapons are vital in Moscow's calculation of the global balance of power. At the same time, Russia appears to recognize that such weapons have only limited operational utility in the absence of an existential threat to the nation's survival. The 2010 National Security Strategy proposed a limited set of scenarios that would justify the employment of nuclear weapons.

> 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

[20] Professor Stephen Blank, *Russia and Nuclear Weapons*, Paper presented to the Atlantic Council Conference in Stockholm, 25–26 May 2010, pp. 10–11.

[21] Dimitri Trenin, 'Russian Perspectives on Global Elimination of Nuclear Weapons', in Barry Blechman, ed., *Russia and the United States*, Stimson Center, July 2009, p. 1.

> against the Russian Federation involving the use of conventional weapons when the very existence of the state is under threat.[22]

Ironically, although strategic nuclear weapons play a central role in Moscow's national security strategy and foreign policy, Russian leaders are forced to admit that the risks of a major strategic exchange with any part are extremely low. In his otherwise extraordinarily bellicose, pre-election article in *Rossiskaya Gazetta*, Vladimir Putin admitted as much.

> The probability of global war between nuclear powers is not high because that would mean the end of civilization. As long as the 'powder' of our strategic nuclear forces created by the tremendous efforts of our fathers and grandfather**s** remains dry, nobody will dare launch a large-scale aggression against us.[23]

Russian images of the trigger for a central strategic conflict typically embed this possibility in a local or regional conflict involving another nuclear power that escalated. Even then, Russian military writings appear to have confidence that a secure second strike capability, the 'powder' to which President Putin refers, will be sufficient to deter further escalation. Unlike the first decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian military and political leaders no longer voice concerns about a strategic 'bolt from the blue', a surprise massed attack on Russian strategic forces and command and control that seeks to disarm Russia and limit damage to the United States.

The one caveat to the above statement is a scenario in which the United States deploys robust strategic missile defenses. Many Russian analyses express concern that the United States is seeking to create a position of strategic advantage in which it could launch a major strategic strike intended to weaken the Russian retaliatory capability sufficiently to allow U.S. missile defenses to achieve damage limitation.[24] Even here, Russian analyses are inclined to view the central exchange as an outgrowth of escalation from a local or regional conflict. The subject of the role of missile defenses in Russian conflict scenarios is discussed in greater detail below.

SCENARIOS FOR LIMITED NUCLEAR CONFLICTS

While a central nuclear exchange does not loom large in Russian visions of future conflicts, the limited use of nuclear weapons does. To a significant extent, this is a logical outgrowth of the decline of Russia's conventional

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22 National Security Strategy, *op. cit.,* p. 22.

23 Putin, *Rossiskaya Gazetta, op. cit*.

24 Vladimir Kozen, 'Novaia IAdernaia Doktrina SSHA: Anakhronism Sokhraniaetsia', *Natsional'naia Oborona* 4, April 2010; and Sergei Lavrov, 'Novyi Dogovor o SNV v Matritse Global'noi Bezopasnosti', *Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn'* 7, July 2010.

forces in the aftermath of the breakup of the Soviet Union and the continuing improvement in the conventional capability of the other major powers: the United States, NATO Europe and China.

Even before the Russian government was able to promulgate either a new military doctrine or a declaratory policy on the role of nuclear weapons in Russian national security, the military was conducting exercises involving the limited use of nuclear weapons. By the late 1990s, Russian military theorists were publishing articles discussing the limited use of theater and even strategic nuclear weapons specifically as a means of de-escalating a regional or even local conflict that had gotten out of control.[25] In this period, the collapse of the Soviet era military appeared to provide Moscow with few options for avoiding conventional defeat in a regional conflict other than by the use of nuclear weapons. As Colonel General Vladimir Yakovlev, then Chief of Russia's nuclear forces, explained Moscow's thinking, '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.'[26]

In 1999, the Russian military conducted its first large-scale combined arms exercise in which it simulated the use of a small number of nuclear weapons for this purpose.

> A large scale military maneuver was organized with the code name: Zapad 99, in which an attack on the Kaliningrad oblast was simulated. During the simulation, this small Russian enclave between Poland and Lithuania could only be held for three days. In order to avoid defeat, Russian troops deployed tactical nuclear weapons 'to de-escalate' the conflict. The simulated use of nuclear weapons included two TU-95 [Bear] and two TU-160 [Blackjack] heavy bombers, launching nuclear air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) against Poland and the United States.[27]

Zapad 99 became the template for Russian exercises involving Eastern Europe and NATO. According to one Western expert, since then the structure of these major exercises has been relatively consistent:

> Since 1999 Russia has conducted operational-strategic exercises dealing with its western strategic direction on a regular basis. Those exercises have included the first use of nuclear weapons to de-escalate and bring about conflict termination in a scenario involving a conventional attack

[25] V. Levshin, A. Nedelin and M. Sosnovskiy, 'O primenenii yadernogo oruzhiya dlya deeskalatsii voyennykh deystviy', *Voennaya Mysl* 3, May–June 1999).

[26] Cited in Blank, *op. cit*., p. 321.

[27] Marcel H.Van Herpen, *Russia's Embrace of Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Its Negative Impact on U.S. Proposals for Nuclear Arms Reduction,* Great Debate Papers, Cicero Foundation, September 2011, p. 12.

> upon Russia from the West by coalition forces enjoying tactical-technical qualitative superiority over Russian conventional forces. The limited nuclear strikes seemed to have designed disrupt C4ISR and precision strike capabilities of the aggressor forces in order to halt the attack.[28]

It took the Russian government a number of years to come to terms with the role of nuclear weapons in non-central strategic conflicts. It is clear that the issue divided Russian leaders and military experts for a protracted period of time. It appears that the discussion hinged on differing assessments of the state of military reform and the likelihood that Russia would be able to deploy a modern conventional capability in the near term.[29] In the months preceding the publishing of the New National Security Strategy, Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of Russia's Security Council, floated a trial balloon in which he suggested that the new National Security Strategy would permit Russian commanders to engage in selective nuclear strikes in the context of a purely conventional local war.[30]

As quoted above, the new formulation placed some limits on the use of nuclear weapons to control a conventional conflict—but not many. As veteran Soviet and Russian strategic analyst Alexei Arbatov noted, the new policy on the use of nuclear weapons in nonstrategic scenarios is fairly expansive.

> Russia may decide to selectively initiate the use of nuclear weapons to "deescalate an aggression" or to "demonstrate resolve," as well as to respond to a conventional attack on its nuclear forces, command, control, communications, and intelligence (C3I) forces (including satellites), atomic power plants, and other nuclear targets.[31]

Over time, the focus of Russian policy with respect to the limited use of nuclear weapons evolved from their role in countering simple quantitative inferiority to their value in counterbalancing advantages that likely adversaries would possess in advanced conventional weapons and, in particular, so-called precision-strike systems. Russian leaders were concerned that they faced adversaries, notably the United States and its allies, with a decisive advantage in advanced conventional weapons. In three conflicts with adversaries armed and trained on the Soviet/Russian model—Operation

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[28] Jacob Kipp, 'Russia's Nuclear Posture and the Threat That Dares Not Speak its Name', in Blank, ed., *op. cit*., p. 463.

[29] See the discussion in Simon Sharadzhyan, *Russia's Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Their Current Configuration and Posture: Strategic Asset or Liability?* Harvard University, Belfor Center, January 2010, pp. 8–9.

[30] Interview With Russian Federation Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev, *Izvestiya*, 14 October 2009.

[31] Alexei Arbatov, *Reducing the Role of Nuclear Weapons*, Paper Presented to the Conference on Achieving the Vision of a World Free of Nuclear Weapons, Oslo, 26–27 February 2008, pp. 5–6.

Desert Storm in 1991, Operation Allied Force in 1998 and Operation Iraqi Freedom—the U.S. demonstrated its ability to exploit the advantages of the modern revolution in military affairs and, in particular, its overwhelming superiority in precision strike systems.

Key to the evolution of scenarios for nonstrategic conflicts is the ability of the Russian defense industrial complex to produce the advanced military systems that are proliferating in eastern militaries. Absent this, Russia will need to continue to rely on nuclear weapons to achieve a balance of forces in major theaters.

> Great, if not decisive, role in determining the nature of warfare have military capabilities of countries in space, in the field of information warfare in the first place—in cyberspace. And in the longer term—the creation of weapons based on new physical principles (radiation, geophysical, wave, genetic, mental and physical, etc.). All of this will, together with nuclear weapons to obtain qualitatively new tools to achieve political and strategic objectives. Such weapons systems would be comparable to the results of the use of nuclear weapons, but it is more "acceptable" in political and military terms. Thus, the role of the strategic balance of nuclear forces in deterring aggression and chaos will gradually decrease.[32]

Some Russian military sources have laid out scenarios in which active defense against aggression were complemented with large-scale strikes by advanced conventional deep-strike systems against a range of high-value targets in the aggressors' homeland. By threatening unacceptable damage on value targets via conventional means, Moscow could deter conventional aggression.

> Combining defensive operations undertaken to beat off aggression and asymmetrical actions relying on the efficiency of modern high-precision conventionally equipped strategic weapons systems, supported by subversive and reconnaissance groups is a persuasive enough factor for the enemy to cease military operations on terms favorable for Russia. This conclusion has a practical significance and relevance in view of the fact that the economy and infrastructure of any European country has a large number of objectives, some of them potentially dangerous, vital for the survival of its population and government. Strategically important targets that, if destroyed, lead to unacceptable damage include the top government administration and military control systems; major manufacturing, fuel, and energy enterprises (steel and engineering plants, oil refineries, defense industry enterprises, electric power plants and substations, oil and gas production, accumulation, and storage facilities, life support facilities, and so on); vitally important transportation facilities across the

[32] Putin, Rossiskaya Gazeta, *op. cit.*

> adversary's entire territory (railroad hubs, bridges, strategic ports, airports, tunnels, and so on); potentially dangerous objectives (hydroelectric power dams and hydroelectric power complexes, processing units of chemical plants, nuclear power facilities, storages of strong poisons, and so on).[33]

President Putin made clear the view of the Russian leadership that the future belonged to militaries capable of employing a range of modern technologies, particular in the areas of IT, rapid communications and precision navigation.

> It should be born in mind that technological progress in many varied areas, from new models of weaponry and military hardware to information and communications technology, has dramatically changed the nature of armed conflicts. Thus, as high-precision, long-range conventional weapons become increasingly common they will tend to become the means of achieving a decisive victory over an opponent, even in a global conflict. [34]

Given the U.S. superiority in advanced conventional weapons, Russian military leaders were also concerned that it could be subjected to what would amount to an overwhelming and disarming first strike in a theater engagement. Precision conventional weapons also could create effects similar to those associated with the use of nuclear weapons if the former were used to attack such targets as chemical factories or nuclear power plants.

For Russian leaders, confronted by the reality of a weak conventional military and a defense industrial sector of only limited capability, the solution to the problem was clear. Thus, for most of the past two decades, Russian political and military leaders, echoing arguments made by their predecessors in the 1980s, have repeatedly argued that the threat of conventional precision-strike weapons could be countered by the employment of theater nuclear weapons.[35] One well-known Russian military expert made the case for tactical nuclear weapons as an appropriate counterweight to conventional precision weapons clear.

> While possessing an overwhelming superiority in the precision-guided conventional munitions sphere, the United States currently only relies to a slight extent on tactical nuclear weapons, although it maintains a small number of nuclear aircraft bombs in Western Europe in order to ensure

[33] Col. S. G. Chekinov and Lt. Gen. S. A. Bogdanov, 'Asymmetric Actions to Maintain Russia's Military Security', *Military Thought* 1, 2010, p. 8.
[34] Putin, Rossiskay Gazeta, *op cit.*
[35] Stephen Blank, 'Undeterred: The Return of Nuclear War', *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 1(2), Summer/Fall 2000, pp. 55–63.

> its political leadership in NATO. Russia is compelled to rely on tactical nuclear weapons as an instrument of nuclear deterrence.[36]

It is interesting to note that even U.S. sources acknowledge that it was because of the U.S. advantage in conventional weapons that Russia had made the choice to emphasize nuclear weapons as the equalizer in theater conflicts. The *Final Report of the Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States* noted, 'Ironically, our edge in conventional capabilities has induced the Russians, now feeling their conventional deficiencies, to increase their reliance on both tactical and strategic nuclear weapons.'[37]

Theater nuclear weapons have become relatively standard features in Russian operational exercises scenarios. A NATO assessment is that the Zapad-2009 exercise in western Russia may have included simulated operations with theater nuclear-armed missiles. According to a Russian newspaper, the final phase of the Vostok-2010 exercise in eastern Russia included the simulated use of a nuclear mine.[38]

Russian scenarios for limited nuclear use generally follow a predictable pattern. What starts out as a very limited engagement with the military forces of peripheral states spirals out of control. This pattern is reflected in Russian military exercises.

> In these exercises, Russia first comes into conflict with such opponents and then, through a chain of unfortunate events, the situation develops into conflict with a larger power (perhaps NATO and/or the United States). The conventional phase of this conflict does not go well and the exercises move toward an apparent Russian first use of nuclear weapons to compensate. This represents a somewhat reluctant use of nuclear weapons at the tail end of an escalation ladder. The Russians are not focused on an opportunity to surprise and defeat but instead seek to ward off defeat by the application of nuclear weapons as a response to, for example, American and NATO conventional precision-strike systems. Which nuclear weapons might be used, how they might be targeted and for what intended effects, and exactly what situations or actions would trigger their employment are contingent on the particulars of the situation.[39]

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[36] Sergei Rogov, Colonel (retired) Valeriy Yarynich, Colonel-General (retired) Viktor Yesin, Major-General (retired) Pavel Zolotarev, 'The Future of Strategic Weapons After Prague: What the Further Steps for the Reduction of the Nuclear Potential Could Be', *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, 1 September 2010.

[37] *Report of the Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United* States, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, 2009, p. 36.

[38] US NATO Delegation NATO-Russia, 'NAC Discusses Russian Military Exercises', *Aftenposten*, 13 February 2011, http://www.aftenposten.no/spesial/wikileaksdokumenter/ article4028273.ece.

[39] James T. Quinlivan and Olga Oliker, *Nuclear Deterrence in Europe: Russian Approaches to a New Environment and Implications for the United States,* RAND MGF 1075, The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2011, p. 67.

Some Russian sources suggest that the goal of limited or de-escalatory strikes should be calibrated to produce a specific level of damage. Calibrated damage is defined as 'damage that is subjectively unacceptable to the enemy and which exceeds the benefits the aggressor expects to gain as a result of the use of military force'. The concept of calibrated damage appears similar to that in U.S. escalation theory of damage intended to ensure that the aggressor's costs outweigh his gains. There is the expectation that by inflicting only calibrated damage, the aggressor will not decide to escalate and suffer even greater damage.[40]

One longtime observer of Russian military affairs noted that based on evidence from military exercises, the typical target set for a de-escalatory strike is limited and generally involved military targets critical to the aggressor's operations. These targets included:

- Airbases as well as command, communications and support facilities in European NATO countries and in at least one case in Japan. New members of NATO are clearly considered first candidates for basing countries for launching an attack against Russia;
- Unknown targets in the continental United States (most likely bases from which B-52s and B-2s would fly missions against Russia);
- Aircraft carrier groups in the Pacific Ocean and the Baltic Sea. Similar operations were simulated at least one in the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean; and
- U.S. bases on Diego Garcia and Guam.[41]

There are some regional conflict scenarios that Russian sources see as almost inherently strategic in character, largely as a result of the nature of the aggressor and its location vis-à-vis Russian territory. Those involving U.S./NATO or Chinese forces in operations on the territory of the former Soviet Union fit this category. There is some evidence that in this year's exercise, Kavkaz 2012, which clearly involved operations against a sophisticated adversary, that theater nuclear weapons were employed to de-escalate the conflict once a successful defense had been achieved.[42]

THE IMPACT OF MISSILE DEFENSES ON CONFLICT SCENARIOS

Like its Soviet predecessor, the Russian government has generally been opposed to the deployment of missile defenses, whether for strategic or

[40] Nikolai Sokov, *Nuclear Weapons in Russian National Security Strategy*, Monterey Institute of International Relations, June 2010, p. 16.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[42] Roger McDermott, 'Kavkaz 2012 Rehearses Defense of Southern Russia', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 9(174), 25 September 2012.

theater purposes. Russian governmental sources, both civilian and military, have consistently viewed U.S. missile defenses as a threat to regional and global stability. Defenses may undermine the certainty of the Russian second strike deterrent, particularly if complemented by a counterforce first strike. In addition, defenses can also devalue nuclear weapons as instruments of political coercion particularly in Europe. Third, missile defenses could deny Russia forces the ability to employ a limited number of theater nuclear weapons to de-escalate a conflict.[43]

> Russia is not opposed to the deployment of a U.S. missile defense shield, but it is against the creation of such a shield that would overtly be directed against it, potentially reducing the capabilities of the Russian strategic nuclear forces.[44]

As part of its strategy to 'reset' relations between the United States and Russia, the Obama administration canceled the proposed Third Site defensive deployment in Europe, replacing it with what was thought to be a less capable and, hence, less threatening deployment. This alternative, known as the European Phased Adaptive Architecture (PAA), was based on the sea-based Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense System, which included the Standard Missile 3. The first of four planned phases of the PAA was declared operational in 2012. Current plans are to deploy the system's subsequent phases every two or three years.[45]

Russia's negative reaction to the PAA appeared to take the U.S. administration by surprise. The Kremlin's hostile response to a limited missile defense in Europe may be a function of Russia's inability to rebuild the non-nuclear portions of its military machine. As a consequence, Moscow increasingly must rely on its nuclear arsenal not only for strategic deterrence but also for any measure of intrawar control and for political influence along its periphery. An integrated regional missile defense system for Europe strikes at the heart of Russia's political strategy vis-à-vis the West.[46]

One additional reason for Russian leaders to focus on offensive counters to theater missile defenses is the relatively weak state of the Russian air/missile defenses. Advanced, non-nuclear missile defenses are very expensive to acquire, deploy and operate. Although Russia has designed and produced in small quantities several different advanced theater missile defense systems—the S-400 and 500—it is not clear that it can produce them

[43] Stephen Blank, 'Russia and Nuclear Weapons', in Stephen Blank, ed. *Russian Nuclear Weapons—Past, Present and Future*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA, November 2011, pp. 315–317.

[44] Lt. Gen. Sergei Karakayev, *Russia Today*, 4 September 2012.

[45] Daniel Goure, 'The Obama Administration's Phased-Adaptive Architecture: Technological, Operational and Political Issues', *Defense and Security Analysis* 28(1), 1 March 2012, pp. 17–31.

[46] Norman Friedman, 'Russia Fires Back on Missile Defense', *Proceedings*, December 2011, pp. 88–89.

in the numbers necessary in order to achieve a damage limiting capability. According to observers, the long-range S-400 air defense system has not yet entered serial production. Only four batteries have been delivered. Plans for rapid acquisition of large numbers of the S-500 must be questioned. In fact, the Chief of the General Staff, Nikolai Makarov, admitted in late 2011 that the S-500's design facility had to be given two additional years to build two new production facilities to manufacture the S-500. According to Russian experts, deliveries will probably begin in 2017 at the earliest.[47]

The fact is that no NATO missile defense based on the proposed technologies and architecture could pose a threat to Russia's strategic deterrent. This is not just a matter of technology but of geography and kinematics. Defensive systems deployed on or near NATO territory could not even engage Russian ICBMs or SLBMs launched against anyplace but Europe itself and, even then, only in the terminal phase of their trajectories. Since Russia has a massive number of theater nuclear weapons, this problem is moot.

For these reasons, it is clear that Russian opposition to theater missile defenses, in general, and the PAA, in particular, is politically motivated., It reflects Moscow's need to continue to hold Europe and other states in Eurasia at risk. The political nature of Russian opposition to missile defenses was acknowledged by one Russian commentator:

> Judging by the intensity of Russia's constant opposition to US missile defenses in Europe, one might think that the very survival of the nation is in danger. In reality, though, the opposite is true: The battle over missile defense is so fierce because the stakes are so low. In terms of an actual impact on Russia's security, US defense is largely irrelevant. The intensity of Russia's opposition to the missile defense plans owes more to its internal political circumstances than to anything else—which is why the current controversy is so persistent despite efforts to resolve it. It is time to acknowledge this and to recognize that, as far as US-Russian relations are concerned, disagreement over missile defense is just an overblown distraction.[48]

The Kremlin has sought to undermine or neutralize the U.S. deployment by a variety of means. Politically, it has vacillated between offering to cooperate with the U.S. and NATO on missile defenses to making dire predictions of the impact of the system on relations between the parties. Russian sources have warned that the consequences of such deployments might be an offensive arms race or even the collapse of strategic arms control. Former Russian President Dimitri Medvedev warned that Russia could decide to walk away from the recently signed New Start treaty: 'Given the intrinsic link between

[47] Carolina Vendil Pallin, ed., *Russia's Military Capabilities in a Ten Year Perspective—2011*, FOI, Sweden, August 2012, p. 83.

[48] Pavel Podvig, 'Point of Distraction', Russianforces.org, 1 June 2012.

strategic offensive and defensive arms, conditions for our withdrawal from the New Start treaty could also arise.'[49] Other Russian sources suggested the possibility that Moscow could decide to withdraw from the INF Treaty and resume deployment of long-range theater ballistic missiles.

In addition to political responses, Russia also identified a number of technological and operational responses to U.S. missile defense deployments. Vladimir Putin argued that given the relationship between offense and defense, improvements in the latter would be met by changes in the former.

> 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.[50]

In his 2012 election campaign, Putin returned to the theme of the need to build offensive capabilities in order to counter the U.S. deployment of missile defenses.

> The times demand decisive steps to strengthen a single system of air and space defense of our country. We are being pushed toward these actions by the policy of the United States and NATO on the question of deploying a missile shield.[51]

Similarly, Russian President Dimitri Medvedev warned that Russia could respond to deployment of defenses in Europe unlimited by an agreement with countermeasures. 'I have set the task to the armed forces to develop measures for disabling missile-defense data and control systems'.[52]

The Commander of the Russian Strategic Forces, Lt. Gen. Sergei Karakayev, publicly claimed that Russian land- and sea-based intercontinental ballistic missiles nuclear were equipped with maneuverable, guided and even 'hypersonic' warheads that could defeat U.S. missile defenses. This may have been why he took such a sanguine view of those defenses.[53]

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[49] David Herszenhorn, 'Russia Elevates Warning About U.S. Missile-Defense Plan in Europe', *The New York Times*, 23 November 2011, p. A1.

[50] Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, speech in Vladivostok cited in Blank, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

[51] Vladimir Putin, Rossiskaya Gazeta, *op. cit.*

[52] Lyudmilla Alexandrova, 'Medvedev's Missile Defense Comments Tough but Nothing New', ITAR-TASS, 24 November 2011.

[53] http://warships1discussionboards.yuku.com/topic/21008/New-Russian-strategic-missiles-invulnerable-RVSN-commande.

Senior Russian officials have also been very clear that they would also consider preemptive strikes against theater missile defenses in a crisis. In a televised speech to the nation in November 2011, Medvedev announced that the negotiations with NATO would continue, but that Russia would take measures to counter the PAA. Russia's ballistic missile defense is to be upgraded and systems to disrupt missile defense systems are to be developed. If this proves to be insufficient, Medvedev has threatened to station the Iskander short-range ballistic missile system in southwest and western Russia, including the Kaliningrad Oblast, in order to be able to strike European targets more rapidly or mass their fire in order to overwhelm the system.[54] Similar comments were made by other a number of Russian military leaders, often tying their comments to statements regarding the capabilities of the Iskander system.[55]

Other Russian sources have gone even farther, suggesting that during a crisis involving NATO, Moscow might actually consider the use of force against Western missile defenses. In a public statement, the Chief of the General Staff, General Makarov, not only cited the traditional Russian counters to a theater missile defense system such as moving missiles closer to their European targets or adding countermeasures but also, as 'an extreme measure', launching a preemptive strike against missile installations in Europe.[56]

It will be a number of years before the United States either alone or with its allies deploys robust theater missile defenses. Nevertheless, it is clear that even modest defenses have a significant impact on Russian perceptions of future conflicts and on Moscow's defense programs.

CONVENTIONAL CONFLICT SCENARIOS

As discussed above, the central concern in Russian statements on national security and defense policy is with the security of the immediate geographical environs around the periphery of Russia. Much like the great Eurasian empires of old, the much reduced Russia of the 21st century initially had to focus most of its attention with respect to conventional conflict scenarios on managing threats along its borders and in the regions immediately beyond. As NATO expanded, the United States launched military operations in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Russian leadership increasingly saw the problems of conventional conflict with states along its western and

[54] President's Announcement Concerning the Situation Regarding the Planned NATO Missile Defense System in Europe, *Prezident Rossii*, 23 November 2011, http://news.kremlin.ru/news/13637.

[55] See Stephen Blank, 'Eastern European Missile Defense: Russian Threat Assessment and Iran', *AEI Critical Threats*, 13 July 2009.

[56] Richard Boudreaux, 'Moscow Raises Alarm Over Missile-Defense Plan for Europe', *The Wall Street Journal*, 3 May 2012.

southern borders as merging with scenarios for a 'great powers' conflict with the United States/NATO.

The primary adversary in the majority of Russian scenarios for conventional conflict is the United States, typically in concert with its NATO allies. One of the catalytic events that propelled Moscow to shift its vision of future conventional conflicts was NATO's intervention in the Balkans in 1998. The air campaign in Operation Allied Freedom demonstrated the significant technological progress made by the United States in the application of technologies such as stealth and precision-guidance in the years since Desert Storm. It appeared to confirm the analyses of Russian military theorists regarding the emerging revolution in military affairs based on a combination of advanced IT systems and networks, comprehensive ISR and long-range precision strikes.[57]

In addition, NATO's apparent indifference to Russian interests in the region resulted in a near clash of forces. The consequences of the Balkans campaign was, in the opinion of a longtime expert on Soviet and Russian military thought, dramatic: 'The campaign put an end to Moscow's assumptions about a strategic partnership and raised the importance of the issue of future war for the Russian political elite'.[58]

The first major Russian military exercise since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Zapad 99, both reflected the lessons Moscow had learned from the events of 1998 and set the tone for subsequent views on conventional conflict scenarios. According to a number of reports, the scenario began with a NATO-imposed blockade of Kalinigrad that then escalated to clashes between NATO and Russian forces in the Baltic region. NATO's ability to employ advanced conventional strike systems threatened to overwhelm Russian defenses. The forces that Russia had to deploy in this scenario were relatively small, technologically obsolescent and logistically unsustainable. In order to avoid defeat, Moscow chose to escalate, conducting a nuclear attack with bomber-launched long-range cruise missiles. Two nuclear warheads hit targets in Western Europe and two in the United States. Ironically, observers suggest that the decision to use air-launched nuclear cruise missiles rather than theater or strategic ballistic missiles was taken in order to limit the risks of misinterpretation. Despite the fact that two targets in the U.S. homeland were struck with nuclear weapons, the scenario ended with NATO backing down. [59]

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[57] See, as an example, Makhmut Gareev and Vladirmir Slipchenko, *Future War*, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, Foreign Military Studies Office, 2007.

[58] Jacob Kipp, 'Operational Art and the Curious Narrative on the Russian Contribution: Presence and Absence Over the Last 2 Decades', in Stephen Blank and Richard Weitz, eds., *The Russian Military Today and Tomorrow: Essays in Memory of Mary Fitzgerald*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA, July 2010, p. 235.

[59] Pavel Felgenhauer, 'Russia Still Sees West as Primary Enemy', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 4(110), 6 June 2007; and Jacob Kipp, 'Russia's Nonstrategic Nuclear Weapons', *Military Review* 81(3), May–June 2001, pp. 27–38.

Over the ensuing 13 years, Russian visions of conventional conflict and the character of major exercises evolved in response to a number of factors. The first of these was the political-strategic environment in areas of interest to Russia, most particularly NATO's eastward expansion and the prospect of states such as Georgia and Ukraine being brought into the Alliance. The second was increased instability along Russia's southern border and in some of the states of the former Soviet Union, which might draw in external actors. The third factor was the continuing rapid pace of change in military technologies, which posed a double challenge to the Russian military: determining how to counter such capabilities in the hands of prospective adversaries, particularly the United States and its allies, and also how to acquire similar capabilities as part of an overall program of military reform. The fourth was the growing military power of the People's Republic of China.

Russian conflict scenarios and exercises show very specific responses to threats based on the strategic direction from which they emanate. Russian military leaders assert that the country faces potential threats from the West, South and East. According to Lieutenant-General Sergey Skokov, the Chief of the Main Staff of the Russian Ground Forces, each direction presents a unique threat: an advanced, network-centric adversary in the West, a massed conventional opponent in the East and insurgency/terrorism from the South (although in the third case, the unknown factor is the possibility of U.S./NATO intervention).[60]

The greatest challenge to Russia was posed by the United States and NATO, which, according to military experts were seeking to exploit the advantages of the IT revolution and network-centric warfare to conduct 'no-contact' warfare. This kind of warfare involves the use of long-range strike systems with the intent of achieving decisive results, thereby obviating the need to deploy ground forces.[61]

Several events in the first decade of the 21st century set the Russian military's doctrine and force structure planning firmly in the direction of developing the capabilities to fight high-intensity, information-based, precision campaigns. The first of these was the U.S. campaigns in Iraq and, to a lesser extent, Afghanistan. In both cases, the American military's total domination of air, sea and space coupled with the ability to conduct large-volume, long-range operations employing primarily precision-strike systems allowed it to limit the number of ground forces employed in both operations while rapidly achieving strategic objectives. As one longtime commentator described the Russian reaction to the campaign in Iraq,

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[60] Roger McDermott, 'Zapad 2009 Rehearses Countering a NATO Attack on Belarus', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 6(179), 30 September 2009.

[61] Jacob Kipp, 'Russian Military Doctrine: Past, Present and Future', in Stephen Blank, ed., *Russian Military Politics and Russia's 2010 Defense Doctrine*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA, March 2011, pp. 97–100.

> No one in Moscow every seriously believed that Saddam Hussein might indeed "defeat" the allied forces. But the speed and decisiveness of the offensive has bewildered many. Russian generals were expecting another prolonged, so-called non-contact war, like the one against Yugoslavia in 1999, in Afghanistan in 2001, or the Gulf War in 1991, when a four day ground offensive was preceded by a 39 day air bombardment. It was believed that Americans were afraid of close hand-to-hand encounters, they would not tolerate the inevitable casualties, and that in the final analysis they were cowards who relied on technological superiority. In the first week of the war, allied forces rapidly fanned out of Kuwait, occupied most of Southern Iraq and moved deep into the central part of the country without prolonged preliminary air bombardment. This successful blitz caused shock in Moscow.[62]

The second event that shaped Russian views of conventional conflict was the 2008 war with Georgia. Unlike the performance of U.S forces in the Iraq campaign five years earlier, that of the Russian forces operating against Georgia was substandard. The Russian forces were shown to be obsolete and inadequate in almost every measure. Problems ranged from obsolescent equipment, an inability to operate during the night, archaic information systems, a lack of precision-strike capabilities, communications failures, poor or nonexistent computer systems, inadequate command and control capabilities, bad training, inflexible or nonexistent logistics and manpower problems. It was quite clear that the Russian military could never hope to defeat a modern adversary, one using IT, precision-strike systems and advanced networks if it continued to emphasize traditional 'Soviet era' forces. However, a modern, information-intensive military could not be based on the extant force structure model, which relied on a mixed conscript-contract Army.[63]

The Russian military saw the Georgian campaign as providing invaluable insights into how to fight a NATO-type adversary. General Vladimir Boldyrev, the commander-in-chief of Russia's Ground Troops asserted with a straight face that

> For the first time we faced actions of military formations that have organizational and personnel structures and have been trained on the basis of NATO standards. Their tactics corresponds to the view of the U.S. Army on fighting a battle. A particular characteristic of this tactics is inflicting maximal damage on the adversary predominantly without coming into combat contact.[64]

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62 Pavel Felgenhaeur, 'The Elite's Feeling the Heat', *Moscow Times*, 10 April 2003.

63 Daniel Goure, 'Caught Between Scylla and Charybdis: The Relationship Between Conventional and Nuclear Capabilities in Russian Military Thought', in Blank, ed., Russian Nuclear Weapons, *op. cit.*, pp. 272–273.

64 Quoted in Roger McDermott, 'Russia's Lessons From the Georgia War: Impacts on Military Reform Plans', *CACI Analyst*, 12 November 2008.

Russian conventional conflict scenarios since 2008 reflect the military's struggle to achieve the goals of military reform and, in particular, to acquire and integrate into war plans, advanced conventional systems, networks and so-called sixth-generation warfare capabilities based on new physical principles. The military and defense industrial sector have been struggling since the reform program was announced in 2008 to implement the kinds of reforms required to create a modern, mobile, technology-intensive military of the kind imagined by military theorists.[65]

One of the major themes in Russian military exercises beginning with Zapad 99 was the challenge of repelling an attack by an adversary with advanced conventional capabilities and employing network-centric tactics and techniques. In 2004, the Russian military conducted a large-scale combined arms command post exercise, Stabil'nost 2004, which tested the ability of the Russian military to deal with a long-range, precision threat from the south. According to accounts of the exercise, while ostensibly based on a multidirectional terrorist attack on Russian territory, it involved, in addition to the deployment of mobile ground combat units, the following actions: multiple strikes by cruise-missile-carrying strategic bombers, defensive missile operations by the cruiser Peter the Great against incoming sea-launched cruise missiles, an attempt to fire an SS-N-23 from a Delta IV class ballistic missile submarine, SS-19 and 24 launches and even the orbiting of a satellite by the Space Forces. Russian officials claimed that the SS-24 employed a new maneuvering warhead intended to defeat ballistic missile defenses. When asked about the threat against which this impressive array of strategic weapons was employed, Deputy Chief of the General Staff Colonel General Baluevsky stated the obvious: 'one does not fight Bin Laden with strategic missiles.' [66]

Almost on the heels of the 2008 conflict with Georgia, the Russian military conducted a large-scale command and control exercise, Stabil'nost 2008. From accounts of the exercise, it appears to have been a replay of the Georgian campaign but with the intervention of powerful outside forces acting against Russia. But as in the example of Stabil'nost 2004, the later exercise included operations by strategic bombers, SSBNs and the Strategic Rocket forces. According to one description,

> In the exercise scenario, a peripheral conflict gradually escalates with involvement of an outside high-technology adversary. The participation of military commissariats indicates the play of recalling reservists and the evolution toward regional and general war. Despite deployment of

[65] Roger McDermott, 'Russia's Conventional Armed Forces: Reform and Nuclear Posture to 2010', in Blank, ed., *The Russian Military Today and Tomorrow, op cit*., pp. 33–97 and Roger McDermott, *Russian Perspectives on Network-Centric Warfare: The Key Aim of the Serdyukov Reforms*, Foreign Military Studies Office, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2011.

[66] Quinliven, *op. cit*., pp. 52–53.

> forces forward, the situation gradually worsens for the Russian forces and culminates with a variety of strikes, some of them nuclear.[67]

Subsequent exercises that focused on the Western strategic direction kept largely to the same political-strategic format. The trigger for the scenario was generally a local conflict that drew in other parties, first a major outside power such as NATO, and then Russia. The initial cause of the conflict was a major military power, generally believed to be NATO, initiating an offensive campaign against a local state with security ties to Russia. Zapad 2009 involved an attack on Belarus with Russian forces coming to that country's assistance. Russian ground forces moved west into Belarus while air and naval forces conducted a series of intensive conventional long-range range precision strikes against both NATO ground formations and military bases in Alliance territory. There is some dispute as to whether the use of nuclear weapons to simulate de-escalation of the conflict was included.[68]

Over the course of the next several years, the Russian military focused increasingly on the employment of a range of advanced conventional systems in its exercises. In essence, the goal of the Russian modernization effort was to establish effective operational parity with the West across the spectrum of networked and precision military capabilities. Vostok-2010 was the first to address the eastern strategic direction. Although it involved elements of both the Northern and Pacific fleets, it was focused primarily on halting and then repelling a mass, conventional offensive into Siberia. Although the identity of the aggressor was not specified, knowledgeable observers were quick to conclude that this was a test of the reformed Russian military's ability to deal with a conflict with China.

> Although defense officials stress the importance of the exercise, they are remarkably silent on the nature of the scenario. Given the location of the exercise, it is most likely to involve a scenario linked to a future crisis with China. Reporting on the force elements earmarked for the exercise suggests that Vostok's scenario may center on a military intervention in the Russian Far East by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), with an initial defensive response using units from the VVS and VDV as a holding motif while partial mobilization occurs, followed by offensive operations.[69]

> Vostok 2010 also was the first major exercise to test the success of the transformation of the Russian military into a brigade-centric force, capable of conducting advanced conventional operations and network-centric warfare. As one of the Russian reformers described the "new look," it was

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67 *Op. cit.,* pp. 53–54.

68 McDermott, Zapad 2009 . . . *op. cit.,* and Quinliven, *op. cit*., pp. 56–57.

69 Roger McDermott, 'Russian Military Prepares for Vostok 2010', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 7(106), 2 June 2010.

a gamble on the nature of the future war, which the Russian Army would face.[70]

Looking to build a modern, network-centric military, Russian military theorists and decision-makers have focused on increasing the battle for information as the decisive aspect in future conventional conflicts. Russian thought has been informed by Western writings on the subjects of network-centric warfare, information dominance and the like. Russian sources tend to agree with their eastern counterparts on the requirement to achieve information superiority at the outset of future conflicts. Some theorists have proposed a very sophisticated view of this battle for information, arguing that information superiority is not measured in terms of quantity of data gathered but in acquiring a deeper understanding and realization of the battlefield, accurately weighing advantages over enemy disadvantages and rapidly transmitting such decisions to units and subordinates.[71]

The recent Kavkaz 2012 exercise appeared to be directed at testing a Russian response to a U.S./NATO intervention from the direction of the Persian Gulf. At the same time as this exercise was being conducted, the Russian military was also conducting Vzaimodeistviye 2012, involving the Russian military acting against alleged terrorist units, held in Armenia under the mantle of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). According to the Chief of General Staff General Nikolai Makarov, the Kavkaz-2012 'involved the resolving of two distinct and very important strategic tasks: to use troops to resolve an internal conflict, while at the same time repulse an external conflict'.[72]

The immediate purpose of the exercise was to test new technologies and weapons systems that are being deployed as part of the Russian military reform program. According to reports, the goal of the exercise was to 'examine the introduction of network-centric approaches to combat operations.' In addition, Kavkaz 2012 tested and used newly acquired command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems. As one Western observer commented, the exercise was 'partly calculated to allow the top brass to convince the political leadership that the "new look" is making progress and thus ensure the continued money flow for the modernization process'.[73]

A number of observers speculated that Kavkaz 2012 might be a pretext for a military operation designed to coincide with a U.S./Israeli attack on Iran. Various sources speculated that this exercise was intended either to position Russia to come to Iran's aid or, even more devious, to attack and

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70 Jacob Kipp, 'Russia's Nuclear Posture', *op. cit.*, pp. 486–487.

71 McDermott, *Russians Perspectives on Network-Centric Warfare, op. cit.*, pp, 17–19.

72 Pavel Felgenhauier, 'Russia Is Building an 'Iron Fist', *op. cit.*

73 Roger McDermott, 'Kavkaz 2012 Rehearses Defense of Southern Russia', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 9(174), 25 September 2012.

overrun Georgia while Iran was under attack.[74] One source suggested that Moscow could use the pretext of needing to secure lines of communications from southern Russia to Iran as the basis for its occupation of Georgia.[75]

In this context, Kavkaz-2012 was a test of the ability of the Russian military to implement Moscow's strategy to dominate militarily within the presumed sphere of influence, while repulsing U.S. forces that may move to stop Russia from occupying its neighbors. In August 2008, the Russian military did not have the conventional means to deter U.S. air and sea power if a decision was made to engage the Russian forces invading Georgia. The actual use of the strategic nuclear deterrent was unthinkable, so the Russian troops stopped without achieving the strategic goal of regime change in Tbilisi. In Kavkaz 2012, the Russian military conducted a number of missions designed to repel hostile air and naval forces, including, in the latter case, amphibious assault groups.[76]

The Russian vision of future conventional conflicts is increasingly moving in the direction of contained or limited clashes of relatively symmetrical IT-enabled forces employing long-range offensive and defensive systems. The exploitation of cyber weapons, space-based capabilities and systems based on new physical principles, referenced by President Putin and a number of military leaders, will only accelerate this trend.

> Adopting network-centric capabilities may be characterized as a gamble, yet it will incur a high price for failure, relegating the Russian state in the future to playing a minor and decreasingly influential role as a security actor within Eurasia. On the other hand, any advance made in this long term quest will no doubt be viewed with suspicion among Russia's former Soviet neighbors.[77]

UNSTABLE COUNTRIES AND COUNTERTERRORISM SCENARIOS

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia found itself amidst a sea of relatively fragile nations. Having left Afghanistan only a few years before, the Russian military and political leadership had little interest in becoming involved in any new counterinsurgencies. What little time and energy Moscow had for relations with its former brethren was devoted to denuclearization of the other republics, ensuring access to several sites, addressing conflicts such as the Tajik civil war and the violent dispute between Armenia

[74] Fred Weir, 'Why Russia Is Planning Iranian War Games', *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 January 2012; and Pavel Felgenhauer, 'The Russian Military Has an Action Plan Involving Georgia if Iran Is Attacked', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 9(68), 5 April 2012.

[75] Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Fall 2012: A New Russian Assault on Georgia? The KAVKAZ 2012 Exercises and Russian War Games in the Caucuses*, Cicero Foundation, 7 November 2012.

[76] Felgenhauer, 'Russia Is Building an "Iron Fist"', *op cit.*

[77] McDermott, *Russian Perspectives on Network-Centric Warfare, op. cit.*, p. 22.

and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabhak and promoting the safety of Russian citizens, the Near Abroad.

Initially, the Kremlin evinced very little interest in the future of the Caucasus and Central Asian region, the areas likeliest to experience instability and insurgency, and only kept sufficient presence to ensure minimal influence. There was very little attention given in Russian military thought and policy toward the requirements for low-intensity or counterinsurgency conflicts.

This changed as a result of the two Chechen Wars and September 11, 2001. After the latter date and in response to the presence of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan and several Central Asian republics, Russian leaders recognized the importance of this region as a security buffer. Since this time, Moscow has sought to reassert its great power status in the region, in part by strengthening its economic, financial and strategic ties with many of these integration with post-Soviet states, and in part by creating forces capable of rapid deployment to support regimes under threat.[78]

The experiences of the Tajik civil war, the Chechen insurgency and emergence of violent Islamic extremist groups in Central Asia forced Moscow to reconsider its position on developing capabilities to deal with insurgencies. Russia has had as much experience with counterterrorist operations as has the United States. In many ways, the Russian experience in the Caucuses was more difficult than the coalition's experience in either Iraq or Afghanistan. Although Chechnya is one fifth the size of Afghanistan, with a population of a little over 1 million during the height of the Chechen conflict, the casualty rates for Russian forces were higher in absolute terms than for coalition forces.[79]

Moscow recognizes the need to develop the forces and doctrine to address the threats posed by local instability and insurgent groups. Progressively over a decade or so, Russia created a system of security relationships and force deployments that enable it to maintain a degree of security over the Caucuses and Central Asia. Today, Russia has forces deployed in most of the former Soviet republics, with the largest contingents in Georgia, Tadjikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Stability in Central Asia is managed primarily through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Combined exercises are conducted annually in one of the member nation's territory simulating either terrorist attacks or anti-narcotics operations. The Collective Rapid Deployment Force (CRDF) for Central Asia, comprising about 15,000 troops made up of Kazakh,

[78] Sebastien Peyrouse, 'Russia-Central Asia: Advances and Shortcomings of the Military Partnership', in Stephen Blank, ed., *Central Asian Security Trends: Views from Europe and Russia*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle, PA, April 2011, pp. 7–8.

[79] Matthew N. Janeczko, 'The Russian Counterinsurgency Operation in Chechnya Part 2: Success, But at What Cost? 1999–2004', *Small Wars Journal*, 2 November 2012, pp. 35–48.

Kyrgyz, Russian and Tajik units, is the only trained armed forces capable of intervening in real time.[80]

Russia has sought, at times, to expand the forces available in Central Asia for counterinsurgency/counterterrorism operations. Moscow suggested assigning its Ivanovo-based airborne division and Ulyanovsk-based air-mobile assault brigade to the collective force. These units would substantially enhance Russia's rapid-response capability.[81]

Kremlin leaders acknowledge that Russia faces a continuing threat from local instability and religious–ideologically based terrorism. To meet these challenges, Moscow recognizes the need for appropriately organized, trained and equipped forces to deal with such threats. According to General Makarov, Chief of the Russian General Staff,

> Unfortunately, we are facing threats from a number of unstable states, where no nuclear weapons but well-trained, strong and mobile armed Forces are required to resolve any conflict situation[82]

Russian security officials are increasingly concerned about preparing military responses to possible internal threats to the stability of the regimes in Central Asia. They believe that local security forces will need to be back-stopped by regular military forces. According to one commentator, 'the so-called revolutions taking place in the Arab states show that there is practically no way to crush rebellions without the regular army and some crackdown measures'. The head of the CSTO declared, 'We are talking about the use of CSTO potential in order to protect the constitutional system at the request of a legally elected head of state'.[83]

The Tsentr 2011 exercise provides an excellent example of how the Russian military conceives of counterinsurgency conflict scenarios. It appeared to have been aimed at testing the ability of Russian and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Central Asian allies Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to react to the threat of possible mass uprisings as in North Africa and the Middle East. In a briefing to journalists prior to the start of the exercise, General Makarov said that the Russian military leadership wants to radically change its combat posture to be able to

[80] A. Frost, 'The Collective Security Treaty Organisation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and Russia's Strategic Goals in Central Asia', *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 7(3), 2009, pp. 83–102.
[81] Vladimir Socor, 'CSTO Summit: Rapid Deployment Forces Advance at a Snail's Pace', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 6(24), 5 February 2009.
[82] Chief of the General Staff General Makarov, 'Russia Would Use Nukes to Stave Off Threats—General Staff', *RIA Novosti*, 15 February 2012.
[83] Stephen Blank, 'The CSTO: Gendarmerie of Eurasia', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 8(176), 26 September 2011.

act as NATO did during the Libya campaign, launching air operations with precision-guided weapons and practically no ground troops or losses.[84]

Some observers believe that the Russian military is looking to an expanded security role in Central Asia post-2014 when U.S. and coalition forces will have withdrawn from Afghanistan. The Russian Army is looking to enhance the mobility of its combined arms brigades, providing them with wheeled vehicles and entering into an agreement with a French company to build a new armored personnel carrier.

> Russian procurement priorities in terms of hardware for the Ground Forces brigades are now taking on a distinctly realistic appearance, driven by a shift in General Staff thinking on the likely theater of future military operations: Central Asia. At a political level, this assessment, and the money spent on meeting the procurement needs to equip these brigades, may allow the Kremlin to reassert its once dominant security role in the region post 2014.[85]

CYBER CONFLICT

In the West, the idea of cyber conflict was placed in high relief by the hacker attacks on Estonia in 2007 and the efforts to attack government and military networks during the 2008 Russo-Georgian conflict. But for Russian analysts, this is only one possible scenario, and perhaps the least interesting or frightening.

In the Russian taxonomy of military operations, cyber warfare is a part of the larger field of information warfare and information operations. Information warfare has long been an aspect of Russian military doctrine. Information operations can have a decisive effect during conflict, sowing confusion among decision makers, misdirecting military operations and weakening the morale of target populations. A number of Russian military leaders and national security specialists see the locus of modern warfare shifting from the kinetic to the digital domains. 'Land and sea have ceased to be the main theaters of war' with the focus shifting into 'the aerospace and information spheres, including into cyber security'.[86]

Russian sources distinguish between cyber operations as a new part of traditional military operations and cyber activities intended to influence the political stability of target populations and states often in peacetime. The new Russian Military Doctrine even suggests the possibility of achieving strategic

[84] Pavel Felgenhauer, 'Russia Begins Tsentr 2011 Military Exercises', *Eurasian Daily Monitor* 8(169), 15 September 2011.
[85] Roger McDermott, 'Russia Intensifies Intervention Options in Central Asia', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 9(130), 12 July 2012.
[86] General Makaraov, *RIA Novosti*, 30 January 2012.

objectives without the use of traditional force via the application of cyber weapons. The document speaks of 'the prior implementation of measures of informational warfare in order to achieve political objectives without the utilization of military forces'.

Russian political and military leaders see a growing threat from cyber activities directed against their country. These events encompass a much broader array of effects than traditional hacking or interference with IT systems. They also include information warfare efforts.

> We need to secure our society against the activities of Western special services who would like to inflict damage on our cyber security. These are new technologies used by Western special services to create and maintain constant tension in societies. The goal is serious—up to the overthrow of the political regimes that has existed in these countries.[87]

The primary source of cyber threats to Russia, not surprisingly, is the West. Dimitri Rogozin, Permanent Representative to NATO, seemed to accuse that organization of undertaking a cyber campaign against his country. He declared that certain countries are

> developing systems to suppress the cyber-nets of a potential enemy or to introduce to the software of civilian production (mobile telephones, for example) harmful programs that can be activated at moment necessary for the West . . . It comes as no surprise, then, that the US has no strong motivation to sign any global treaties on not using cyber weapons, especially not with Russia, which potentially could be the object of cyber-attacks.[88]

Other Russian sources have gone even farther, accusing foreign countries, the United States in particular, of seeking cyber domination. They point to doctrinal statements in U.S. defense documents and the creation of U.S. Cyber Command as evidence that an effort is underway to gain supremacy in cyberspace.[89]

Social media is viewed by some Russian analysts as a conduit for cyber warfare and information operations. Russian commentators have expressed the view that the Arab revolts have been orchestrated by Internet networks imposed on Egypt, Tunisia and Libya.[90] The Arab Spring cyber war was

[87] Army General Sergei Smirnov, first deputy minister FBS, *RIA Novosti*, 27 March 2012.

[88] Keir Giles, *Information Troops—A Russian Cyber Command?* 3rd International Conference on Cyber Conflict, Tallinn Estonia 2011, p. 46.

[89] Professor Igor Panaren, 'Supremacy in Cyberspace: New Strategy by US', http://rt.com/politics/cyberspace-defense-us-panarin-543/.

[90] Interfax News, 'Riots in Middle East Result of West's Subversive Information Technology—Russian Military Analyst', 26 March 2011.

not about warfare only but about well-planned and large-scale campaigns orchestrated from abroad to create unrest among the target population.[91]

Russian views of the role of cyber operations as a component part of combined arms operations is similar in many respects to those of U.S. cyber experts. Combined information and military operations will be the norm. Russian cyber war doctrine calls for the comprehensive assessment of the battle space prior to the initiation of operations. Targets must be identified and evaluated prior to the initiation of hostilities. Cyber attacks could be initiated even in peacetime and certainly during the crisis period that precedes overt hostilities. The use of cyber weapons will be part of a broader information campaign designed to confuse and demoralize the adversary. Once hostilities were initiated, the use of kinetic and cyber weapons must be closely coordinated. [92]

One vision of the cyber aspect of a future conflict was provided by theorists from the General Staff:

> The main objective will be to disorganize the functioning of the key enemy military, industrial and administrative facilities and systems, as well as to bring information-psychological pressure to bear on the adversary's military-political leadership, troops and population, something to be achieved primarily through the use of state-of-the-art information technologies and assets.[93]

One of the features of cyber warfare that is very attractive to Russian military leaders is its relatively low cost. While a cadre of sophisticated cyber 'warriors' is required, the cost-effectiveness of cyber weapons will be considerably better than that for large and complex military systems. For a military struggling to modernize virtually all portions of its force structure, this is an extremely attractive feature of cyber warfare.

> Information weapons . . . do not require specialized manufacturing facilities and a complex infrastructure, a small group or even a single individual can develop and carry out an act of destruction while not having to physically cross borders and expose human lives to risk. [94]

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91 Sergei Duz, 'NATO Prepares for Cyberwar Against Russia', *The Voice of Russia*, 18 October 2012.

92 Roland Heikero, 'Emerging Cyber Threats and Russian Views on Information Warfare and Information Operations', FOI, Stockholm, Sweden, March 2010; and Timothy Thomas, 'Recasting the Red Star: Russia Forges Tradition and Technology Through Toughness', Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2011.

93 I. N. Dylevsky et al., 'Russian Federation Military Policy in the Area of Information Security: Regional Aspects', *Military Thought*, 31 March 2007.

94 General Alexander Burutin, 'Speech', *Info-Forum,* 10 February 2008.

CONCLUSIONS

To return to where this article began, both Cold War superpowers are challenged by a similar strategic problem: the need to recapitalize their military establishments without certainty regarding the threats that they will face in the future. The security environment is growing exceedingly complex and varied. Advanced military technologies or their commercial equivalents are proliferating. New methods and modes of warfare are emerging. Some of these, notably cyber warfare, do not require the large and expensive force structures and force generation systems that the United States and Russia must maintain.

The Putin government faces two additional self-imposed challenges to its efforts to develop a modern military. One of these challenges is its desire to reassert Russia's historic role in its part of Eurasia. This requires that the reformed Russian military maintain a military presence in the region surrounding Russia. It also necessitates developing a significant and costly conventional military capability focused on rapid power projection to medium distances.

The second challenge is the regime's fundamental need for external enemies as the rationale for maintaining an increasingly authoritarian political system domestically. Naturally, the roster of Russia's enemies includes the world's major economic and military powers. Maintaining even the semblance of equality with these threats, much less credible parity, is a daunting, even impossible, task given Russia's economy, the state of its military industrial complex and the military manpower system.

It does not help that most of the conflict scenarios that preoccupy Russia military planners are extremely unlikely. In particular, Russia's concern for countering a U.S./NATO theater capability and offensive operation along the lines of what was witnessed in Desert Storm, Operation Allied Force, Operation Iraqi Freedom or the Libyan operation must be judged as vastly overblown. Moreover, it is the most stressing and expensive threat imaginable. By focusing on this danger, Russian leaders virtually guarantee they will fail to achieve the end state of a competent military and a secure country.

Thus, the Russian military faces an impossible dilemma. It must address a broadening spectrum of prospective conflict scenarios with what will inevitably be inadequate capabilities. One reason that Russia clings so tenaciously to nuclear weapons is its recognition that it is the nation's central, even the sole, source of political relevance and military power. But even Russia's political and military leaders recognize that nuclear weapons are of declining utility.