

**PRIMAKOV NATIONAL RESEARCH
INSTITUTE OF WORLD ECONOMY AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
(IMEMO)**

**RUSSIA:
ARMS CONTROL,
DISARMAMENT AND
INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY**

**IMEMO SUPPLEMENT
TO THE RUSSIAN EDITION
OF THE SIPRI YEARBOOK 2021**

**MOSCOW
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2022**

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Foreword by Alexander Dynkin

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The volume provides IMEMO contributions *to the Russian Edition of the 2020 SIPRI Yearbook: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*. The authors analyze the Ukraine crisis and the start of the Russian special military operation, the Russia-NATO relationship dynamics and the NATO's new strategic concept, problems of strategic stability and the prospects for a follow-on START treaty, issues of transparency and control over nuclear warheads. The book also focuses on the key factors of cyberwarfare and reviews the modern stage of the US Middle East policy as well as the problems of navigation safety in the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf.

Reviewer: Marina M. Lebedeva, professor, PhD in Political Science

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FOREWORD

Publication of the SIPRI Yearbook “Armaments, Disarmament and International Security” in Russian is a unique joint project of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the National Research Institute of the World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IMEMO RAS). This project is successfully implemented since 1993. In the Russian version, the Yearbook is complemented by a Special Supplement prepared by the Institute’s leading scholars, which is translated into English and distributed as a separate brochure under IMEMO and SIPRI vultures.

Traditionally, the IMEMO Supplement contains an analysis of a number of topical issues that enables to track the dynamics of events and processes in the field of international security and arms control. This year, one of the most important topics for such analysis were the dramatic events in Ukraine. They were analyzed with an emphasis on the background of the military conflict and on the context of the evolution of relations between Russia and NATO. In addition, the first section of the book – “Analyses, Forecasts and Discussions” – presents materials on topics such as the adoption of a new NATO strategic concept, strategic stability in the context of the development of a new START treaty, transparency and control over nuclear warheads.

The section “Scientific Expertise” reviews the key factors of cyberwarfare and explores the modern stage of the US Middle East policy and the issues of the safety of navigation in the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. The Supplement also includes an overview of the main documents of the Russian Federation on national security, defense and arms control (for the period from January to December 2021).

The editing of the SIPRI Yearbook 2021 in Russian and the IMEMO Special Supplement to the Yearbook was led by Alexey Arbatov and Sergey Oznobishchev. Marianna Yevtodyeva and Konstantin Bogdanov carried out general coordination of work on editing and publication of the Russian version of the SIPRI Yearbook and the IMEMO Special Supplement.

Editing of the Yearbook in Russian is performed at a high professional level. Marianna Yevtodyeva, Konstantin Bogdanov, Pavel Karasev, Vasily Klimov, Irina Matveeva, Galina Oznobishcheva and Sergey Tselitsky took part in this work. The layout of the publication was prepared by Yaroslav Ryvkin.

I would like to express my special gratitude to the authors of the IMEMO Special Supplement – Alexey Arbatov, Konstantin Bogdanov, Alexey Davydov, Anatoly Dyakov, Stanislav Ivanov, Pavel Karasev, Sergey Oznobishev, Andrey Zagorsky, and Sergey Tselitsky.

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Academician Alexander Dynkin
President of the Primakov National Research Institute
of World Economy and International Relations
of the Russian Academy of Sciences
July 2022

ACRONYMS

ABM Treaty	–	1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
AFU	–	Armed Forces of Ukraine
AI	–	artificial intelligence
ALCM	–	air-launched cruise missile
BMD	–	ballistic missile defense
BRICS	–	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CENTO	–	Central Treaty Organization
CPS	–	Conventional Prompt Strike
CTBT	–	1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
DPR	–	Donetsk People’s Republic
FRG	–	Federal Republic of Germany
EFP	–	Enhanced Forward Presence
EU	–	European Union
FOBS	–	fractional orbital bombardment system
G7	–	“Group of Seven”
GBSD	–	Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent
GCC	–	Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
GDP	–	gross domestic product
GDR	–	German Democratic Republic
GGE	–	UN Group of Governmental Experts
GLCM	–	ground-launched cruise missile
HB	–	heavy bomber
ICBM	–	intercontinental ballistic missile
ICT	–	information and communication technology
IHL	–	international humanitarian law
IISI	–	Institute of Information Security Issues

INF	–	1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty
IR(B)M	–	intermediate-range (ballistic) missile
IRGC	–	Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (Iran)
IS (ISIS)	–	Islamic State
JCPOA	–	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
KSA	–	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LoW	–	launch-on-warning
LPR	–	Lugansk People's Republic
LRHW	–	Long-Range Hypersonic Weapon
MIC	–	military-industrial complex
MIRV	–	multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicle
MRBM	–	medium-range ballistic missile
NATO	–	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
New START	–	2010 Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms
NSNW	–	non-strategic nuclear weapon
NTMs	–	national technical means
OEWG	–	UN Open-Ended Working Group
OIC	–	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
OSCE	–	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PRC	–	People's Republic of China
PrSM	–	Precision Strike Missile
RF	–	Russian Federation
SALT I	–	1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreement
SALT II	–	1979 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Agreement
SCADA	–	supervisory control and data acquisition systems
SCO	–	Shanghai Cooperation Organization

SDI	–	Strategic Defense Initiative
SLBM	–	submarine-launched ballistic missile
SLCM	–	sea-launched cruise missile
SMO	–	special military operation
SNF	–	strategic nuclear forces
SOA	–	strategic offensive arms
SORT	–	2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty
SSBN	–	ballistic missile submarine
START	–	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (series of treaties)
START I	–	1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
START II	–	1993 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
START III	–	1997 framework for follow-on Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
TNW	–	tactical nuclear weapon
TSV	–	trajectory shaping vehicle
UAE	–	The United Arab Emirates
UAV	–	unmanned aerial vehicle
UN	–	United Nations
WMD	–	weapon of mass destruction

PART I. ANALYSES, FORECASTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Ukraine Crisis and the Russian Military Operation
2. The Russia–NATO Relationship Dynamics and the Alliance’s New Strategic Concept
3. Strategic Stability and Prospects for a Follow-on START Treaty
4. Problems of Transparency and Control Over Nuclear Warheads

1. UKRAINE CRISIS AND THE RUSSIAN MILITARY OPERATION

*Andrey ZAGORSKY, Sergey OZNOBISHCHEV,
Konstantin BOGDANOV*

Tensions build up

In April of 2021, against the background of the military exercises in Russia's Southern and Western Military Districts which started on March 30, Western media raised hue and cry over the massing of Russian troops on the Ukrainian border. In the absence of information on the exact aims of the exercise fears were expressed about a possible start of military actions.¹ The wave of speculation subsided somewhat after the Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu announced on April 22 that the exercise was over and the troops were returning to the places where they were permanently stationed.² The theme of the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict was again front and center in the Western media in October 2012 after the end of the Russo-Belarusian strategic exercise Zapad-2021 (West-2021) held on September 10–16 and involving about 200,000 troops in various regions of Russia and Belarus.³ The West claimed that the Russian troops had not returned

¹ Macias, A., 'U.S. concerned about Russian troop movements near Ukraine, discussing regional tensions with NATO allies', *CNBC*, 8 Apr. 2021.

² RIA Novosti, 'Shoigu announces troops' return from exercises in southern and western Russia', 22 Apr. 2021 <<https://ria.ru/20210422/proverka-1729461998.html>>.

³ 'RF Defense Ministry Joint Strategic Exercise West-2021' [n.d.] <<https://structure.mil.ru/mission/practice/all/west-2021.htm>>.

to barracks after the exercise was over.⁴ It was also reported that on December 1 the Russian Defense Ministry launched a new stage in the military preparation of the units of the Southern Military District.⁵

Political rhetoric on both sides continued to mount in the final months of 2021. In early December 2021 Chief of Staff of the US Army General McConville expressed concern about the concentration of significant Russian forces on the border with Ukraine which makes an offensive possible should Moscow decide to do so.⁶ The US called for de-escalation of the situation around Ukraine, a pullback of Russian troops from the border, the search for a diplomatic solution of the problems, threatening tough sanctions if Russia invaded Ukraine.⁷

Moscow denied allegations about preparing a military operation seeking to restrain the Western countries from the temptation to cross “the red line” in relations with Russia. While in April 2021 the Russian President Vladimir Putin, speaking about “red lines,” did not specify them, merely saying that Moscow would determine them on a case by case basis,⁸ later he referred to NATO expansion, stationing of missile defense facilities in Poland and Romania, accession of Ukraine to NATO and stationing of US bases and systems within a short striking distance of Central Russia, Western encouragement of Kiev’s course for dismantling the Minsk agreements on conflict settlement in eastern

⁴ Sonne, P., Dixon, R., Stern, D.L., ‘Russian troop movements near Ukraine border prompt concern in U.S., Europe’, *The Washington Post*, 30 Oct. 2021.

⁵ ‘Russian Defense Ministry starts planned withdrawal of Southern Military District troops to training grounds as NATO claims Russia is “preparing to invade Ukraine’, *Voyennoye obozrenie*, 1 Dec. 2021 <<https://topwar.ru/189695-rossijskoe-minoborony-nachalo-krupnomasshtabnye-uchenija-vojsk-juvo-na-fone-zajavlenij-nato-o-podgotovke-vtorzhenija.html>>.

⁶ Liptak, K., ‘US intelligence estimates Russian troop levels on Ukraine border could reach 175,000’, *CNN*, 4 Dec. 2021.

⁷ Vazquez, M., ‘Biden says he’s preparing initiatives to make it difficult for Putin to “do what people are worried he may do” in Ukraine’, *CNN*, 4 Dec. 2021.

⁸ ‘Address of the President of the Russian Federation of 21 April 2021 (On the state of the nation and guidelines of the state internal and external policy)’, *Kremlin.ru*, 21 Apr. 2021 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/46794>>.

Ukraine, supply of lethal weapons to Ukraine, the holding of military exercises on the Black Sea and other regions near Russia's borders.⁹

The Russian President in his speeches, on the one hand, said that Moscow does not want to “burn the bridges,” but on the other hand stressed: “If somebody sees our good intentions as indifference or weakness and themselves intend to burn or even blow up these bridges they should know that Russia's response will be asymmetrical, swift and tough. The organizers of any provocations that threaten the basic interests of our security will regret their actions like they did not regret for a long time”.¹⁰ Speaking about the growing threats on Russia's western borders Putin stressed that Russia was taking “adequate military-technical measures”.¹¹

Conceding that Russia's warnings produce a certain effect of tension in the West, the President in November 2021 put before the Foreign Ministry the task of seeking for Russia serious “long-term guarantees of our security”,¹² initiating substantive talks with the USA and its allies on working out concrete legally binding agreements that rule out further eastward enlargement of NATO and deployment of threatening weapons systems in the immediate proximity of the Russian territory.¹³

Against this background, on the US initiative, Putin and President Biden had a video call. The main topic was the Ukraine crisis and lack of progress in implementing the 2015 Minsk agreements. Putin expressed concern over Kiev's provocative actions against Donbass. Biden stressed the “threatening” character of Russian troops movement near the Ukrainian borders and indicated the sanctions the US and its allies could use in the event of further escalation. Rejecting claims about the “threatening” Russian military activities, Putin drew attention to

⁹ ‘Enlarged meeting of the Foreign Ministry Collegium. Vladimir Putin Takes Part in Enlarged Meeting of Foreign Ministry Collegium’, *Kremlin.ru*, 18 Nov. 2021 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67123>>.

¹⁰ Address of the President (note 8).

¹¹ ‘Handing in of credentials ceremony’, *Kremlin.ru*, 1 Dec. 2021 <<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67250>>.

¹² Enlarged Meeting of the Foreign Ministry Collegium (note 9).

¹³ Handing in of credentials ceremony (note 11).

the fact that “it is NATO that is making dangerous attempts to establish a presence on Ukrainian territory and building up a military potential close to our borders.” He stressed that “Russia has a serious interest in getting solid legal guarantees that rule out NATO’s eastward expansion and deployment of offensive weapons systems in contiguous states with Russia. Putin and Biden agreed to instruct their representatives to enter into substantive consultations on these issues. Moscow stated that “on the whole the conversation was frank and businesslike”.¹⁴

Washington commentators stressed that during the conversation Biden did not only reassert the US adherence to the preservation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, but also expressed a readiness, together with the allies, to resort to tough sanctions in the event of a military escalation, but he also called for de-escalation and a settlement of the crisis by diplomatic means.¹⁵ Reaffirming the US position that Kiev had the right to choose the methods of ensuring its security, Biden indicated that in the event of a military de-escalation Russia and NATO could resume the dialog interrupted in 2014 about the expressed concerns of Russia and the US European allies, as well as to start negotiations with the participation of European states and Ukraine in order to take into account Russia’s strategic concerns, consolidate the ceasefire and agree confidence measures in the framework of the Minsk process. At the same time he stressed that in the event of further escalation the US would increase arms supplies to Ukraine and would be ready to deploy additional forces on NATO’s “eastern flank.” After the video conference Biden discussed these proposals with the leaders of the UK, Germany, France and Italy and the President’s national security adviser Jake Sullivan noted that the talk revealed outlines of a possible deal and that all issues should be solved through dialog.¹⁶

¹⁴ ‘Meeting with US President Joe Biden’, *Kremlin.ru*, 7 Dec. 2021 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67315>>.

¹⁵ The White House, ‘Readout of President Biden’s Video Call with President Vladimir Putin of Russia’, 7 Dec. 2021.

¹⁶ ‘Biden and Putin make little apparent headway on Ukraine in virtual summit’, *The Guardian*, 7 Dec 2021; Karam, J., ‘Biden takes hard line with Putin over possible Ukraine invasion’, *The National News*, 8 Dec. 2021.

Talks on security guarantees

A week after the video call, on 15 December 2021, Russia handed over to the American side (and on 17 December made public) Russian drafts of a treaty between Russia and the USA on security guarantees and of an agreement with NATO on security measures. The draft Russian-American treaty¹⁷ would seal the following provisions:

- US obligation to rule out further eastward expansion of NATO, not to admit to NATO former Soviet Union republics, not to create military bases on their territories, not to use their infrastructure to conduct any military activities and not to develop bilateral military cooperation with them;
- mutual obligations of Russia and the USA not to use the territory of other states for the preparation and conduct of an armed attack on each other or any other actions affecting the core security interests of the two countries;
- to refrain from deploying armed forces and armaments in the regions where such deployment would be perceived by the other side as a threat to its national security;
- to refrain from flying heavy bombers equipped for nuclear or non-nuclear armaments or deploying surface warships in the areas, from where they can attack targets in the territory of the other side;
- to improve the mechanisms of preventing dangerous military activity on the high seas and in the air space above it;
- not to deploy ground-launched intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles outside their national territories, from which such weapons can attack targets in the national territory of the other side;
- to refrain from deploying nuclear weapons outside the national territory, return such weapons already deployed outside their national territories, bring back to the national territory such weapons already deployed outside the country, eliminate all existing infrastructure for deployment of nuclear weapons outside the national territory; not to

¹⁷ Russian Foreign Ministry, 'Treaty Between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on Security Guarantees. Draft', 17 Dec. 2021 <https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790818/?lang=en>.

train military and civilian personnel from non-nuclear countries to use nuclear weapons; not to conduct exercises and training for general-purpose forces that include scenarios with the use of nuclear weapons.

The draft agreement with the NATO countries¹⁸ envisaged an agreement not to create conditions or situations that pose or could be perceived by the other parties to the agreement as a threat to national security; to exercise restraint in military planning and conducting exercises, to prevent dangerous military activities and incidents at sea outside territorial waters and in the airspace above (in the first place in the Baltic and in the Black Sea areas); to use the mechanisms of urgent consultations, including the Russia-NATO Council, to settle problem situations; and to organize telephone hotlines to maintain emergency contacts. In addition, the document envisaged the following mutual obligations:

- Of Russia and the “old” NATO countries that were its members before 1997 not to deploy armed forces and armaments on the territory of other European states in addition to the forces deployed before 27 May 1997 (compliance with this item would require the withdrawal of the armed forces and armaments deployed by the Alliance on “the eastern flank” since 2017); in exceptional cases such deployments would be possible only with the consent of all the parties to the agreement (i. e. Russia);
- Of Russia and the NATO countries not to deploy land-based intermediate- and short-range missiles in areas allowing them to reach the territory of the other parties to the agreement;
- Not to conduct military exercises and other military measures above brigade level in a zone of agreed width and configuration on both sides of the borders of Russia and Belarus, on the one side and the NATO member-states on the other.

¹⁸ Russian Foreign Ministry, ‘Agreement on Measures to Ensure the Security of the Russian Federation and Member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Draft’, 17 Dec. 2021 <https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790803/?lang=en>.

It was also proposed to include in the agreement obligations of NATO countries that rule out further enlargement of NATO, including the accession of Ukraine, as well as NATO's renunciation of any military activities on the territory of Ukraine and other states of Eastern Europe, in the South Caucasus and in Central Asia.

Russia stressed that the key provisions of the two drafts were NATO's renunciation of further expansion and deployment of offensive weapons systems on the Russian borders, as well as the demand to bring back the bloc's military potential and infrastructure in Europe to the pre-1997 level.¹⁹

In a December 30, 2021 telephone conversation with Biden Putin explained the essence of the Russian proposals stressing that the result of the negotiations should be solid legal guarantees that rule out NATO's eastward expansion and the deployment of threatening weapons systems in the immediate proximity of the Russian borders. The two leaders expressed mutual readiness for a serious and substantive dialog on the issues discussed. It was agreed that bilateral Russia-US talks would be held in Geneva on 9–10 January, 2022, to be followed on January 12 by talks in Brussels in the framework of the Russia-NATO Council and on January 13 by a discussion at the OSCE. Biden stressed that the US had no intention to deploy offensive weapons on Ukraine's territory.²⁰ The phone call took place as reports were coming in of the return of 10,000 Southern Military District troops to their permanent station,²¹ although the Western countries put the withdrawal of Russian troops into question.²²

¹⁹ 'Press Conference on the Results of the Russo-French Talks', *Kremlin.ru*, 8 Feb. 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67735>>.

²⁰ 'Telephone Conversation with US President Joseph Biden', *Kremlin.ru*, 31 Dec. 2021 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67487>>.

²¹ Interfax, 'Southern Military District Announces Return of more Than 10,000 Troops form Field Drill', 25 Dec. 2021 <<https://www.interfax.ru/russia/812504>>.

²² Smith, D., 'Biden and Putin exchange warnings during phone call amid rising Ukraine tensions', *The Guardian*, 30 Dec. 2021.

US Administration officials noted that the conversation was serious and substantive, though its aim was not to solve the problems discussed, but to set the tone of the forthcoming talks.²³ They said that progress in the negotiations would only be possible in the event of a military de-escalation.²⁴ The Russian side stressed that Biden's warning of massive sanctions against Russia in the event of escalation around Ukraine would be a serious mistake that would effectively jeopardize Russia-US relations.²⁵

After Putin's conversation with Biden, there have been mixed developments. On the one hand, the negotiating process became more active in several main areas: military de-escalation around Ukraine, discussion of Russian proposals on security guarantees and settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

On the other hand, simultaneously with the talks tensions were rising around Ukraine. In January 2022 Russia announced it was resuming military exercises near the Ukrainian borders.²⁶ Although in February the end was announced of the joint Union Resolve – 2022 exercises with Belarus and the start of the return of the Western and Southern Military District troops to the places where they were permanently stationed,²⁷ the West claimed that far from pulling its troops back Russia was continuing the build-up of its force. Starting from late January Washington claimed that Russia could invade Ukraine “at any moment.” Dates of the invasion were named and shifted. The US was conducting intensive consultations with the allies on the package

²³ Smith (note 22).

²⁴ The White House, ‘Statement by Press Secretary Jen Psaki on President Biden’s Phone Call with President Vladimir Putin of Russia’, 30 Dec. 2021.

²⁵ Telephone Conversation with US President (note 20).

²⁶ Interfax, ‘Exercises Start in Voronezh, Belgorod, Bryansk and Smolensk Oblasts’, 11 Jan. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/russia/814780>>.

²⁷ RIA Novosti, ‘Southern and Western Military District Troops Return to Barracks after Exercise’, 15 Feb. 2022 <<https://ria.ru/20220215/ucheniya-1772856307.html>>.

of anti-Russian sanctions in the event of a start of military actions.²⁸ Moscow denied all charges that it was about to invade Ukraine as “propaganda, fakes and fiction”.²⁹

On the negotiation level, early reactions to Moscow’s December proposals were received during January talks in Russia-US, Russia-NATO and OSCE formats. Stressing the West’s intransigence, above all on the issue of guarantees of NATO non-expansion, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov described the talks as calm and businesslike, which held out some promise. The Western countries’ proposals showed a readiness to discuss Russia’s earlier proposals, specifically, risk reduction, confidence measures, including in outer space and in the cyberspace, as well as arms control, including limitations of intermediate- and short-range missiles. However, Moscow insisted that the West give written answers to its proposals.³⁰

Lavrov’s talks with US Secretary of State Blinken took place in Geneva on 21 January, 2022 even as the Western media were abuzz with reports that Russia was about to start a military operation. While the main concern for Lavrov was the discussion of the fundamental European security issues raised by Russia, for Blinken it was military de-escalation around Ukraine. Describing the discussion as positive, Lavrov nevertheless said: “I cannot say whether we are on the right track or not on the right track. We will know it when we get the American reaction on paper”.³¹

²⁸ ‘Kremlin Says Biden and Putin to Discuss Ukraine Crisis Next Week’, *VOA News*, 4 Dec. 2022; Wintour, P., ‘Russia has amassed up to 190,000 troops on Ukraine borders, US warns’, *The Guardian*, 18 Feb. 2022.

²⁹ Russian Foreign Ministry, ‘Answers of the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation to Questions from RT Channel’, 18 Feb. 2022 <https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1799343/?lang=ru>.

³⁰ Foreign Ministry of Russia, ‘Interview of Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov on Channel One’s Big Game Program, Moscow, 13 Feb. 2022’, 13 Feb. 2022 <https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1810694/>.

³¹ RIA Novosti, ‘Lavrov Speaks about Talks with Blinken’, 21 Jan. 2022 <<https://ria.ru/20220121/zheneva-1768926437.html>>.

A January 26 Paris meeting of advisers to the heads of state and government in the Normandy format issued a brief joint statement which reaffirmed that the Minsk Agreements were the basis of the Normandy format and expressed a commitment to work to diminish the differences. The participants called for an unconditional and full compliance with the measures to strengthen the ceasefire regime whatever the differences on other issues. They discussed the importance of stepping up the efforts of the Tripartite Contact Group and its working groups to speed up progress in implementing the Minsk Agreements.³² However, the second meeting held in Berlin shortly afterward yielded no results.

On that same day, 26 January, Russia received written answers of the US and NATO to its proposals. The Spanish newspaper *El País* published the full text several days later.³³ The Western countries effectively refused to discuss the obligation to renounce the “open doors” policy and “countered” the Russian proposals with a demand that Russia withdraw its troops from Transnistria, Ukraine, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. For the rest, the reply expressed readiness to discuss the majority of the questions raised by Russia, including non-deployment of offensive weapons systems near borders, intermediate- and short-range missiles, conventional and nuclear arms control in Europe, confidence and security measures, reduction of risks of dangerous military incidents, etc. Commenting on US and NATO answers, Putin said that “there are really things there that can be discussed.” Noting that “our central concerns, unfortunately, have been ignored” he said, “I don’t think this is the end of our dialog”.³⁴

In February of 2022, after synchronizing their positions with one another, – with the USA, in the framework of NATO and the EU, as well as with Kiev, – the French President Emmanuel Macron and the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz paid visits to Moscow (on February

³² Élisée, ‘Declaration of the advisors to the N4 Heads of States and Governments’, 26 Jan. 2022.

³³ El País, ‘Documentos entregados por la OTAN y EE UU en respuesta al tratado que les presentó Rusia el 17 de diciembre de 2021’, 2 Feb. 2022. ‘Full text of US and NATO responses to Russia on security issues’, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 2 Feb. 2022.

³⁴ Press Conference on the Results of Russo-French Talks (note 19).

8 and 15 respectively). Acting OSCE Chairman, the Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau flew to Moscow on February 15. The following system of steps to settle the crisis emerged from the talks with Macron:³⁵

- To agree concrete measures to stabilize and de-escalate the situation;
- To achieve progress on fundamental issues regarding security guarantees in order to build a new security and stability order in Europe;
- To activate the Normandy format to fulfil the Minsk Agreements and settle the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Olaf Scholz proposed a similar action plan.³⁶ He had brought to Moscow Kiev's "firm promise" to submit to the Tripartite Contact Group at an early date all the draft laws on the status of East Ukraine, on changing the Constitution and preparation for elections. Biden, too, urged that Kiev urgently resolve the issue on a special status of Donbass.³⁷

Polish Minister Zbigniew Rau on February 15 discussed with Lavrov the resumption of OSCE dialog on a wide range of European security issues which was interrupted in 2014.

Moscow in its reaction evinced an interest in the proposals of Western leaders. Putin noted that some of Macron's ideas and proposals could form the basis of further joint moves.³⁸ On the instructions of their presidents Sergey Lavrov and the French Foreign Minister Jean-Ives Le Drian continued discussing the French proposals.³⁹ After talks with Rau Lavrov said he considered interesting the proposal to start an informal "resumed OSCE dialog on European security" while stressing

³⁵ Press Conference on the Results of Russo-French Talks (note 19).

³⁶ Press Conference on the Results of the Russo-German Talks, *Kremlin.ru*, 15 Feb. 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67774>>.

³⁷ Russian Foreign Ministry, 'Interview of the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov to SPUTNIK, Ekho Moskvyy, Govorit Moskva and Komsomolskaya Pravda, 28 January 2022', 28 Jan. 2022 <https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1796330/>.

³⁸ Press Conference on the Results of the Russo-French Talks (note 19).

³⁹ Russian Foreign Ministry, 'Telephone Conversation between Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic Jean-Ives Le Drian', 21 Feb. 2022 <https://www.mid.ru/ru/press_service/telefonnye-razgovory-ministra/1799767/>.

that at this stage Moscow considered dialog with the USA and NATO to be of paramount importance. He said that the speed with which NATO had changed its stance showed that the bloc was not beyond redemption. They can admit the obvious when they are under serious pressure. Summing up, Lavrov spoke in favor of continued dialog in order to clear up the West's position in the hope that "thanks to efforts on all these tracks combined, not a bad package result can be achieved".⁴⁰ Speaking about the results of talks with Macron and Scholz, Putin said that there was "simply no alternative" to the Minsk Agreements and that everything had to be done to resolve the problems of Donbass proceeding above all from the still untapped possibilities of fulfilling the Minsk Agreements.⁴¹

Moscow presented its reply to the USA on February 17.⁴² It stated that the American side had failed to give a constructive answer to the basic elements of the Russian project of security guarantees and that in the absence of US readiness to agree on solid and legally binding guarantees of Russia's security Russia would be forced to react, among other things, by military-technical means. Stressing the "package character" of Russian proposals the answer set forth Russia's position on specific issues: configuration of conventional forces in Europe, strategic stability (post-START), non-strategic nuclear weapons, intermediate- and short-range land-based missiles, heavy bombers and surface naval vessels, military exercises and maneuvers, prevention of incidents on the high seas and in the air space, etc. Lavrov's talks with Le Drian and Blinken were to continue.

⁴⁰ Russian Foreign Ministry. 'Statement and answers to media questions by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation During a Joint Press Conference with Acting OSCE Chairman, Foreign Affairs Minister of Poland Zbigniew Rau on the Results of the Talks, Moscow, 15 February 2022', 15 Feb. 2022 <https://www.mid.ru/ru/press_service/vizity-ministra/1798511/>.

⁴¹ Press Conference on the Results of the Russo-French Talks (footnote 19); Press Conference on the Results of the Russo-German Talks (note 36).

⁴² Russian Foreign Ministry, 'On the Handing of a Written Reaction to the Answer of the American Side on Security Guarantees', 17 Feb. 2022 <https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1799157/>.

Decision on Special Military Operation, Its Tasks and Goals

Against this background, the State Duma, on February 16, 2022 called on the President to recognize the independence of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics⁴³ and on February 18, by agreement with the Russian authorities, considering that the Ukrainian President was about to order an offensive, mass evacuation of the population was announced in the DPR and LPR⁴⁴. On February 21 the question of recognizing the DPR and LPR was discussed at a meeting of Russia's Security Council.⁴⁵ Later in the evening of that day the Russian President signed decrees on the recognition of the DPR and LPR⁴⁶ and treaties on friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance with them.⁴⁷ The treaties were ratified the following day.⁴⁸ On February 22 the Federation Council, in response to the President's request, authorized the use of Russian armed forces outside the territory of Russia in connection with the situation around Donbass.⁴⁹

⁴³ RIA Novosti, 'Putin Receives Appeal of the State Duma to Recognize the DPR and LPR', 16 Feb. 2022 <<https://ria.ru/20220216/donbass-1773090571.html>>.

⁴⁴ RIA Novosti, 'Heads of DPR and LNR Announce Start of Mass Evacuation to Russia', 18 Feb. 2022 <<https://ria.ru/20220218/evakuatsiya-1773598104.html>>.

⁴⁵ 'Security Council Meeting. The Head of State Presides over a Kremlin Meeting of the Security Council of the Russian Federation', *Kremlin.ru*, 21 Feb. 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67825>>.

⁴⁶ 'Signing of Documents on Recognition of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics', *Kremlin.ru*, 21 Feb. 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67829>>.

⁴⁷ RIA Novosti, 'Putin Signs Cooperation Treaties with DPR and LPR', 21 Feb. 2022 <<https://ria.ru/20220221/dogovor-1774188956.html>>.

⁴⁸ 'President Signs Federal Law On Ratification of the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the Russian Federation and the Lugansk People's Republic', *Kremlin.ru*, 22 Feb. 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67834>>; 'President Signs Federal Law on Ratification of the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the Russian Federation and the Donetsk People's Republic', *Kremlin.ru*, 22 Feb. 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67835>>.

⁴⁹ Interfax, 'Federation Council Endorses Putin's Decision to Use RF Armed Forces Abroad', 22 Feb. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/russia/823799>>.

Answering questions from journalists later in the evening of the same day Putin explained that Russia had recognized the DPR and LPR within the borders established under their constitutions, within the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts as they were determined as parts of Ukraine. Stressing that all the disputed issues had yet to be resolved in the course of negotiations between the Kiev authorities and the two republics, he added: “We will render assistance, including military assistance, to these republics. Because there is a conflict there, by this decision we are sending a clear message that we intend to fulfil the obligations we have assumed if necessary”.⁵⁰

In the morning of February 24, 2022 Putin delivered an address in which, invoking the request of the DPR and LPR for help, the sanction of the Federation Council of Russia, and the provisions of the treaties on mutual assistance with the Donbass republics, he announced that he had made a decision to launch a special military operation (SMO).⁵¹ On March 1, 2022 the Federation Council’s extraordinary session endorsed the use of Russian Armed Forces on the territory of Ukraine.⁵²

After Russia recognized the DPR and LPR Lavov’s planned meetings with Blinken and Le Drian were canceled. The discussion of Russia’s proposals was discontinued. The Western countries started implementing tough anti-Russian sanctions.

The main causes that prompted the Russian leadership to launch the SMO in Ukraine have been formulated by Russia’s high-ranking officials repeatedly and in various forms.

Addressing a meeting of the RF Security Council shortly after the start of the military operation, President Putin said that “our soldiers and officers are fighting on Ukrainian territory... for a peaceful life

⁵⁰ ‘Vladimir Putin Answers Questions from Journalists’, *Kremlin.ru*, 22 Feb. 2022 <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/press_conferences/67838>.

⁵¹ ‘Address by the President of the Russian Federation’, *Kremlin.ru*, 24 Feb. 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/statements/67843>>.

⁵² Federation Council, ‘Federation Council of the Russian Federation Endorses Use of Russian Armed Forces on Ukrainian Territory’, 1 Mar. 2022 <<http://council.gov.ru/events/news/39851/>>.

of the citizens of Donbass, for de-Nazification and demilitarization of Ukraine so that no “anti-Russia”... would threaten us”.⁵³

These goals were then articulated in various ways in a number of speeches by the President and other officials. The arguments fall into two parts: (1) arguments pertaining to Ukraine and its bilateral relations with Russia; and (2) arguments in a broader, geopolitical context.

As the Russian President said in one of his speeches, for many years “Kiev has not only been preparing for war, for aggression against Russia, against Donbass, it has been waging it. Attempts never stopped to stage acts of sabotage in Crimea... All the past years military actions in Donbass and shelling of peaceful population centers have continued. Nearly 14,000 civilians, including children, have died during this time”.⁵⁴ Russia’s ombudswoman Tatiana Moskalkova more than once drew attention to the “worsening plight of the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine and continued violation of their rights.” The Russian language, she said, has been increasingly discriminated against.⁵⁵

According to Russian officials, for a long time Russia hoped that Kiev would comply with the Minsk Agreements, a complex of agreed measures aimed at peaceful settlement of the situation in south-eastern Ukraine.⁵⁶ In this connection Putin stressed that “[we] have been engaged in this for almost eight years and we “were interested in implementing this complex of measures” because “it was the result of a compromise”.⁵⁷ And, as the RF President stressed, Russia’s recognition of the DPR and LPR on February 21, 2022 was “prompted precisely

⁵³ ‘Conference with Permanent Members of the Security Council’, *Kremlin.ru*, 3 Mar. 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67903>>.

⁵⁴ ‘Conference on Measures of Socio-Economic Support of the Regions’, *Kremlin.ru*, 16 Mar. 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67996>>.

⁵⁵ ‘Moskalkova: Ukraine’s authorities Discriminate Against More than Half of the Population’, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 30 July 2021 <<https://rg.ru/2021/07/30/moskalkova-vlasti-ukrainy-diskriminiruiut-bolshe-poloviny-naseleniia.html>>.

⁵⁶ For more detail see TASS, “Minsk Agreements. History and Compliance”, 9 Dec. 2019 <<https://tass.ru/info/7297787>>.

⁵⁷ ‘Transcript: Putin Answers Questions about the Situation Around DPR and LPR’, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 22 Feb. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/02/22/stenogramma-putin-otvetil-na-voprosy-po-situacii-vokrug-dnr-i-lnr.html>>.

by the fact that Kiev... had started to declare publicly that it was not going to comply with these [Minsk] agreements”,⁵⁸ which was another stimulus for subsequent Russian actions.

As for Kiev’s preparation of an offensive operation on the border with the Luhansk and Donetsk republics, Lavrov stated, “Ukraine, having failed to implement the Minsk Agreements, was preparing to capture the lost territories of the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics (DPR and LPR) with horrible bloodshed”.⁵⁹ In the same context the Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu told a meeting of the RF Security Council on 21 February about constant cases of Ukrainian bombardment of the republics. He also spoke about massive concentration of troops (59,300 troops, 345 tanks, 2160 armored vehicles, 820 pieces of ordnance and mortars, 160 multiple rocket launchers, including Smerch systems) “on the borders of the Lugansk and Donetsk oblasts from the Ukrainian side”.⁶⁰ As President Putin has repeatedly stressed, the SMO was a forced measure aimed at disrupting the aggressive plans of Kiev, which was preparing “a force scenario... and ethnic cleansing”,⁶¹ while “Russia administered a pre-emptive rebuff to aggression”.⁶²

On February 23, a day after Moscow recognized the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics, it declared that the recognition also meant that Russia “has recognized all their fundamental documents, including constitutions which indicate the borders within Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts at the time they were parts of Ukraine.” The Russian President said that Moscow was “expecting” that “all the disputed issues would be resolved through negotiations between the current Kiev authorities and the leadership of these republics”. However, he expressed the opinion that “unfortunately at this point in time... this is impossible because

⁵⁸ TASS, ‘Putin Says Minsk Agreements Are Dead’, 22 Feb. 2022 <<https://tass.ru/politika/13811259>>.

⁵⁹ TASS, ‘Lavrov Claims Ukraine is Set to Seize DPR and LPR with horrible bloodshed’, 18 Mar. 2022 <<https://tass.ru/politika/14112729>>.

⁶⁰ Security Council Meeting (note 45).

⁶¹ TASS, ‘Putin’s Key Statements at Meeting on Regions’, 16 Mar. 2022.

⁶² ‘Victory Parade on Red Square. Russian President’s Speech at Military Parade’, *Kremlin.ru*, 9 May 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65544>>.

the hostilities there continue and... tend to intensify”.⁶³ This was a de facto stating that there were legal grounds for restoring the initial borders of the republics, which also became one of the goals of the SMO.

The Russian authorities characterize the subsequent spread of the military operation beyond the DPR and LPR and the operation itself as a forced measure. Putin explained it in the following way: “We could simply... help the Donbass republics on the contact line, at the front, so to speak, and simply reinforce them with our Russian Army. But in that case the other side, meaning... Western support of nationalists and radicals, would endlessly funnel material resources, ammunition, hardware and so on. Therefor our General Staff, the Defense Ministry chose another path”.⁶⁴ He made a point of stressing that Moscow’s plans “do not envisage the occupation of Ukrainian territories. We are not going to impose anything on anyone by force”.⁶⁵

Regarding the more general geopolitical and strategic reasons for the special military operation in Ukraine, in his speeches Putin has repeatedly pointed to the shaping of NATO’s anti-Russian course, noting that “behind the current actions... of the collective West stand hostile geopolitical goals”.⁶⁶ And according to Security Council Secretary Nikolay Patrushev, “a large number of foreign consultants and advisers who have found their way into Ukraine constantly provoke the creation of ever new threats to Russia’s security”. Patrushev recalled that “the European security crisis was brought about by active NATO expansion, the development of the military infrastructure near the Russian border, the destruction of the arms control system. As well as the development of Ukrainian territory as a potential theater of military actions”. And he noted that “Russia’s proposals concerning the implementation of the principles of equal and indivisible security

⁶³ Victory Parade... (note 62).

⁶⁴ ‘Meeting with Female Flight Crew Members of Russian Airlines’, *Kremlin.ru*, 5 Mar. 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67913>>.

⁶⁵ ‘Vladimir Putin Address. Transcript’, *Rossisyskaya gazeta*, 24 Feb. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/02/24/vladimir-putin-vystupil-s-obrashcheniem-k-rossiianam.html>>.

⁶⁶ Conference on Measures (note 54).

and legally sealed security guarantees were ignored”.⁶⁷ In the opinion of the Russian Defense Ministry, NATO has long been “preparing for a large-scale armed conflict with Russia,” as the Russian deputy defense minister Alexander Fomin told a briefing of military attaches and representatives of foreign embassies in December 2020.⁶⁸

Russia has had the perception of NATO expansion as a threat to its national security for years and even decades. However, of late Moscow has been very sensitive to that danger as an “unacceptable threat”. Shortly after the start of the SMO the Russian President stressed that “military development of territories contiguous with our borders, if we allow it, will remain for decades ahead and perhaps forever, and will create for Russia a constantly growing, absolutely unacceptable threat... We can no longer afford to simply observe what is happening”.⁶⁹ As a concrete next step in the build-up of the threat, it was noted that Ukraine started “practical implementation of plans to join NATO”.⁷⁰

Thus, the special military operation launched on February 24, 2022, if we systematize the official views of the Russian leadership, was aimed at solving a certain hierarchy of military and political goals. These, conventionally in order of expansion, included: protecting citizens of the DPR and LPR from Ukrainian shelling; preventing Ukrainian military aggression against Donbass; expanding the security perimeter of the two republics to their administrative borders (borders that they had when they were provinces of Ukraine); stopping anti-Russian policies and hostile actions by “Ukrainian hands”; demilitarization and de-Nazification of Ukraine; putting on trial those who had committed crimes against peaceful citizens in Ukraine, including citizens of the Russian Federation; stopping “the military development” of Ukrainian territories adjacent to the Russian borders; prevention of further eastward advance of NATO’s infrastructure. As hostilities in

⁶⁷ ‘Patrushev: “We Could not Allow Nationalists to Possess Nuclear Weapons’, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 15 Mar. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/03/15/patrushev-my-ne-mogli-dopustit-nalichie-iadernogo-oruzhiia-u-nacionalistov.html>>.

⁶⁸ TASS, ‘RF Defense Ministry: NATO Is Preparing for a Large-Scale Armed Conflict with Russia’, 27 Dec. 2021 <<https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/13311131>>.

⁶⁹ Vladimir Putin Address (note 65).

⁷⁰ Conference on Measures (note 54).

Ukraine developed, the officially defined goals of the SMO continued to expand, based on the consideration of the Ukrainian territory as an arena of global confrontation between the “collective West” and Russia. In this struggle, the declared goal of Russia and its allies and partners is to replace the unipolar world of globalization with a multipolar world order⁷¹ on the basis of equal and indivisible security and taking into account the interests of all countries and peoples of the world.

The course of military actions in Ukraine

The Russian offensive in Ukraine started from several directions at once and in several directions advanced deep into Ukrainian territory on the very first day of the operation, February 24. By the morning of February 24 the aviation, missile troops of the land forces and the Russian Black Sea navy delivered a massive strike with long-range cruise missiles on military installations throughout the Ukrainian territory, including its western regions.⁷²

Then Russian troops moved in from the north (from Belarus territory), east (from adjacent regions of Russia) and south (from Crimea) which made vulnerable the main strongholds of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), including Kiev.

The Russian troops in the Kiev area acted in two directions.

In the *Northern direction* the Russian troops advanced along two main roads, from the north from Gomel past Chernigov and from the north-east along M02 Highway via Baturin reaching the north-eastern outskirts of Kiev in Brovar District. Major cities along this route (Chernigov, Konotop) were blocked but not occupied.

⁷¹ ‘Address to Participants and Guests of X Moscow Conference on International Security’, *Kremlin.ru*, 16 Aug. 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69166>>.

⁷² Interfax, ‘RF Defense Ministry Announces Strikes on Ukraine’s Military Infrastructure’, 24 Feb. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/russia/824028>>.

From the *Kiev direction* proper a large airborne assault force landed on Gostomel Airport (north-western outskirts of Kiev) with the use of more than 200 helicopters⁷³(the largest air landing operation since the 1991 Gulf War and one of the largest in history). After repelling a counter-attack by Ukrainian forces deployed to defend the capital, the Russian landing force waited until the armor arrived from the north, via Pripjat and Ivankov, and then expanded the area under its control occupying the suburban areas of Bucha and Irpen and cutting off the highway to Zhitomir to the west.

Thereafter the situation in the Kiev area stabilized for a month without any visible changes in favor of one side or the other. On March 29 the Russian Defense Ministry announced the decision to “scale down military activities” in the area “drastically, by several times” “in order to heighten mutual trust and create the necessary conditions for further negotiations”.⁷⁴ On March 30 Russia started pulling back its troops from Kiev and the northern territories, a move officially explained by the need “to create corresponding conditions for the decision-makers necessary for the negotiations to move forward”.⁷⁵

In the *Slobozhansk area* the Russian advance was insignificant from the early days. Sumy and Kharkov were blocked from the north and east. Actual advance started a little later along the M03 Highway generally in the direction of the eastern outskirts of Kharkov toward Slavyansk and Kramatorsk. Balakleya⁷⁶ was captured on March 3.

⁷³ Interfax, ‘RF Defense Ministry Reports Strikes on Ukraine’s Military Infrastructure. Russian Forces killed more than 200 Ukrainian Troops when Capturing Airfield Near Kiev’, 25 Feb. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/world/824549>>.

⁷⁴ Interfax, ‘Russian Defense Ministry Decides to Scale Down Military Activity Drastically in the Kiev and Chernigov Areas’, 29 Mar. 2022 <<https://www.interfax-russia.ru/main/minoborony-rf-prinyalo-reshenie-kardinalno-sokratit-voennuyu-aktivnost-na-kievskom-i-chernigovskom-napravleniyah>>.

⁷⁵ Yegorova V., ‘Peskov Explains the Reason for Russian Troops Pullback from Kiev Area’, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 6 Apr. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/04/06/peskov-obiasnil-prichiny-otvoda-rossijskih-vojsk-iz-pod-kieva.html>>.

⁷⁶ Petrov I., ‘The Russian military liberated the city of Balakleya in the Kharkiv region’, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 3 Mar. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/03/03/rossijskie-voennye-osvobodili-gorod-balakleia-v-harkovskoj-oblasti.html>>.

Thereafter the battle for Izyum began, ending with the taking of the city by morning of March 24⁷⁷. After the seizure of Krasny Liman on May 28⁷⁸ Severusk was taken by July 20. As of mid-July of 2022 fighting continued to the south of Izyum in the direction of Barvenkovo and Velikaya Kamyshevakh, and on the approaches to Slavyansk.

The eastern area was the zone of responsibility of the armed units of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics. LPR forces were advancing in the northern and north-western direction toward Starobelsk (taken on March 2 with the support of the Russian troops advancing from the east⁷⁹), Lisichansk and Severodonetsk, with heavy fighting for AFU strongholds in Rubezhnoye and Popasnaya, while the Slobozhansk group advancing from Izyum was threatening the area of the AFU Severodonetsk group. Popasnaya was taken by May 10. After that the advance continued to the west and north-west, outflanking the AFU group in Severodonetsk and Lisichansk and subjecting the group to concentric pressure. By June 25 Severodonetsk was seized by the Russian troops LPR units⁸⁰, and Lisichansk was occupied by July 3⁸¹. As of mid-July an offensive continued in the north-western direction from Popasnaya to Soledar and Bakhmut, threatening the AFU group in Slavyansk and Kramatorsk.

The DPR, while tying up AFU forces to the west of Donetsk, concentrated its actions on advancing in the south-western direction with a view to joining the Russian troops advancing from Crimea to

⁷⁷ Interfax, 'RF Defense Ministry Announces Seizure of Izyum, Kharkov Oblast', 24 Mar. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/russia/831005>>.

⁷⁸ Interfax, 'RF Defense Ministry Announces Krasny Liman is Under Total Control', 28 May 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/world/843428>>.

⁷⁹ Interfax, 'RF Defense Ministry Reports Development of DPR and LNR Offensive', 2 Mar. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/world/825665>>.

⁸⁰ Interfax, 'The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation announced the establishment of full control over Severodonetsk', 25 Jun. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/world/847896>>.

⁸¹ Interfax, 'Russian Defense Ministry: Lisichansk Surrounded', 3 Jul. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/world/850184>>.

the east along the Sea of Azov coast toward Mariupol. The storm of Volnovakaha began on February 27 ending on March 11,⁸² fighting continues near Ugledar.

From the early days the Russian troops made the biggest advances in the *southern direction*. Already by noon of February 24 the Russian motorized groups which moved from Crimea to the north and north-west seized key communication lines across the Power Dam in Novaya Kakhovka (70 km from the border) and Antonov Bridge (100 km from the border) establishing a bridgehead on the right bank of the Dnieper.⁸³

In the north western sector, after a tactical sea landing operation in Azovskoye (north of Genichesk), the Russian troops moved swiftly, seizing Mariupol without resistance by the night of February 25. It was the first major Ukrainian city to be taken under Russian control. Berdyansk was taken on the night of February 28.⁸⁴

Toward the end of February 28 Russian troops took control of the city of Energodar located on the southern bank of the Kakhovsky Reservoir and the site of Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant.⁸⁵ On the night of March 4 Ukrainian troops made an abortive attempt to recapture the plant.⁸⁶ On the night of March 1 the Russian troops blocked Kherson and on March 2 took control of the city,⁸⁷ which became the first regional center captured during the operation. By March 15 the whole territory

⁸² Interfax, 'Russian Defense Ministry Reports Capture of the City of Volnovakha in Ukraine', 11 Mar. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/world/827537>>.

⁸³ Stepanenko, A., 'Novaya Kakhovka Taken Over Neatly', *Vesti.ru*, 16 Mar. 2022.

⁸⁴ TASS, 'RF Forces Take Control of Berdyansk and Energodar', 28 Feb. 2022 <<https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/13892759>>.

⁸⁵ Interfax, 'RF Defense Ministry Reports that Radiation Level in Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant is Normal', 4 Mar. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/world/826232>>.

⁸⁶ Interfax, 'RF Defense Ministry: Ukrainian Sabotage Group Attacks Patrol at Zaporozhye Power Plant', 4 Mar. 2022 <<https://www.interfax-russia.ru/main/minoborony-rf-ukrainskaya-diversionnaya-gruppa-napala-na-patrul-na-zaporozhskoy-aes>>.

⁸⁷ Petrov I., 'RF Defense Ministry: Kherson is Totally Under Control', *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 2 Mar. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/03/02/minoborony-rf-herson-vziat-pod-polnyj-kontrol.html>>.

of Kherson Oblast had been occupied by the Russian troops,⁸⁸ which meant a substantial advance to the north of Novaya Kakhovka toward Krivoy Rog and Nikopol.

On February 28 – March 1 Russian troops joined up with the armed forces of the DPR advancing on Mariupol from the east. By March 1, Mariupol was blocked and by March 2–3 totally surrounded.⁸⁹ A large group of AFU and the National Guard that remained inside the circle was gradually pushed to the territory of industrial parks, notably the Ilich Plant and Azovstal steel plant. Followed grueling inner city fighting in which heavy weapons were used. After an attempt (on April 11–12) to break out from the grounds of the Ilich Plant⁹⁰ on April 13 a large group (more than a thousand-strong) of the 36th marine brigade of the Ukrainian Armed Forces surrendered, which marked the end of organized resistance in the area.⁹¹ By May 20 the remaining Ukrainian troops who were hiding in Azovstal underground spaces (2439 people) surrendered, whereupon Russia's Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu announced complete liberation of the area.⁹²

⁸⁸ Gavrilov, Yu., 'RF Military Take Control of Entire Kherson Oblast', *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 15 Mar. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/03/15/pod-kontrol-voennyh-rf-pereshlavsia-hersonskaia-oblast.html>>.

⁸⁹ Interfax, 'DPR Units Complete Blocking of Mariupol: RF Defense Ministry', 28 Feb. 2022 <<https://www.interfax-russia.ru/south-and-north-caucasus/sobytiya-na-ukraine/podrazdeleniya-dnr-zavershayut-blokirovaniemariupolya-minoborony-rf>>; *Interfax*, 'RF Military Reports Tightening of Ring Around Mariupol and Capture of Balakleya', 3 Mar. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/russia/825937>>.

⁹⁰ 'DPR Reports Death of Baranyuk, Commander of AFU36th Brigade, During a Breakout Attempt in Mariupol', *Gazeta.ru*, 17 Apr. 2022 <<https://www.gazeta.ru/army/news/2022/04/17/17584268.shtml>>.

⁹¹ Petrov, I., 'All Marines who Held Ilich Plant Surrender', *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 13 Apr. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/04/13/v-mariupole-v-plen-sdalis-vse-morpehi-uderzhivavshie-zavod-imeni-ilicha.html>>.

⁹² Russian Defense Ministry, 'The Territory of Azovstal Steel Plant in Mariupol Totally Liberated', 20 May 2022 <https://z.mil.ru/spec_mil_oper/news/more.htm?id=12422481@egNews>.

During marine action on February 24 a Russian landing force occupied Zmeinyi Island capturing 82 Ukrainian servicemen.⁹³ On June 30 Russian troops left the island. The Russian Defense Ministry said this was “an act of good will” demonstrating that “the Russian Federation is not obstructing UN’s efforts to organize a humanitarian corridor to export agricultural products from Ukrainian territory”.⁹⁴

In the early days of hostilities the Ukrainian navy did not offer significant resistance and the largest warship, the frigate *Hetman Sagaidachniy* (Project 11351 patrol vessel) was scuttled by its own crew in Nikolayev Port on February 24.⁹⁵

On April 14 the *Moskva*, Project 1164 guided-missile cruiser, flagship of Russia’s Black Sea Navy, sank west of Crimea. The official Russian view of the episode is that “ammunition exploded ... as a result of a fire”⁹⁶. By the evening of April 14 it was announced that the cruiser which was being towed “lost stability [and] sank in stormy conditions”.⁹⁷

Estimate of losses on both sides can only be very rough considering the paucity, contradictory character and tardiness of data.

Russia published casualty data twice: on March 2 it reported 498 dead and 1597 wounded,⁹⁸ on March 25, 1351 dead and 3825 wounded.⁹⁹

⁹³ Interfax, ‘RF Armed Forces Destroyed 118 Military Facilities in Ukraine and Shot Down Five planes’, 25 Feb. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/world/824443>>.

⁹⁴ Interfax, ‘RF Defense Ministry Announces Voluntary Departure of Its Military from Ukraine’s Zmeinyi Island’, 30 Jun. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/world/849670>>.

⁹⁵ ‘Ukrainian Navy frigate the *Hetman Sagaidachniy* scuttled at Nikolayev Port’, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 4 Mar. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/03/04/v-portu-nikolaeva-podtopili-fregat-vmf-ukrainy-getman-sagajdachnyj.html>>.

⁹⁶ Interfax, ‘RF Defense Ministry Reports Ammunition Explosion on Board the *Moskva* Cruiser’, 14 Apr. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/russia/834853>>.

⁹⁷ Interfax, ‘*Moskva* Cruiser Sinks When Being Towed’, 14 Apr. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/russia/835073>>.

⁹⁸ Stepanov, A., ‘Defense Ministry Discloses Casualties in the Course of the Special Military Operation’, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 2 Mar. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/03/02/minoborony-498-rossijskih-voennosluzhashchih-pogibli-v-hode-specialnoj-voennoj-operacii.html>>.

⁹⁹ Alexeyev, A., ‘The First Stage of the Special Operation Successfully Completed’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, № 33 (27805), 28 Mar. 2022, p. 4 <<http://redstar.ru/pervyj-etap-spetsoperatsii-uspeshno-zavershyon/>>.

In addition, the Defense Ministry officially recognized one person dead and 27 missing as a result of the sinking of the *Moskva* cruiser.¹⁰⁰ These statistics do not include the casualties sustained by the armed forces of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics and apparently the losses of the Federal National Guard Service and other military units that are not under the Defense Ministry jurisdiction.

Since that moment and until mid-August 2022 no official casualty figures were published. On June 1, 2022 the Chairman of the State Duma Defense Committee A. V. Kartapolov said that the Russian armed forces “practically stopped losing people” as a result of the “changed approach to the tactics of warfare.”¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Interfax, ‘Defense Ministry Announces 27 Dead and One Missing on the *Moskva* cruiser’, 22 Apr. 2022 <<https://www.interfax.ru/russia/837499>>.

¹⁰¹ ‘Deputy Speaks about Diminishing Russian Casualties in the Course of the Special Operation After Change of Tactics’, *Vedomosi*, 1 Jun. 2022 <<https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/news/2022/06/01/924700-deputat-rasskazal-o-snizhenii-poter-rossii>>.

2. THE RUSSIA–NATO RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS AND THE ALLIANCE’S NEW STRATEGIC CONCEPT

Sergey OZNOBISCHEV

In recent years, tensions between Russia and NATO the West have increased significantly. The existing dialogue mechanisms have been gradually ceasing to work. The NATO–Russia Council, which for many years served as a mechanism for promoting dialogue in a number of important areas of mutual interest, has ceased to function. The mutual accusations have grown stronger. The arms control process, which stabilized the dialogue between Russia and the West for half a century by providing an important incentive for security cooperation, have been dismantled and destroyed with the active US participation.

On the Way to Further Exacerbating Relations

The Russia–NATO relations in 2021 followed what has become a “traditional” negative dynamics. Against this background, military activity, which each side increasingly regarded as hostile, continued to intensify. In April 2021, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg noted serious concerns that “in recent weeks, Russia has moved thousands of combat-ready troops to Ukraine’s borders.” He described it as “the largest massing of Russian troops since 2014.”¹

The official polemic between Moscow and Brussels regarding NATO expansion has sharply escalated. There has been an intensification of references to the political and legal justification of the process of expansion of the military-political bloc to the East. The evidence that a number of high-ranking representatives of leading NATO countries had once pledged not to expand the Alliance eastward has been increasingly

¹ NATO, ‘Joint press point by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Dmytro Kuleba’, 13 Apr. 2021.

mentioned at a high political level in Moscow. Considerable attention has been paid to the international press reports on the 1991 document on this subject, found in the British National Archives.

This document, which was classified as “secret,” stated that in the course of the negotiations involving the FRG, GDR, USA, USSR, UK, and France, representatives of the West made it clear that NATO would not expand, and the Alliance could not offer membership to Poland and other East European countries. It also cited the words of the US representative R. Seitz, who stated “that we do not intend to benefit from the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe. NATO should not expand to the East, either officially or unofficially.”²

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov reminded that “Jim Baker [US Secretary of State – *Ed. note*] told Mikhail Gorbachev in February and May 1990 that the military infrastructure would not move an inch east of the Oder.” According to Lavrov, British Prime Minister John Major later assured the then Soviet Defense Minister Dmitry Yazov that there were “no plans” to integrate Eastern Europe, Poland and Hungary in particular, into NATO.³

Commenting on this evidence, Russian President Vladimir Putin noted, during a large press conference in late 2021, that “not one inch to the East, we were told in the 1990s. And where we are? They just cheated us: five waves of NATO expansion.”⁴ NATO, on the other hand, continued to assert, as it had done for decades, that “the Alliance never made a promise not to expand eastward.”⁵

² Kogalov, Yu. ‘Der Spiegel: 1991 Document with Western Promises Not to Expand NATO Eastward Discovered’, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 8 Feb. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/02/18/der-spiegel-obnaruzhen-dokument-1991-goda-o-nepriemlemosti-rasshireniia-nato-na-vostok.html>>.

³ ‘Lavrov Reminded US and British Promises Not to Expand NATO Eastward’, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 13 Jan. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/01/13/lavrov-napomnil-obeshchaniia-ssha-i-britanii-o-nerasshirenii-nato-na-vostok.html>>.

⁴ TASS, ‘Putin: Russia Was “Cheated, Brazenly Deceived” When in the 1990s They Promised Not to Push NATO Eastwards’, 23 Dec. 2021 <<https://tass.ru/politika/13281595>>.

⁵ RIA Novosti, ‘NATO Never Promised Not to Expand, Stoltenberg Said’, 23 Dec. 2021 <<https://ria.ru/20211223/nato-1765221396.html>>.

It is symbolic for the Western position that the new NATO Strategic Concept, adopted in Madrid at the end of June 2022, declares the conviction that “NATO’s enlargement has been a historic success.”⁶ But for the Russian side, the opposite has always been obvious – the expansion of NATO and the approach of the military-political bloc to the Russian borders for virtually three decades have constantly served as one of the main security concerns. Suffice it to recall that even during the periods when relations between Moscow and Brussels were quite “cooperative,” there existed in several State Duma convocations from 1997 to 2004 an “Anti-NATO” out-of-faction association, which included more than half of the members representing various parties.

For the Russian political elite, NATO’s eastward expansion has recently become even more synonymous with a direct military threat to national security than before. At the end of 2021, Vladimir Putin emphasized that “the expansion of the NATO bloc to the East, including [the integration of] Ukraine... one of the key issues of Russia’s security in the medium term and even the strategic perspective, we warn our partners that it is unacceptable to us.”⁷

Moreover, Russian official circles began to insist that NATO plays a more aggressive and even sinister role in the Ukrainian crisis. According to State Duma Chairman Vyacheslav Volodin, “NATO was preparing Ukraine for an attack on our country.” And only the start of the special military operation (SMO) by Russia prevented this “huge tragedy.”⁸

The constant and growing concern in Moscow over the activities of the North Atlantic Alliance was interpreted by its leadership in its own way. In particular, the NATO Secretary General firmly rejected the idea, which he believed he had heard “from Moscow that Russia

⁶ NATO, ‘NATO 2022 Strategic Concept’, 29 Jun. 2022.

⁷ ‘Joint News Conference With Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis’, *Kremlin.ru*, 8 Dec. 2021 <<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67320>>.

⁸ TASS, ‘NATO Was Preparing Ukraine for an Attack on Russia, a Special Operation Prevented It – Volodin’, 4 May 2022 <<https://tass.ru/politika/14541767>>.

has a kind of veto, a right to deny other countries, the sovereign right to decide its own path, including what kind of security arrangements they want to be part of, including a membership of NATO.”⁹

The Secretary General of the Alliance noted “more Russian military presence in the High North, in the Barents Sea, and in the Baltic Sea, Kaliningrad, the Black Sea, and also down to the Mediterranean and Middle East.” And this, he said, was “one of the main reasons why NATO over the last years has increased the readiness of our forces and also why we have deployed battlegroups to the eastern part of the Alliance.”¹⁰

At the end of December, Jens Stoltenberg reiterated that “NATO remains ready for meaningful dialogue with Russia” and expressed his intention to call a new meeting of the NATO–Russia Council early next year.¹¹ According to former Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and current Federation Council member Grigory Karasin, Sergey Lavrov in response “proposed Stoltenberg to reach agreements on the particular issues, which would have spared Moscow and Brussels many years of fruitless negotiations.” However, the Russian Foreign Minister and NATO Secretary General failed to achieve any results on this issue.¹²

On 17 December, the Russian side put forward detailed proposals to the United States and NATO in the form of draft agreements – “Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Security Guarantees”¹³ and “Agreement on Measures to Ensure the Security of the Russian Federation and Member States of the North

⁹ NATO (note 1).

¹⁰ NATO, ‘Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meetings of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs and NATO Ministers of Defence’, 31 May 2021.

¹¹ NATO, ‘NATO Secretary General discusses situation in and around Ukraine with the Prime Minister of Romania’, 21 Dec. 2021.

¹² RIA FAN, ‘Stoltenberg Proposed to Renew the Russia–NATO Format – Senator Karasin’, 4 Oct. 2021.

¹³ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Security Guarantees’, 17 Dec. 2021.

Atlantic Treaty Organization.”¹⁴ The essence of these proposals was that Russia would like to receive firm ‘legal security guarantees’ from the United States and North Atlantic Alliance.

According to the President of the Russian Federation, “they came to us. And now they say, “No, Ukraine will be in NATO too...” You have to provide us guarantees, you – and immediately, now, not to bury it for decades,” – the Head of State expressed his opinion. President Putin called on NATO to begin substantive negotiations to provide Russia with reliable and long-term security guarantees. He clarified that it is legal guarantees that Moscow needs, “because our Western colleagues have not previously fulfilled their respective verbal commitments.”¹⁵

Without going into a detailed analysis of the proposals from the Russian side, it should be noted in general terms that they demanded fundamental changes in US and NATO policies, while insisting on “rolling back” the Alliance to the 1997 position, the year the NATO–Russia Founding Act was signed.

Russian officials emphasized that, as Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov put it, Russia’s security agreements with the US and NATO should be considered “comprehensively,” “not by the menu principle.” But at the same time it was accepted that the West could take them “as a platform, as a basis.”¹⁶

The Western response to the Russian initiatives, published in the Spanish newspaper *El País*, touched on important elements of the Russia–NATO/US security dialogue.¹⁷ The “Statement by NATO

¹⁴ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Agreement on Measures to Ensure the Security of the Russian Federation and Member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’, 17 Dec. 2021.

¹⁵ TASS, ‘The West “Immediately, Now” Must Provide Guarantees of Russia’s Security, and Not Vice Versa – Putin’, 23 Dec. 2021 <<https://tass.ru/politika/13281603>>.

¹⁶ TASS, ‘Ryabkov Warned the US and NATO Against Ignoring the Draft Security Agreements’, 17 Dec. 2021 <<https://tass.ru/politika/13228961>>.

¹⁷ TASS, ‘El País Published a Confidential US and NATO Response to Russian Security Proposals’, 3 Feb. 2022 <<https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/13591117>>.

Defense Ministers on the situation in and around Ukraine” as of 16 February, 2022 expressed that NATO countries “have made substantive proposals to Russia to enhance the security of all nations in the Euro-Atlantic region,” while expecting a response from the Russian side. Brussels reminded about the repeated offers to continue further dialogue within the NATO–Russia Council and readiness to cooperate.¹⁸

Nevertheless, Moscow did not regard the Western proposals as a full-fledged response to its concerns and proposals formulated in the two above-mentioned documents. The official report on Vladimir Putin’s telephone conversation with French President Emmanuel Macron, which took place in late January 2022, stated that “US and NATO responses did not take into account such principal concerns of Russia as prevention of NATO expansion, non-deployment of strike weapons systems near Russian borders, as well as return of the military capabilities and infrastructure of the bloc in Europe back to the 1997 positions, when the Russia–NATO Founding Act was signed. A key question is also ignored: how the United States and its allies intend to follow the principle of the indivisibility of security, enshrined in the basic OSCE and NATO–Russia documents, which stipulates that no one should strengthen their security at the expense of the security of other countries.”¹⁹ A little later the President of the Russian Federation, commenting on the position of the West, stated: “All attempts have come to nothing... Not a single millimeter of progress has been made on any issue.”²⁰

At that time, the Russian side assumed that there was still a possibility of peaceful resolution of the contradictions that had arisen. At a press conference after his meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Moscow on 15 February (a little more than a week before the start of the special military operation, SMO), President Putin claimed that Moscow wanted to “solve this issue now, right now, in the near

¹⁸ NATO, ‘Statement by NATO Defence Ministers on the situation in and around Ukraine’, 16 Feb. 2022.

¹⁹ ‘Telephone Conversation With French President Emmanuel Macron’, *Kremlin.ru*, 28 Jan. 2022 <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67657>>.

²⁰ TASS, ‘Putin Called the Operation in Ukraine a Forced Measure’, 24 Feb. 2022 <<https://tass.ru/politika/13844765>>.

future, during the negotiation process by peaceful means.” Moreover, the hope was expressed that Russia’s “concerns would be heard and taken seriously by our partners.”²¹

However, this scenario was not destined to materialize. Russia began the SMO in Ukraine, which Putin described as a forced measure because “for Russia they created such security risks that it was impossible to respond by other means.”²²

NATO’s Reaction to Russian Special Military Operation

As might be expected, NATO’s reaction to the start of the operation was extremely negative. The Alliance’s first statement on the subject emphasized that “Russia’s actions pose a serious threat to Euro-Atlantic security, and they will have geostrategic consequences.”²³ In response to these actions, NATO announced deployment of “additional defensive land and air forces to the eastern part of the Alliance, as well as additional maritime assets.” In addition, a course was taken to increase the “readiness” of NATO forces “to respond to all contingencies.”²⁴

The launch of the SMO has led to a significant increase in the intensity of high-level meetings and consultations, statements, and events both inside and outside the Alliance. Besides the adoption of the already mentioned statement of the North Atlantic Council, there were an emergency online meeting of NATO leaders, an extraordinary meeting of the NATO Military Committee, Jens Stoltenberg’s visit to the Łask Air Base (Poland), a meeting of NATO foreign ministers, an emergency meeting of NATO defense ministers (Ukrainian Defense Minister Alexey Reznikov and representatives of Georgia, Finland, Sweden, and the EU also took part in it), and a meeting of G7 leaders organized by NATO Headquarters. The purpose of the corresponding

²¹ ‘News Conference Following Russian–German Talks’, Kremlin.ru, 15 Feb. 2022. <<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67774>>.

²² TASS (note 20).

²³ NATO, ‘Statement by the North Atlantic Council on Russia’s Attack on Ukraine’, 24 Feb. 2022.

²⁴ NATO (note 23).

NATO events was to constantly adjust the Alliance's position with respect to the dynamically changing situation in Europe and the world, the development of the special military operation, and Russia's policies.

Despite all the organizational and military preparations, a week after the start of the military operation the NATO Secretary General declared that the Alliance "does not seek conflict with Russia,"²⁵ and a few days later followed an important clarification that NATO does not consider itself and is not "part of this conflict."²⁶ Later in Brussels, the goal of the Alliance was further specified in the form of the Alliance's declared "responsibility" to ensure that "the war does not escalate beyond Ukraine, and become a conflict between NATO and Russia."²⁷

Brussels also refused to introduce a no-fly zone over the Ukrainian territory, despite insistent requests from the Ukrainian side. Obviously, the key here was the fear expressed by US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin that when "establish a no-fly zone, certainly in order to enforce that no-fly zone, you'll have to engage Russian aircraft. And again, that would put us at war with Russia."²⁸ President Putin was very clear about this, saying that Russia would consider any attempts by other countries to establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine as the taking part in hostilities.²⁹

The rather cautious approach to military support for Ukraine, formed within the Alliance, was disappointingly and somewhat critically assessed by the President of Ukraine. Commenting on the results of one of the NATO summits, where the demand of the Ukrainian side to

²⁵ NATO, 'Secretary General in Poland: NATO Allies Will Always Stand Together to Protect Each Other', 1 Mar. 2022.

²⁶ NATO, 'NATO Foreign Ministers Meet Amidst Escalating Russian Aggression in Ukraine', 4 Mar. 2022.

²⁷ NATO, 'Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Previewing the Extraordinary Summit of NATO Heads of State and Government', 23 Mar. 2022.

²⁸ TASS, 'The Pentagon Said That the Establishing of a No-Fly Zone Over Ukraine Would Threaten the US With War With Russia', 2 Mar. 2022. <<https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/13942229>>.

²⁹ TASS, 'Putin: Russia Will Consider Attempts to Create a No-Fly Zone Over Ukraine as Participation in the Conflict', 5 Mar. 2022. <<https://tass.ru/politika/13978447>>.

“close the sky” over Ukraine was rejected, Vladimir Zelenski noted: “There was a NATO summit. A weak summit, a confused summit, at which it is clear that not everyone considers the fight for freedom to be the most important goal for Europe. About the fact that NATO can protect someone, including the countries of the Alliance themselves. I don’t know who you can protect and whether you can protect your own allies.”³⁰

NATO, under pressure from a certain part of public opinion, has agreed to supply arms to Ukraine. The publicly announced volumes of such supplies are at times impressive. However, the actual number of supplied weapons are much more modest. According to Deputy Minister of Defense of Ukraine Anna Malyar, “Ukraine received from Western countries only 10% of the weapons it requested.”³¹

At the same time, Russia not only declared that it “will consider the US and NATO transports with arms deliveries to Ukraine as legitimate targets of the Russian Armed Forces,”³² but the Russian Armed Forces began to actively act in this direction. There are constant reports about the destruction of military equipment supplied from abroad, including a significant number of heavy weapons – 155mm M777 howitzers, armored vehicles, etc.³³

In all, according to reports of the Russian Defense Ministry, as of July 2022, since the beginning of the SMO, there have been destroyed 239 aircraft, 137 helicopters, 1503 unmanned aerial vehicles,

³⁰ ‘Zelensky Called Meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers Weak and Confused’, *Izvestia*, 5 Mar. 2022 <<https://iz.ru/1300923/2022-03-05/zelenskii-nazval-vstrechu-glav-mid-stran-nato-slaboi-i-rasteriannoi>>.

³¹ TASS, ‘Ukraine Says It Has Received Only 10% Of the Requested Weapons From the West’, 14 June 2022 <<https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/14906693>>.

³² Samozhnev, A., ‘The Russian Foreign Ministry Called US and NATO Transports With Weapons to Ukraine Legitimate Targets for Strikes’, *Rosyiskaya Gazeta*, 21 Apr. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/04/21/mid-transport-ssha-s-oruzhiem-na-ukraine-mozhet-rassmatrivatsia-kak-voennaia-cel.html>>.

³³ See, for example, Russian Ministry of Defense, ‘Briefing of Ministry of Defense’, 19 June 2022 <https://z.mil.ru/spec_mil_oper/news/more.htm?id=12425783@egNews>; Russian Ministry of Defense, ‘Briefing of Ministry of Defense’, 21 June 2022 <https://z.mil.ru/spec_mil_oper/news/more.htm?id=12425943@egNews>.

353 anti-aircraft missile systems, 3994 tanks and other armored combat vehicles, 738 multiple rocket launchers, 3117 field artillery guns and mortars, and 4099 another pieces of military equipment.³⁴

As a result, there emerged information from sources in NATO circles that an informal agreement had been reached between the countries of the North Atlantic Alliance to refuse to supply certain weapons systems to Ukraine, including tanks and combat aircraft.³⁵

Transformation of Strategy

The new NATO Strategic Concept, adopted at the NATO Summit in Madrid in June 2022, differs markedly from previous similar documents. Of course, this was due to Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, which caused NATO to tighten its policy toward Moscow.

The new version of the Strategic Concept reflects the unprecedented aggravation of relations between Russia and the West/NATO. For NATO, Russia is no longer a state with which the Alliance had previously sought to bring interaction into the "true strategic partnership,"³⁶ but has become, as the new concept formulates it, a country that poses "the most significant and direct threat" to the Alliance.³⁷ The new document predictably uses very harsh language with regard to Russia and its actions, primarily in the context of the Ukrainian crisis. In contrast to Russia, China is qualified in the document in much milder terms, proclaiming that China's policies "challenge the interests, security and values" of the Alliance.

³⁴ Russian Ministry of Defense, 'Briefing of Ministry of Defense', 9 July 2022 <https://z.mil.ru/spec_mil_oper/news/more.htm?id=12428435@egNews>.

³⁵ TASS, 'DPA Found Out About the Unofficial NATO Arms Blacklist for Kiev', 25 May 2022 <<https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/14729969>>.

³⁶ This was the formulation of the goal of developing relations with Russia in NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept. See NATO, 'Active Engagement, Modern Defense', 19 Nov. 2010.

³⁷ NATO (note 6).

The document is quite general in character and replete with political declarations. It proclaims as NATO's general objective the traditional goal that the Alliance will continue to 'defend our freedom' and contribute to a more lasting peace.

This goal, as conceived by the authors of the concept, should be achieved through the implementation of five principles. They include the well-known principle of "all-azimuth defense" – "against all threats, from all directions"; a commitment to the common shared values; the need to strengthen the Alliance; and the continuation of the three fundamental tasks of deterrence and defense, crisis prevention, and joint defense. Proceeding from the need to cope with modern technological challenges in the military field, the document emphasizes the goal of ensuring the Alliance's "technological advantage."³⁸

While the previous documents of this type stated that the "threat of conventional attack against NATO is low,"³⁹ the authors of the new concept when describing the "strategic environment" of the modern world, claim that under the current conditions "the possibility of an attack" on the Alliance countries exists.⁴⁰ As in the previous documents, the new Strategic Concept, adopted in Madrid, declares that NATO's deterrence and defense strategy is based on a combination of nuclear, conventional, and missile defense capabilities. The goal of strengthening these components remains to "deny any potential adversary any possible opportunities for aggression."⁴¹

The emphasis on nuclear weapons, primarily those at the disposal of the United States, which provide "supreme guarantee of the security," has not changed either. The statement that "NATO will remain a nuclear alliance" as long as nuclear weapons exist has been confirmed as a rule. A certain tribute to modern political trends is the statement that NATO's goal is to create such "security environment" under which a nuclear-free world will be possible.⁴²

³⁸ NATO (note 6).

³⁹ NATO, 'Deterrence and Defense Posture Review', 20 May 2012.

⁴⁰ NATO (note 6).

⁴¹ NATO (note 6).

⁴² NATO (note 6).

The provisions of the Strategic Concept reaffirm the decisions of the 2008 Bucharest Summit of NATO with regard to Georgia and Ukraine. At that time, fourteen years ago, members of the Alliance “agreed that these countries will become members of NATO.”⁴³

As expected, the outcome of the NATO summit was an increase in the Alliance’s infrastructure and in the size and combat readiness of its military units. The summit agreed on “new baseline” for “deterrence and defense posture.”⁴⁴ In addition to the most general and rather traditional principles, mention should be made of the new “commitment” of the Alliance members to “deploy additional robust in-place combat-ready forces on our eastern flank, to be scaled up from the existing battlegroups to brigade-size units where and when required, underpinned by credible rapidly available reinforcements.”⁴⁵

We are talking about the agreement reached a few months earlier to expand the scale of NATO’s so-called Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP). It should be recalled that in 2017 the Alliance completed the deployment of four multinational battalion battlegroups in the Baltic states and Poland with a total of about 4,500 troops, which have been provided with personnel on a rotational and temporary basis. But at an extraordinary meeting of Heads of States and Governments of NATO member countries in March 2022, it was announced that the number of forward deployment to increase twice, up to eight battalion battlegroups, which, in addition to the named states, will be also deployed in four more countries: Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.⁴⁶

The Madrid summit also adopted a proposal from NATO member states on the New NATO Force Model,⁴⁷ which, as noted, is aimed at modernizing and strengthening the NATO force structure. The new structure is intended to replace the NATO Response Force. Whereas previously this force of 15 days’ combat readiness had to

⁴³ NATO, ‘Bucharest Summit Declaration’, 3 Apr. 2008.

⁴⁴ NATO, ‘Madrid Summit Declaration’, 29 June 2022.

⁴⁵ NATO (note 44).

⁴⁶ NATO, ‘Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Following the Extraordinary Summit of NATO Heads of State and Government’, 24 Mar. 2022.

⁴⁷ NATO, ‘New NATO Force Model’, [n. d.]

number 40,000 troops, under the new model the Alliance members would have to be prepared to deploy 100,000 troops within 10 days, 200,000 – within 10 to 30 days, and finally 500,000 – within 30 to 180 days.⁴⁸ The transition to the new model is planned for 2023.

An important new element of the strategy is the ability to reinforce quickly, including through “investing more together in prepositioned equipment,”⁴⁹ as well as an improved command and control system. Improving “collective defense” exercises to ensure readiness for “high intensity and multi-domain operations” and ensuring “reinforcement of any ally on short notice” are mentioned among the new “baseline” requirements for the “deterrence and defense posture.” As noted, this whole set of measures will help to significantly strengthen “NATO’s deterrence and forward defense.”⁵⁰

In 2022 the trend to intensify the frequency of military maneuvers of NATO member countries became clearly evident. The Secretary General of the Alliance also stated that “we [NATO – *Ed. note*] have already done a lot. With speed and unity... increased our readiness and exercises.”⁵¹

Sweden and Finland’s accession to NATO was timed to coincide with the NATO summit in Madrid. The negotiations between these countries and the Alliance concluded in Brussels on 4 July, and the Swedish and Finnish foreign ministers signed the accession protocol at NATO headquarters on 5 July.

One of the consequences for Russia is the emergence of a long stretch of direct contact line with NATO along the Russian-Finnish border, about 1,300 km long. However, Russia took this turn of events rather calmly. It was noted that integration of Finland and Sweden to NATO does not pose a direct threat to Russia, “since Moscow has no

⁴⁸ NATO (note 47).

⁴⁹ NATO, ‘Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Following the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the Level of Heads of State and Government (2022 NATO Summit)’, 22 June 2022.

⁵⁰ NATO (note 44).

⁵¹ NATO, ‘Pre-ministerial Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg Ahead of the Meetings of NATO Defense Ministers’, 15 Jun 2022.

problems with these countries.” But at the same time, as President Putin stressed, possible “expansion of the military infrastructure on this territory” will certainly cause a “response” from Russia.⁵²

Despite Moscow’s initially calm overall reaction, such a move by the West opens up additional channels for exacerbation of military and political tension. There is a possibility that NATO’s position would strengthen near Russia’s eastern borders as well. Japan whose Prime Minister attended the NATO summit for the first time, has also taken an increased interest in the activities of the Alliance.

The course to further strengthen the military-organizational component of the Alliance, demonstrated in the new NATO Strategic Concept and in the documents of the Madrid summit, does not contribute to the strengthening of European security either.

However, despite the most severe crisis, very important “systemic” elements of interaction are not off the agenda of either NATO or Russia. As noted above, the latest Strategic Concept expresses the desire and willingness to “use NATO” as a platform for further arms control consultations. For his part, the Russian President recently reiterated that “Russia is open to dialogue on ensuring strategic stability, preserving the regimes for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and improving the situation in the area of arms control.”⁵³

In the NATO Strategic Concept, the Alliance leadership states that it continues to keep open the “channels of communication” with Moscow in order to maintain the ability to “manage and mitigate risks.” Moreover, the document states that a possible change in relations depends on Moscow.⁵⁴ Ultimately, therefore, all participants in the European process, including Russia, NATO countries and Ukraine, have an objective interest in ensuring national security interests, which cannot be realized without restoring the security system in Europe as a whole.

⁵² TASS, ‘Putin: Finland and Sweden Joining NATO Does Not Pose a Direct Threat to Russia’, 16 May 2022 <<https://tass.ru/politika/14636203>>.

⁵³ ‘Address to the Participants of the X St. Petersburg International Legal Forum’, *Kremlin.ru*, 30 June 2022 <<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/68785>>.

⁵⁴ NATO (note 6).

3. STRATEGIC STABILITY AND PROSPECTS FOR A FOLLOW-ON START TREATY

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The tragic events in Ukraine since the end of February 2022 have been a turning point not only in the European politics over the last half century, but also in the global one, that is during the period when the *détente* between Russia and the West began, entered its heyday, and then declined and collapsed. Without going into the genesis of this historic phase of international relations, we note that the world will change beyond recognition in the future, even if it avoids the worst scenario – an escalation of the Ukrainian conflict to a nuclear war, at the possibility of which the Russian president hinted transparently in his speech on 24 February, 2022.¹ Among other things, this also applies to the issues of strategic stability, nuclear deterrence, and arms control regimes and processes.

The previous year raised hopes for the better. With a Democratic administration in power, the New START Treaty² had been extended for five years, just three days before it expired on 5 February, 2021. In June 2021 there was a full-fledged summit between Russia and the United States in Geneva, which paved the way for the start of consultations on strategic stability. During the first rounds, the parties set up two working groups: “on principles and objectives for future arms control” and “on capabilities and actions with strategic effects.”

But this process was abruptly interrupted when on 17 December Russia demarched in the form of two draft treaties, with the United States and NATO respectively, which presented demands in the form of ultimatum to abandon NATO expansion into Ukraine and other

¹ President of the Russian Federation, ‘Transcript of the Address of the President of the Russian Federation’, Kremlin.ru, 24 Feb. 2022. <<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>>.

² ‘Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms’, Kremlin.ru, 8 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.kremlin.ru/supplement/512>>.

post-Soviet countries, as well as several other demands in the field of arms control and military activities. Neither the US nor NATO generally agreed to the first demand, although they accepted a number of other specific Russian proposals.

At the same time, the build-up of a large group of Russian forces around the Ukrainian borders and shores continued, which was explained as large exercises on the territory of Russia and Belarus.

After the recognition of the independence of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics (the DNR and the LNR) on 21 February, 2022, the Russian special military operation in Ukraine began on the morning of 24 February. The West responded with massive sanctions and stopped the dialogue on strategic stability.

Meanwhile, back in the summer of 2021, there appeared information in the US about the ongoing grandiose construction of three missile bases and hundreds of silos for intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) in the central regions of China.³ Soon this information was also made public by the Pentagon.⁴ It is clear that the Chinese missile build-up does not unfold in a vacuum, but is superimposed on an extremely complex and contradictory state of military-technical, doctrinal, and negotiating context of strategic stability.

The Difficult Start

In July 2021, the long-awaited US–Russian dialogue on strategic arms control has been resumed. The road to our present position was long and difficult. It spans more than half a century, including 40 years of intense and nearly uninterrupted negotiations between the two nuclear superpowers from 1969 to 2010, resulting in ten major treaties

³ Lendon, B., 'China is building a sprawling network of missile silos, satellite imagery appears to show', CNN, 2 July 2021; Korda, M., Kristensen, H., 'A Closer Look at China's Missile Silo Construction', Federation of American Scientists, 2 Nov. 2021.

⁴ Office of the Secretary of Defense, 'Military and security developments involving the People's Republic of China 2021. Annual Report to Congress', 2 Nov. 2021, p. 48.

and agreements.⁵ But after 2010 there was an unprecedentedly long pause in the negotiations. At first, Moscow refused the Barack Obama administration's offers (in 2013 and 2016⁶) to go further in strategic arms reduction. Then Donald Trump's administration openly set out to destroy arms control and sabotage negotiations in this area.⁷

Interestingly, there is no fundamental disagreement on the traditional central issue – limitation and reduction of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), heavy bombers (HBs) and their nuclear warheads – only the future numerical ceilings are in dispute. More than anything else, this is due to the successful extension of the New START Treaty.

It is worth recalling that the New START Treaty limited the strategic arms of Russia and the United States to ceilings of 1,550 warheads⁸ and 700 deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers. In total, deployed and non-deployed missile launchers and heavy bombers

⁵ ABM Treaty and Interim Agreement on Certain Measures With Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, SALT I (1972); SALT II Treaty (1979); INF Treaty (1987); START I Treaty (1991); START II Treaty (1993); Joint Statement on Parameters on Future Reductions In Nuclear Forces, START III Framework (1997); Joint Statement Concerning the ABM Treaty, which distinct strategic ABM from non-strategic one (1997); SORT Treaty (2002); New START Treaty (2010).

⁶ Calmes, J., 'Obama Asks Russia to Join in Reducing Nuclear Arms', *The New York Times*, 19 June 2013; *Interfax*, 'The B. Obama plans to change nuclear force doctrine', 16 July 2016. <<https://www.interfax.ru/world/518835>>.

⁷ During the Trump administration, the US withdrew from the multilateral agreement on Iran's nuclear program (2018), the INF Treaty (2019), the Open Skies Treaty (2020), was about to withdraw from the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and had been refusing to extend the New START Treaty.

⁸ Importantly, the New START does not refer to 'nuclear warheads,' but simply to 'warheads' of ICBMs (with a range of over 5,500 km) and SLBMs (with a range of over 600 km), which does not allow missiles with conventional warheads to be removed from the restrictions. In contrast, only nuclear-armed HBs (with a range of more than 8,000 km, or equipped with nuclear-armed air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) with a range of more than 600 km) are counted, although their nuclear-armed missiles and bombs are counted as one warhead.

are limited to a ceiling of 800.⁹ All reductions were completed by the parties in March 2018, although Russia has made a number of private claims to the US on the methods of withdrawal of weapons from the Strategic Nuclear Forces.¹⁰ By the end of 2021, the Russian forces had 527 deployed delivery vehicles and 1,458 warheads, while the US forces had 665 delivery vehicles and 1,389 warheads. Compared to the state at the beginning of the deep reductions (under START I) since the early 1990s, the strategic nuclear forces of the parties have been reduced approximately 6–7 times in warheads, and 4–5 times in delivery vehicles.¹¹ The Treaty's verification system, which guarantees its implementation and, at the same time, provides significant transparency and predictability in the field of strategic nuclear forces for many years to come, is extremely important.

Nevertheless, the parties had to overcome great difficulties on the way to the next START treaty. First of all, since the new dialogue was officially given the label of “strategic stability,” it was necessary to first agree on the essence of this concept. In order to become the basis for arms negotiations, this notion cannot be reduced to the sounding thesis like “peace-for-the-world,” but must have a clear strategic meaning.

⁹ Non-deployed launchers and associated ICBMs and SLBMs include those at ICBM or SLBM loading sites, ICBM or SLBM repair and maintenance sites, ICBM or SLBM storage sites, ICBM or SLBM re-equipping or liquidation sites, training sites, test ranges, space launch sites, production facilities, and in transit. Non-deployed heavy bombers include those intended for testing, at repair sites, or at HB production facilities.

¹⁰ The term ‘strategic nuclear forces’ (SNF) is rough equivalent to the term ‘strategic offensive arms’ (SOA), although SNF is slightly higher than the numerical levels of SOA due to the actual deployed launchers and warheads, which are counted less due to the agreed counting rules. As a rule, the term SNF is applied to actual nuclear weapons, while SOA is applied to weapons systems in a treaty-legal context.

¹¹ The variation is due to the fact that the counting rules for the START I and the New START are very different, as are the 1991 and 2021 levels of the parties’ SNF in terms of delivery vehicles and warheads.

It was endowed as such by Moscow and Washington only once in history, in their 1990 Joint Statement.¹² It defined strategic stability as a *strategic relationship between the parties that removes incentives for a nuclear first strike*. Accordingly, future START treaties were to be based on the consideration of the relationship between strategic offensive and defensive arms, as well as on reducing the concentration of warheads on strategic delivery vehicles and giving priority to highly survivable systems.

These principles were embodied a year later in START I, and then left a more or less salient imprint on the five subsequent agreements in this area.¹³ As the dynamic models of the US–Russian strategic balance show,¹⁴ the possibility of a massive disarming (counterforce) nuclear strike by either side, capable of preventing crushing retaliation, is now ruled out. Thus, according to the logic of the 1990 Joint Statement, the incentive for a first nuclear strike is removed, and so the incentive for a preemptive strike for fear of a disarming enemy strike is also removed. This is consistent with the understanding of strategic stability at that time and for the next twenty years.

¹² ‘Soviet–United States Joint Statement on Future Negotiations on Nuclear and Space Arms and Further Enhancing Strategic Stability’, *USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev’s State Visit to the United States, 30 May – 4 June 1990. Documents and Materials* (Politizdat: Moscow, 1991), pp. 197–199. [In Russian]; ‘Soviet–United States Joint Statement on Future Negotiations on Nuclear and Space Arms and Further Enhancing Strategic Stability’, The American Presidency Project, 1 June 1990.

¹³ START II Treaty (1993); Joint Statement on Parameters on Future Reductions in Nuclear Forces, START III Framework (1997); Joint Statement Concerning the ABM Treaty, which distinct strategic ABM from non-strategic one (1997); SORT Treaty (2002); New START Treaty (2010).

¹⁴ Wilkening, D., ‘Strategic Stability Between the United States and Russia’, Ochmanek, D., Sulmeyer, M. (eds.) *Challenges in US National Security Policy: A Festschrift Honoring Edward L. (Ted) Warner* (RAND Corporation: Santa-Monica, CA, 2014), pp. 123–140; Dvorkin, V., ‘Offensive Arms Reduction’, Arbatov, A., Dvorkin, V. (eds.) *The Polycentric Nuclear World: Challenges and New Opportunities* (Political Encyclopedia: Moscow, 2017), pp. 66–67. [In Russian]

Destabilization Tracks and Negotiating Debuts

A decade-long pause in the US–Russian arms control dialogue, the denunciation of important arms control treaties, and the return of Russia and the West to Cold War relations have resulted in a wide gap in the parties’ understanding of strategic stability and they are now pursuing an arms and military technology race not covered by the New START articles.

To a large extent, the destabilization trend is due to the development of long-range offensive weapons with conventional warheads and high-precision targeting based on advanced information and control systems, primarily space-based. These strike weapons acquire the ability to strike the enemy’s nuclear forces and command and control centers, which creates the effect of “entanglement” (mixing) of nuclear and conventional weapons.¹⁵ It is exacerbated by the development of dual-capable delivery vehicles with nuclear and conventional warheads. In the case of their use the nature of the attack (nuclear or conventional) cannot be determined before the warheads are detonated.¹⁶ With the denunciation of the INF Treaty, locating such weapons on forward bases and minimizing their flight time to targets would dramatically increase the threat of a first or preemptive strike.¹⁷ In addition, supersonic and hypersonic boost-glide, air-breathing and

¹⁵ This factor was first studied in detail in Arbatov, A., Dvorkin, V., and Topychkanov, P., ‘Entanglement as a New Security Threat: A Russian Perspective’, Acton, J. (ed.), *Entanglement: Chinese and Russian Perspectives on Non-nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Risks* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Washington, DC, 2017), pp. 11–45.

¹⁶ Such systems in different years have included and still include Russian 3M14 Kalibr (Russia) and U.S. BGM-109 Tomahawk sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs), Russian Kh-101/102 and U.S. AGM-86B air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs), as well as the Russian 9M728 and 9M729 Iskander ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs). In addition, there is an ongoing discussion about the production of the perspective U.S. AGM-181 LRSO as dual-capable cruise missile.

¹⁷ President of the Russian Federation, ‘On the Fundamentals of the State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Field of Nuclear Deterrence’, Presidential Decree no. 355, 2 June 2020, item 12(b). <<http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/45562>>.

maneuvering ballistic delivery vehicles of various types of basing modes are replacing subsonic sea and air-launched cruise missiles.¹⁸ This “entanglement” effect is fraught with a rapid, uncontrollable escalation of an ordinary local conflict to the global nuclear level.

The danger of non-nuclear offensive arms and dual-capable systems is multiplied by the development of global and regional missile defense systems, anti-satellite weapons, means and methods of cyberwarfare that threaten the functioning of command and control systems, as well as missile early warning systems. A separate issue is the development of airborne and naval nuclear delivery vehicles with unlimited range and flight time to targets.¹⁹ Their strategic rationale is still unclear, as is their impact on arms control negotiations.

Thus, in contrast to the 1990 concept, other factors could provide additional incentives for a first nuclear strike in the future: attack on the other side’s precision-guided conventional (especially hypersonic) weapons against strategic nuclear forces and their command and control systems, paralyzing the latter using cyberattacks and space-based strike weapons of various types of basing modes.

It is not yet possible to accurately calculate the specific capabilities of innovative systems and technologies, the timing of their implementation and correlation between them, the course of competition between offensive and defensive means, and therefore their effect on

¹⁸ These include the US AGM-183A and MoHAWC air-launched missiles, Conventional Prompt Strike (CPS) sea-launched missiles, and Long Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW) land-based missiles. See Pifer, S., ‘The Death of the INF Treaty has Given Birth to New Missile Possibilities’, *National Interest*, 18 Sep. 2019. At the same time, Russia creates naval hypersonic missiles 3M22 Tsirkon and air-launched missiles such as 9-A-7660 Kinzhal. See Ramm, A., Kornev, D., ‘Hyperdeath Is on Its Way’, *Military-Industrial Courier*, 23 Mar. 2015.

¹⁹ These are, for example, nuclear-powered cruise missiles such as the Russian 9M730 Burevestnik system and a fractional orbital missile with a hypersonic boost-glide vehicle such as the RS-28 Sarmat/Avangard ICBM.

strategic stability is not clear.²⁰ That is why we should not prematurely give up on arms control.²¹ Instead, we need to adapt our understanding of strategic stability in a timely manner and adopt innovative approaches to reduce impending threats as much as possible through treaty-based approaches.

At the Geneva talks, the main divergence between the parties manifested itself in the fact that the United States proposed to reduce both strategic and tactical nuclear weapons (including those in storage),²² while Russia raised the issue of limiting both nuclear and non-nuclear offensive and defensive strategic weapons, according to its new concept of “security equation.”²³

The US hierarchy of priorities was outlined by Bonnie Jenkins, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control: limiting or banning Russia’s novel unrestricted-range, nuclear-powered autonomous nuclear weapons delivery systems (for example, the 9M730 Burevestnik land-based cruise missile and the 2M39 Poseidon underwater autonomous vehicle); reducing tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs); reducing traditional SOA.²⁴

The US approach is fraught with great difficulties. Limiting Russia’s novel nuclear weapons systems will require not only new definitions, counting criteria (range, type of warhead), and control measures, but also agreement on the terms of the “trade-off.” In

²⁰ For example, advanced reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities could undermine the survivability of ground-mobile and sea-based deterrence systems, but they can also dramatically increase the reliability of treaty monitoring. Cyberattacks threaten to paralyze a retaliatory strike, but they can also disrupt a first disarming strike that requires more effective command and control systems. Quantum technologies and big data analysis can strengthen both offense and defense.

²¹ For an example of such approach see Karaganov S., Suslov D. ‘Deterrence in a New Era’, *Rossiia v globalnoy politike*, 2019, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 22–37. [In Russian].

²² Pifer, S., ‘Reviving nuclear arms control under Biden’, *American Ambassadors Review*, Fall 2020; Gottemoeller, R., ‘Rethinking Nuclear Arms Control’, *The Washington Quarterly*, 2020, vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 139–159.

²³ TASS, ‘Ryabkov: Russia Proposes US to Include Non-Nuclear Weapons in Strategic Agenda’, 27 Jan. 2021. <<https://tass.ru/politika/10557045>>.

²⁴ US Department of State, ‘Under Secretary Bonnie Jenkins’ Remarks: Nuclear Arms Control: A New Era?’, 6 Sep. 2021.

Moscow, these systems are justified by the need to maintain nuclear deterrence by providing a credible capability to overcome the current and any prospective US missile defense system.²⁵ Consequently, any measures in relation to the named systems presuppose the agreement on limitations of the US ABM system, which Washington has not accepted categorically after its withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in 2002.

Even greater difficulties were related to the US demand to limit TNWs, which goes far beyond the traditional interpretation of strategic stability and the negotiating agenda. Almost all TNW systems use dual-capable launchers, that is, unlike strategic weapons, their limitation cannot be controlled through the elimination of launchers and delivery vehicles, since this would imply a radical reduction of US and Russian conventional forces, which is the subject of other negotiations.

In addition, all tactical nuclear weapons in peacetime are in storage of various kinds. Their treaty and legal restriction implies control directly inside centralized storage facilities, at military repair and maintenance bases, pre-factory facilities of manufacturing plants, and even in secret research and development laboratories. Such a regime implies an unprecedented degree of transparency in nuclear activities of the powers, even compared to the 1990s.²⁶ Obviously, the current state of political and military relations between the two countries, which openly declare each other adversaries, is not at all conducive to such trust.

For its part, the Russian concept of the “security equation,” while not yet publicly prioritized, has also raised difficult questions. The restriction on non-nuclear ALCMs²⁷ involves including their delivery vehicles (bombers) in the treaty restrictions along with nuclear HBs – but excluding the same aircraft with bombs from the count, which creates additional verification difficulties. Long-range non-nuclear

²⁵ President of the Russian Federation, ‘The President’s Address to the Federal Assembly’, Kremlin.ru, 1 Mar. 2018. <<https://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957>>.

²⁶ Arbatov, A., ‘Problems and Dilemmas of the Next START Treaty’, *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, 2021, vol. 65, no. 6, pp. 5–20. [In Russian].

²⁷ For the U.S. these include the AGM-84, AGM-158B JASSM-ER, and for Russian Kh-555 and Kh-101.

ALCMs are numbered in thousands, which makes it difficult to include them under future START ceilings.

The logic of the “security equation” is supposed to cover also nuclear and conventional sea-launched cruise missiles and perspective hypersonic boost-glide systems with range over 600 km. In the US Navy, SLCMs are placed in the Mk-41 universal launchers of surface combatants along with surface-to-air and anti-submarine missiles, and can also be launched from the vertical launchers of multipurpose and modified strategic submarines. In Russia they are placed in the launchers of surface combatants and submarine torpedo tubes.²⁸ Even if the parties agreed to limit them, verification of such an agreement would be unprecedentedly difficult.²⁹

Prohibiting the deployment of intermediate-range missiles (IRM) near each other’s borders fits seamlessly into the concept of the “security equation.”³⁰ However, it would be very difficult to revive the INF Treaty after its denunciation in 2019. There is US intent to deploy IRMs in Asia to deter China, but there is no ban on producing such missiles, as in the past treaty, and being ground-mobile, they can be quickly moved from one region to another by sea, airlift, or railroad. The Ukrainian conflict, depending on its course and outcome, may lead to the deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Europe as well.

²⁸ These are various modifications of the US Tomahawk BGM-109 SLCM and, in the future, the Conventional Prompt Strike (CPS) naval hypersonic boost-glide system. Russia is deploying 3M14 Kalibr SLCMs and testing 3M22 Zircon hypersonic missiles. Ketonov, S., ‘Nuclear Cruise Missiles Return to the Navy’, *Voenna-Promyshlennyi Kurier*, 20 Oct. 2020. <<https://vpk-news.ru/articles/59170>>.

²⁹ In history, nuclear SLCMs have been limited only once, under START I, – although not in the Treaty itself, but in the protocol to it, – to a ceiling of 880 missiles for each side, without verification, and on the basis of transparency and confidence-building measures. Since 1983, the United States has deployed 385 nuclear SLCMs (BGM-109 TLAM-N), 179 of them on surface combatants and 206 on submarines. The USSR has deployed 240 similar KS-122 (3M10) Granat missiles since 1985, but only on multi-purpose nuclear-powered submarines. After 2011, the US nuclear-armed SLCMs were decommissioned. See Ketonov (note 28).

³⁰ TASS, ‘Russian Foreign Ministry Waits for Specifics on US Position on Medium-Range Weapons Delivery Vehicles’, 9 Sep. 2021. <<https://tass.ru/politika/12346705>>.

The concept of the “security equation,” as outlined by Moscow, also involves defensive arms capable of meeting strategic objectives.³¹ Although Russia has never officially clarified its proposals to solve the problem, a return to the original 1972 ABM Treaty is hardly possible. Now and for the foreseeable future, both countries’ missile defense systems are not comparable to President Reagan’s SDI program of the 1980s, but each in its own way has gone far beyond the limitations of the 1972 ABM Treaty, primarily in terms of whole territory defense, mobility,³² and protection of allies. In addition, if intermediate-range missiles are deployed in Europe and Asia, the corresponding air/missile defense systems will be built up and improved in those regions.

Even beyond such complex issues as limiting space weapons and banning cyberwarfare tools and techniques, the topics mentioned above demonstrate the enormity of the challenges that faced the Geneva Dialogue. Nevertheless, as the half-century practice of agreements in this area has shown, compromise is achievable even on the most difficult issues when political tensions subside, when there is political will on the part of state leaders and when compromises are reached on which weapons systems to include in the treaty and which ones to postpone for the future.³³

However, the armed conflict in Ukraine at least postponed the resumption of negotiations between Russia and the United States until the second half of the 2020s, if a peaceful resolution of the problem can be achieved and maintained in the coming years. The best we can

³¹ TASS (note 23).

³² For example, the ABM Treaty banned mobile anti-missile launchers, and these are envisaged for the new Nudol anti-missile system, which forms the basis of the new A-235 Moscow area missile defense. Also, the ABM Treaty forbade the territorial defense system and limited it to only two positioning areas (later one), while the S-500 air/missile defense system is designed to protect different areas of Russian territory and, according to a Ministry of Defense representative, ‘will have the ability to destroy medium-range missiles, operational-tactical missiles, and shoot down missiles in near space and thus will carry elements of strategic missile defense.’ See TASS, ‘S-500 System Will Be an Element of Strategic Missile Defense: Air Force Deputy Chief of Staff’, 28 Sep. 2009.

³³ Arbatov (note 26).

hope for is to keep the New START Treaty until its extended term expires in 2026.

There have been instances in the past when arms control negotiations have broken down and even treaties already concluded have been abandoned because of international conflicts,³⁴ and then the process resumed. But then the process was facilitated by its bilateral nature, and if this changes, maintaining strategic stability will face a fundamentally different politico-military and military-technical context.

China Changes the Strategic Balance

In July 2021, just before the first meeting between Russian and US diplomats in Geneva, independent US experts released publicly available data from commercial satellites on the massive construction of three bases and hundreds of silo launchers for intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) in central China,³⁵ which was later also made public by the Pentagon.³⁶ Beijing neither confirmed nor denied it, while Moscow, in the spirit of ‘strategic partnership,’ showed indifference, citing Washington’s indifference regarding the British and French nuclear forces.

According to foreign data (in the absence of official information), China currently has a total of about 350 nuclear warheads for 372 delivery vehicles of various ranges (including aircraft). About 190 land- and sea-based missiles and 270 warheads can be considered as strategic forces

³⁴ This was the case in 1968 because of the entry of Warsaw Treaty Organisation troops into Czechoslovakia, in 1979 with the SALT II Treaty because of the Soviet military entry into Afghanistan, and in 1983 because of the start of US IRMs deployment in Europe.

³⁵ Lendon (note 3); Korda et al. (note 3).

³⁶ Military and security developments... (note 4), p. 48.

under the New START counting rules.³⁷ A missile build-up discovered in the summer of 2021, according to the official US estimates, may increase that number to 700 warheads by 2027, and to 1,000 by 2030. However, the Pentagon officially acknowledged³⁸ that the previous estimates of the Chinese program have been underestimated; and it is possible that they again for some reason underestimate the PRC's capabilities.

Presumably, in the silos under construction China will place brand-new DF-41 ICBMs,³⁹ which are MIRVed and have been tested with two to three warheads, although can carry up to 10 warheads, according to foreign estimates.⁴⁰ Now there are 270 silos at the three new missile bases, but after the completion of the third base by the standards of the first two, most likely there will be about 330–340 launchers in total. If the new missiles are fully loaded with MIRV warheads, that “missile boost,” together with other land, sea, and aircraft strategic launchers⁴¹ may provide China with strategic arsenal of about 4,000 warheads to the max in a decade or in decade and a half.

³⁷ To date, in addition to 140 medium-range nuclear missiles and 20 medium bombers (which do not reach US mainland, unlike Russia) China has had 26 liquid-propellant silo-based DF-5 ICBMs carrying from one to five nuclear warheads, and up to 80 land-based DF-31 ICBMs with single warheads. It also has 18 new DF-41 ICBMs (each carrying three warheads) and six strategic nuclear submarines with a total of 72 JL-2 SLBMs with single warheads. See Military and security developments... (note 4), p. 48, and *SIPRI Yearbook 2021* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2021), pp. 369–377.

³⁸ Military and security developments... (note 4), p. VIII.

³⁹ The DF-41 ICBM is somewhat smaller in weight and dimensions than the past Soviet RT-23UTTH Molodets silo- and railroad-based missile and the US MX (Peacekeeper) ICBM, but larger than the Russian RT-2PM Topol missile.

⁴⁰ Kristensen, H.M., Korda, M., ‘China’s nuclear missile silo expansion: From minimum deterrence to medium deterrence’, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 1 Sep. 2021.

⁴¹ In addition to the existing six strategic submarines, each carrying 12 SLBMs, China is building six more with 12 MIRVed missiles, and is also developing its first heavy bomber equipped for long-range cruise missiles.

Recall that under the New START Treaty, Russia and the US are entitled to 1,550 nuclear warheads in the strategic forces until 2026.⁴² Of course, in addition to strategic nuclear forces, the two superpowers have medium-range and tactical nuclear weapons (in particular, the United States has a total of about 3,800 deployed and reserve nuclear warheads, while 4,300 attributed to Russia).⁴³ But the PRC also likely possesses many hundreds of weapons of comparable class, including ground-mobile cruise missiles and tactical nuclear weapons of the Air Force and Navy.

According to foreign studies, in addition to the existing 350 nuclear warheads, China has a stockpile of weapon-grade uranium and plutonium (used as triggers for thermonuclear warheads), from which about 2,300 nuclear warheads can be produced, including for hundreds of DF-41 missiles. In addition, it is possible to use plutonium produced at separation facilities from irradiated nuclear fuel of commercial reactors (two new plants are being built and will be commissioned in 2025–2030, and one is expected to be purchased from France). Thus, it is possible to produce another 1,200 nuclear warheads, for a total of 3,500 nuclear warheads.⁴⁴

At the same time, China's space constellation is growing intensively (there are 360 China's satellites orbiting today, compared to 1,300 ones belonging to the United States and 170 to Russia), unmanned systems using artificial intelligence, ground-based anti-satellite weapons (a test on a real orbital target took place in 2007), electronic warfare and cyberwarfare technologies are being developed. Precision-guided anti-ship ballistic missiles and medium-range boost-glide hypersonic

⁴² According to the New START counting rules. In reality the US strategic forces have about 1730 warheads, and the Russian Federation has 1600 warheads. The maximum number of warheads that the US and Russia can load on these delivery vehicles within the New START is about 2,200 for the US, and about 2,000 warheads for Russia.

⁴³ *SIPRI Yearbook 2021* (note 37), pp. 335–357.

⁴⁴ Sokolski, H.D. (ed.), *China's Civil Nuclear Sector: Plowshares to Swords? Occasional Paper 2102* (Nonproliferation Policy Education Center: Arlington, VA, 2021).

systems, both nuclear- and conventional-tipped,⁴⁵ are being deployed, China's own missile defense system is being developed, and the most advanced air defense systems S-400 are being purchased from Russia.

Some of this was known before, but very few predicted the start of major missile build-up in China.⁴⁶ Most Chinese and foreign experts argued that China would not chase after the superpowers, but would “go its own way,” sticking to the concept of no-first-use of nuclear weapons, maintaining only “minimal nuclear deterrence” (i. e. the ability to inflict some tangible damage on an enemy with a retaliatory strike) and would not strive for parity with the two nuclear superpowers. This theory was dispelled in the summer of 2021.

In March of that year, at a high forum of the Chinese Communist Party, President Xi Jinping demanded that the Party, as well as the state and military leadership should “accelerate the construction of high-level strategic deterrent.”⁴⁷ Officially, the PRC has not yet made any noticeable adjustments to its public doctrinal guidelines, according to which it “adheres to the principles of defense, self-defense and post-strike response, and adopts active defense. It keeps to the stance that ‘we will not attack unless we are attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked.’”⁴⁸ Information about the rapid acceleration of China's nuclear missile program suggests that the concept of “minimal deterrence” has been replaced by the concept of at least parity with the United States

⁴⁵ These are DF-21D, DF-26 and the latest DF-17 hypersonic boost-glide system.

⁴⁶ In particular, the author of this article noted back in 2013: ‘Chinese nuclear capability has clearly been underestimated by the international community. It appears in all likelihood that China, which is already the third-largest nuclear state after the United States and Russia, is in a class of its own. In terms of its nuclear force levels, China surpasses all of the other six nuclear states combined (excluding the two superpowers). In addition, China is the only state aside from Russia and the United States that has the technical and economic capability to build up its nuclear arsenal rapidly and manifold.’ See Arbatov, A., Dvorkin, V., *The Great Strategic Triangle* (Carnegie Moscow Center: Moscow, 2013), p. 11.

⁴⁷ Cit. ex. Zhao, T., ‘China's silence on nuclear arms buildup fuels speculation on motives’, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 12 Nov. 2021.

⁴⁸ The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *China's National Defense in the New Era* (Foreign Languages Press Co. Ltd: Beijing, 2019), p. 8.

(and Russia), and the doctrine of no-first-use of nuclear weapons will be interpreted very broadly.

Experts, who had not expected such a turn of events, are now guessing what kind of missiles are supposed to be deployed on the three new bases, whether they will be placed in all the silos dug out and whether they will be loaded with the maximum number of warheads.⁴⁹ But in all likelihood, the DF-41 ICBMs will be installed in all the launch facilities as such missiles are produced, for which silos are built in advance simply because it takes longer (one takes up to a year on average). The main missile plant of China is quite capable of delivering missiles for all the silos of the three new bases in 10–15 years, i.e. 20–30 missiles a year, while Russia built not so long ago 50 ICBMs annually.⁵⁰ The same applies to the number of warheads on these missiles; their equipment will be determined by the rate of production of weapons, strategic and technical considerations in arming strategic delivery vehicles.

In the past, the Chinese missile force had a low level of readiness: many missiles were kept separate from their nuclear warheads, and mobile missiles were hidden in underground tunnels. Henceforth, DF-41 ICBMs in hardened silos will become much more survivable and permanently on hair-trigger alert, including for a nuclear first strike in response to an attack by US precision-guided conventional weapons. Or for a launch-on-warning strike (LoW), which involves launching missiles based on satellite information about an attack and its confirmation by ground-based radars – before the enemy’s warheads are dropped on Chinese missile bases.

So far only the US and Russia have had this capability, and it has been eloquently described many times by the Russian president.⁵¹ China will be able to do so through the deployment of silo-based, combat-ready

⁴⁹ Acton, J., ‘Don’t panic about China’s new nuclear capabilities’, *The Washington Post*, 30 Jun. 2021

⁵⁰ Putin, V., ‘Being Strong: Guarantees of National Security for Russia’, *Rosyiskaya gazeta*, 20 Feb. 2012. <<https://rg.ru/2012/02/20/putin-armiya.html>>.

⁵¹ President of the Russian Federation, ‘Valdai Discussion Club Meeting’, Kremlin. ru, 18 Oct. 2018. <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58848>>.

ICBMs and the development of a space-based early-warning system⁵² with technical assistance from Russia.⁵³ This system, like in the other two superpowers, is backed up by a belt of long-range ground radars along the perimeter of the territory.⁵⁴ Such a system is combined with the construction of deep-buried command and control centers providing absolute protection for the top military and political leadership.

In principle, the concept and forces of launch-on-warning do not contradict the doctrine of no-first-use of nuclear weapons, but there is another side of the coin. This concept entails a high risk of a nuclear strike due to false alarms in an early warning system (which have happened occasionally in the past, but were quickly overridden) or a false assessment of an enemy's intentions and actions, as decision-making time for senior leaders is reduced to few minutes (or even seconds).⁵⁵ The transition of the mutual possibility of a reciprocal retaliatory strike from a bilateral to a trilateral format will entail an exponential increase in the threat of an unintended nuclear war, especially since the trajectories of Chinese and US ICBM strikes against each other are projected over the Russian territory according to the laws of ballistics.

As a "margin of safety" of deterrence, China's silo-based missiles will be backed up by a growing fleet of nuclear-powered submarines with MIRVed SLBMs. To communicate with submarines on maritime patrols, the "field" (100x100 km) of Very Low Frequency transmission cables was built.⁵⁶ Only Russia and, in the past, the United States have such infrastructure. As a result, unlike in previous years, a

⁵² China used to occasionally launch short-lived reconnaissance spacecraft into low orbit (ZY and JD series), but now has a permanent Yaogan-30 warning satellite in geostationary orbit. See Linnik, S., 'Status of the Early Warning and Space Monitoring System in the PRC', *Voennoye Obozrenie*, 14 Nov. 2019. <<https://topwar.ru/164418-sovremennoe-sostojanie-sistemy-rannego-raketnogo-preduprezhdenija-i-protivoraketnoj-oborony-i-sredstv-kontrolja-kosmicheskogo-prostranstva-v-kr.html>>.

⁵³ Interfax, 'Putin told about helping China create a missile warning system', 3 Oct. 2019. <<https://www.interfax.ru/world/679050>>.

⁵⁴ Linnik (note 52).

⁵⁵ President of the Russian Federation (note 51).

⁵⁶ Cheng, S., 'China antenna turns Earth into giant radio station, with signals reaching Guam', *South China Morning Post*, 2 Dec. 2021.

US disarming strike against China's strategic forces will be impossible, at least using traditional nuclear missile systems.

This capability alone, due to the number of warheads launched, will be capable of overcoming ("overloading") the current and any foreseeable missile defense system of the United States and its Pacific allies. But China is going further: that same summer of 2021, it tested the newest-ever "hybrid system" by combining a fractional orbital bombardment system (FOBS) with a hypersonic boost-glide vehicle.⁵⁷ This missile launches its warhead into low earth orbit, it is capable of attacking the United States from a southern direction (where they have no warning radars and missile interceptors) and approaching the target along an unpredictable trajectory.⁵⁸ For the next few years, this makes it impossible for the missile defense system to intercept it, even if it is a single strike. Although officially Beijing denied this information and stated that a reusable spacecraft was tested, the explanation was not believed abroad, concluding that China was ahead of both Russia and the United States in this military-technical field.

Strategic Motives and Implications

In hindsight, it is not difficult to explain, as is usually the case, the steep turn in China's policy, as the experts, who previously went along with the Chinese propaganda about 'minimal deterrence,' are doing. First, Beijing is concerned about the development of the US missile defense system at the global level and in the Asia-Pacific region. The vast majority of US missile defense capabilities are indeed deployed in

⁵⁷ Rogoway, T., 'China Tested A Fractional Orbital Bombardment System That Uses A Hypersonic Glide Vehicle: Report', *The War Zone*, 16 Oct. 2021.

⁵⁸ The Soviet Union developed such R-36orb heavy ICBMs in 1968, but then they were banned by the SALT II and START I treaties. Russia's new RS-28 Sarmat heavy ICBM could also be fractional orbital system. Now the PRC has equipped its new FOBS with a hypersonic boost-glide vehicle instead of a free-falling ballistic warhead, making it even more difficult to track its flight in the atmosphere by radar and to intercept it during approach to the target.

the region, although some elements have a global purpose.⁵⁹ These missile defense systems are justified by the task of protecting against the missile threat of the DPRK, but China (like Russia) is projecting US defense capabilities on itself.

Second, the PRC constantly feels the sword of Damocles hanging over itself, that is the striking power of the US nuclear and precision-guided conventional offensive arms.⁶⁰ The combination of US offensive and defensive means, with a growing emphasis on confrontation with China, makes Beijing fear a massive precision-guided conventional strike, to which it will be unable to respond with nuclear weapons if it follows its commitment not to use them first. And a disarming US nuclear strike under the current circumstances would likely leave China with no survivable means of retaliation.

Previously, China partly compensated for the strategic superiority of the US with its IRMs, which held the US military bases and allies in Asia “hostage.” But now, having created a new generation of strategic weapons, the Chinese leadership has decided to shift the focus from

⁵⁹ Three of the five large missile defense radars, three of the six mobile X-band radars, 44 strategic missile interceptors (in Alaska and California), 16 of the 23 ships with the Aegis BMD system, plus six Japanese ships with Aegis BMD, as well as the Patriot BMD system and the planned Aegis Ashore system on Japanese territory are stationed here. Dvorkin, V., Pyriev, V., ‘The US/ NATO Program and Strategic Stability’, Arbatov, A., Dvorkin, V., Bubnova, N. (eds.) *Missile Defense: Confrontation and Cooperation* (Carnegie Moscow Center: Moscow, 2013), pp. 183–202. [In Russian]

⁶⁰ Eight of the 14 Trident strategic missile submarines (SSBNs) are based and patrolling in the Asia-Pacific region; some of the 400 Minuteman land-based missiles and 60 B-52 and B-2 heavy bombers may be aimed at the PRC. Two of the four converted Trident/Ohio submarines, 30 multipurpose nuclear-powered submarines, and 45 large ships are equipped with non-nuclear precision-guided Tomahawk cruise missiles in the Asia-Pacific region. About 70 per cent of all US missiles of this type are deployed in the region (more than 2,000 missiles). Also for non-nuclear strikes are the carrier-based aircraft from aircraft carriers (6 of 11 in the Pacific) and some of the HBs based in Hawaii and Guam. With a priority focus on the PRC, hypersonic boost-glide ground-, sea- and air-launched long-range conventional missiles are being developed. Acton, J.M., *Silver Bullet? Asking the Right Questions About Conventional Prompt Global Strike* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Washington, DC, 2013), p. 17–21.

indirect to direct nuclear deterrence of the United States, as the Soviet Union did after launching a satellite in 1957 and deploying ICBM forces in the 1960s.

Third, Beijing is setting the stage for a significant shift in the balance of power in its favor in possible arms control talks with the United States (discussed below).

Fourth, the high-level motive is China's desire to bring its military power in line with its achieved economic potential and become not only an industrial, but also a politico-military global power, in no way inferior to the United States.⁶¹

Whatever the rationale for China's missile program, if its foreign assessments are true, a truly tectonic shift in the world order is looming in the next decade: China will become a full-fledged military superpower, and this will have both global and regional implications. By gaining superiority in conventional forces⁶² and intermediate- and shorter-range missile systems in the Western Pacific, and then achieving parity with the United States in strategic forces, China will effectively challenge US security guarantees to its allies and partners in the Asia-Pacific region. It will try to drive out US influence and achieve dominance over the area it considers its "historical sphere of influence" (primarily Taiwan, as well as the islands, natural resources and maritime communications of the South China Sea and the East China Sea). Then the influence of the "Celestial Empire" will expand to the Indian Ocean (there is already a Chinese naval base in Djibouti), and in the future – to the Arctic (China is building a large icebreaker fleet and declares the resources of this ocean as the world heritage).

Unlike during the Cold War and the past three decades, the United States will no longer be able to deter possible Chinese military action and political pressure against Asian-Pacific countries by threatening a massive non-nuclear air attack and then a nuclear strike, relying on its strategic superiority. This could encourage US allies and partners (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan) to either submit to China or

⁶¹ Zhao (note 47).

⁶² China ranked first in the world (except for aircraft carriers) in terms of naval ships, and third in the air force after the United States and Russia, but first in the Asia-Pacific region.

pursue their own nuclear deterrent by withdrawing from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

It is clear that such changes will be of great importance for Russia, both regionally and globally. The radical shifts in the ratio of Russia and China's weight categories cannot but affect the degree of equality in the "strategic partnership" between the two powers. The same applies to the prospects for nuclear weapons non-proliferation and even more to Russia's negotiations with the United States on strategic stability.

How Will Russia and the United States Respond?

Moscow's reaction to China's missile program was understandably restrained, despite the mixed history of relations between the two powers. Although objectively most of the nuclear weapons of the two countries can be used against each other, their relationship cannot be defined as 'mutual nuclear deterrence' in the light of the broad military and political cooperation between the two powers.

Obviously, at present Russia will not respond in any way to China's missile build-up by military means, at least not openly. Accordingly, the two states have no subject for arms limitation negotiations, just as the United States has none with the UK and France. Specifically, Moscow has no weapons systems that it could reduce in exchange for appropriate steps by Beijing, which is the essence of this type of negotiation. However, Russia will probably have to respond indirectly to changes in the situation, primarily in terms of responding to US actions. Similarly, it will need to adjust its policy in the Geneva Dialogue with it, depending on how the US negotiating position changes in the new strategic situation.

Another issue is the strong response to the Chinese program from the United States. This is understandable, since the US–Chinese relationship has a pronounced mutual nuclear deterrent nature, although the US still has multiple advantages at the global level, with the PRC having the regional nuclear and missile advantage. Moreover, unlike US–Russian relations, this dynamic balance of power is not governed

by arms control treaties (except for the US strategic nuclear forces, which are limited under the New START Treaty with Russia).

Depending on the further evolution of the PRC's missile program, the US military response can include several dimensions and phases. The Chinese missile build-up will reach impressive scales after 2026, when the extended term of the New START Treaty expires.⁶³ And by that time a broad renewal of the entire US strategic triad, designed for the next two decades and estimated at a cost of \$1.7 trillion, will have already begun.⁶⁴ It is this program that the Chinese missile activities can affect in the most direct way in terms of its acceleration and expansion. Initially, this program was within the ceilings of the New START Treaty, with a reduction in case the follow-on START Treaty was concluded. In particular, a more compact component (12 Columbia-class SSBNs carrying 16 SLBMs are supposed to be built before the 2040s) was planned to replace the previous generation of naval deterrent forces (18 Ohio/Trident class submarines with 24 Trident II SLBMs on each). Now the program can be expanded in terms of numbers of submarines and numbers of warheads on their missiles, especially since the most optimal component of the US nuclear capability against the PRC is sea-based forces in the Pacific. In addition, due to the build-up of China's ground-based missile forces, the United States will not give up replacing the obsolete Minuteman III ICBMs with the next generation of land-based missiles, and as a result the GBSD⁶⁵ system will get the green light from the early 2030s or earlier.

Serious decisions are also possible for non-strategic weapons systems. The program of the hypersonic sea-launched boost-glide system with a conventional or nuclear warhead will receive an

⁶³ As noted above, the Pentagon estimates that by 2027 the level of China's SNF will reach 700 warheads.

⁶⁴ Kristensen, H.M., Korda, M., 'Nuclear Notebook: United States nuclear weapons', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 12 Jan. 2021.

⁶⁵ GBSD – Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent.

impetus.⁶⁶ Another way to deter China is the deployment of land-based intermediate-range missiles in the Asia-Pacific region planned under Donald Trump. It is indicative that this decision has not been canceled by the Biden administration. A number of systems are considered to be candidates⁶⁷ for deployment in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, the Diego Garcia Islands, Guam and the Palau Islands. For domestic and foreign policy as well as operational reasons, this used to be considered difficult, but in view of the Chinese missile build-up in one area or another, this situation may change from now on.

Amid the formation of strategic parity with China, the deployment of fast-flight IRMs in close proximity to the likely enemy can be considered in the United States as a key option for maintaining military superiority, because China will not be able to respond symmetrically for geostrategic reasons. An analogy with the deployment of US intermediate-range missiles in Europe in the 1980s, when the USSR secured parity with the United States in strategic armaments, begs to be drawn.

It is clear that such an unfavorable shift in the military balance may be followed by a strong response by China in the form of accelerated deployment and equipping its strategic missiles and medium-range systems to the maximum numbers of warheads. Russia will also have to take countermeasures under its current and future military programs. After all, these US weapons systems will either have a global purpose or

⁶⁶ These CPS (Conventional Prompt Strike) missiles will be placed on the new multipurpose Virginia-class nuclear submarines in special vertical launch modules, and each submarine will be able to carry 40 Tomahawk SLCMs or 16 CPS hypersonic missiles. A total of 74 destroyers and 37 submarines will be equipped with such modules, most of which will be in the Pacific Ocean. See Ketonov, S., 'New Arguments for the First Strike', *Voenna-Promyshlenniy Kurier*, no. 46, 1–7 Dec. 2021, pp. 6–7.

⁶⁷ These are Precision Strike Missile (PrSM) systems with a range of 700 km, Tomahawk BGM-109G with a range of 1,000 km, and ground-launched MRBMs with TSV (trajectory shaping vehicles). Their deployment is possible in 2023–2024. Pifer, S., 'The Death of the INF Treaty has Given Birth to New Missile Possibilities', *The National Interest*, Sept. 2019, p. 1–7; Ketonov, S., 'Lockheed Martin Was Bypassed in Hypersonic', *Voenna-Promyshlenniy Kurier*, 11 Sep. 2019. <<https://vpk-news.ru/articles/52363>>.

can objectively threaten Russian territory from the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, Russia is likely to respond through both SNF and all types of sea- and land-based intermediate-range missiles⁶⁸ in the Far East, especially in the case of the appearance of US IRMs in South Korea and Japan.⁶⁹

In addition to these weapons programs, the US will undoubtedly significantly increase funding for the latest “arcane” weapons systems and military technologies: space information and control systems and weapons, unmanned aerial vehicles with artificial intelligence, electronic warfare and cyberwarfare, quantum technologies and big data analysis systems. A certain expansion of land and sea-based missile defense systems is also not ruled out. Both China and Russia, in turn, will respond with symmetric and asymmetric countermeasures according to their scientific, technical, and economic capacities.

The Effect on Arms Control

Beginning in 2019, the Trump administration sounded the alarm about Chinese intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles, which there counted up to 2,000 and were capable of hitting US aircraft carriers task forces and any facilities in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and

⁶⁸ This refers to the 3M14 Kalibr and 3M22 Zircon systems, which can be armed with TK 66–02 (200 kt), TK 66–05 (250 kt), and TK 60 (10 kt) nuclear warheads. See Ketonov (note 28).

⁶⁹ For example, such missiles could be deployed against Japan and South Korea in the Southern Kurils and Primorye, and against the United States in Chukotka, from where they could keep under attack missile defense bases and radars, other military and industrial facilities in Alaska and California. See Shirokorad, A., ‘Doomsday Weapons’, *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 7 Jun. 2019. <https://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2019-06-07/6_1047_day.html>.

Guam.⁷⁰ China's joining arms control treaties was Trump's condition for extending New START.⁷¹

President Biden cleared that obstacle, extended the current New START Treaty, and accepted to negotiate the next agreement without preconditions. Until the summer of 2021, Washington did not plan strategic arms limitation talks with Beijing, relying on US strategic superiority. Under Barack Obama, consultations with China were limited to comparing views on strategic stability and enhancing transparency of its nuclear forces and programs.⁷² These contacts have yielded nothing except the compilation of a US–Chinese dictionary of strategic terminology. After the summer of 2021, Washington's priorities will surely change. It will no longer be Chinese IRMs that are out of reach of the United States, but large-scale ICBM deployments that fundamentally change the strategic balance will become a major “headache” for the United States.

If the Ukrainian conflict is solved diplomatically, the resumption of talks with Russia on SOA will most likely be linked again by the United States to the involvement of the PRC, if not directly in talks with Russia, then at least in the overall process of strategic arms control after 2026. Despite the still significant SNF gap with the United States, China has secured itself an extremely favorable position in possible future negotiations. The dispersion of projections for the level of Chinese capabilities by 2030 ranges from a minimum of about 1,000 warheads⁷³

⁷⁰ Cohen, J., ‘Remarks at a UN Security Council Briefing on Threats to International Peace and Security’, US Mission to the United Nations, 22 Aug. 2019; Cohn, J. et. al., *Leveling the Playing Field. Reintroducing US Theater-range Missiles in a Post-INF World* (Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments: Washington, DC, 2019), p. 5.

⁷¹ AFP (Washington), ‘Pompeo wants China to join Russia in START nuclear treaty’, 10 Apr. 2019.

⁷² Gottemoeller, R., ‘Lessons from the Cold War on preventing a US-China arms race’, *Politico*, 23 Nov. 2021.

⁷³ Military and security developments... (note 4), p. VIII.

to a maximum of about 2,000, and by 2035 – to about 4,000,⁷⁴ and the result depends on the pace and scale of China's missile program.

Thus, Washington has the strongest incentive to reach an agreement with Beijing and set as low a ceiling as possible on the Chinese missile program, and time is working for China. So far, the US response has been unclear and contradictory, as China has created a difficult political and strategic dilemma for Washington. It is clear that if Beijing agrees to negotiate, China will not accept a legal treaty legalizing its current SNF handicap, but will demand a fixation of parity, at least in those weapons systems that would be the subject of the treaty. This is the historically established logic of strategic arms limitation over half a century of dialogue and after a dozen agreements between Washington and Moscow. Like any other power, China will participate in negotiations and agreements only if they provide it with more favorable strategic positions than it would otherwise have. But for political and strategic reasons (superpower status, security guarantees for allies in the Asia-Pacific region, and a focus on nuclear deterrence for both China and Russia) it would be extremely difficult for any administration in the White House to establish parity "up front" with a global rival catching up in all respects.

These changes pose great additional challenges for possible future US–Russian SOA talks. First, the US attention will increasingly turn to China and negotiations with Russia will be sidelined, even if they resume after 2026. In the meantime, the United States for the most part cannot separate its strategic forces and military programs into those discussed with Russia in Geneva and those focused on China.

Second, many of the weapons systems placed at the center of the limitations in the Russian concept of the "security equation" are becoming more important for the United States in terms of deterring China's growing capabilities. First of all, these are precision-guided non-nuclear offensive arms (including hypersonic) of various basing modes, global missile defense system, and free hand in the development

⁷⁴ In addition to the existing SNF, by 2030 China is expected to equip its DF-41 ICBMs with a five-warhead MIRV bus, and by 2025 – with ten warhead bus. It will also build six more submarines with MIRVed SLBMs and deploy 20–30 new HBs with long-range cruise missiles and even hypersonic boost-glide systems.

of space weapons. The same applies to the plans to deploy intermediate-range missiles in the Asia-Pacific region, which are seen as an important “asset” in deterring China and in possible negotiations with it.

The outlined US priorities in the current negotiations with Russia will change little with respect to limiting Russia’s novel systems (Poseidon, Burevestnik). The emphasis on tactical nuclear weapons reductions in the wake of the Ukraine crisis is likely to increase.⁷⁵ What may be reconsidered is a significant reduction of the SNF, which the United States itself will not do now in light of China’s strategic forces build-up and the uncertainty about the prospects of their treaty limitation.

The prospects for formal trilateral dialogue are highly questionable.⁷⁶ Due to the specifics of Russian-Chinese strategic relations, it is difficult to imagine arms control negotiations between the two states. Besides, over the last half-century Moscow and Washington have agreed on a huge legal and treaty-based set of definitions, criteria, counting rules and verification methods for SOA. China is unlikely to accept it as an “imposed assortment,” but rather would want to redesign this toolkit to suit its strategic and cultural specificity.

A more realistic option is two bilateral dialogues, which involves talks between China and the United States and the United States and Russia with a certain degree of coordination. After all, the United States is unlikely to agree to limit its strategic systems in talks with the PRC unless similar forces from Russia are simultaneously limited. And the achievement of agreements with Moscow may henceforth be made by Washington contingent on limiting the relevant Chinese armaments. The two parallel (but certainly not synchronous) negotiating tracks will have different topics and control and limitation measures. For example, Russia and the United States may return to the broad agenda outlined in Geneva in July and October 2021. In turn, Washington and Beijing could first focus on limiting land-based ICBMs and IRMs to a cumulative

⁷⁵ In the course of the crisis and based on the Russian president’s warnings on the nuclear issue, the West is seriously discussing the possibility of the use of Russian TNWs if the military special operation in Ukraine fails.

⁷⁶ See Arbatov, Dvorkin (note 14).

ceiling, while banning medium-range missiles in Europe by a separate US–Russian agreement.

A second scenario is also possible: the resumption of talks between Russia and the United States in the event of a peaceful settlement in Ukraine, along with the postponement of the US–Chinese dialogue due to the unwillingness of either side to depart from the aforementioned principled positions.

Finally, a third and quite probable option is to maintain a negotiating pause between Russia and the United States after 2026 in the absence of a peace settlement in Ukraine. At the same time, negotiations between the United States and China could begin, through which Beijing would try to assert its position as the second nuclear superpower and occupy the exclusive position that Moscow has held for half a century of strategic dialogue with Washington.

* * *

It remains to be seen whether Beijing’s attitude to participation in the strategic talks will become more positive as a result of a major build-up of its ICBMs and other SNF components. However, the future depends not only on China, but also on the US (and indirectly Russian) response to China’s missile build-up and its willingness to negotiate in the new environment.

Generally, the concept of ‘strategic stability’ formulated by Moscow and Washington in 1990 is applicable, under certain conditions, to the trilateral format of strategic relations as well. It assumes that each side has a guaranteed ability to deter a first strike by its adversary (or adversaries) with the possibility of an adequate retaliatory strike. The US–Chinese and US–Russian treaties on SOA can contribute to stability if a number of principles are observed. These include taking into account the relationship between strategic offensive and defensive weapons, reducing the concentration of warheads on strategic delivery vehicles, giving priority to the highly survivable systems, and limiting certain types of delivery vehicles in non-nuclear configurations, including medium-range missiles.

4. PROBLEMS OF TRANSPARENCY AND CONTROL OVER NUCLEAR WARHEADS

Anatoly DYAKOV

The process of the agreed limitation and reduction of nuclear weapons, initiated by Russia and the United States more than 30 years ago, has required the development and implementation of transparency and verification measures. The implementation of these measures is due to the need to provide convincing evidence that each side is reducing and modernizing its nuclear weapons by strictly complying with the agreed commitments. This gives the parties confidence in preserving the strategic balance while maintaining a mutual nuclear deterrence relationship between them. At the same time, the implementation of the agreed transparency and verification measures works to gradually build mutual confidence in nuclear arms control and limitation. The implementation of these measures contributes to the maintenance and strengthening of the non-proliferation regime as well.

The extension of the 2010 Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, also known as the New START Treaty, opens the way for the continuation of the bilateral nuclear arms control process. In deciding on the extension, both sides said they were prepared to use the five-year period to seek new and effective arms control solutions to enhance strategic stability and reduce the risk of a resumption of the arms race. At the same time, there also emerged significant differences in the parties' approaches to the list of issues for the upcoming consultations on the content of the follow-on START Treaty.

According to Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov, the Russian side is interested in embracing "the entire spectrum of both nuclear and non-nuclear, offensive and defensive arms with strategic

capability.”¹ And according to US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, the Joseph Biden administration is interested in controlling all nuclear weapons, strategic and non-strategic, and intends to use the time allowed by the five-year extension to reach a new bilateral agreement with Russia that would include the parties’ arsenals of nuclear warheads related to strategic and non-strategic weapons.²

It should be noted that all the previous agreements between the USSR/Russia and the United States on the limitation, reduction, and elimination of nuclear weapons, except for the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), have contained transparency and control measures only for strategic delivery vehicles – intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers (HBs) – and their launchers. The overall dimensions of strategic delivery vehicles allow for the secure monitoring of the fulfillment of the obligations, undertaken by the parties, by using national technical means (NTMs). However, it is impossible to control nuclear warheads using NTMs. The current New START Treaty provides for controlling the number of nuclear warheads, but only those mounted on ICBMs and SLBMs. Nuclear-capable air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) and nuclear bombs for heavy bombers placed in storage in peace times are not counted or controlled under this treaty.

Any agreement establishing control over nuclear warheads would require an exchange of initial declarations of their types and numbers and inspections of the key stages of the warhead life cycle to confirm the quantitative data. Secure control would require extending control procedures not only to warheads mounted on delivery vehicles and placed in storage facilities, but also to facilities that manufacture and dismantle them. At present, the parties have not developed procedures for full-scale control not only of the deployed nuclear warheads, but also of the warheads placed in storage sites. Access for foreign inspectors to nuclear warhead storage facilities and a potential leak of design

¹ Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov’s opening remarks at a briefing at the Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency on arms control and strategic stability, February 11, 2021’, 11 Feb. 2021.

² Blinken, A.J., ‘On the Extension of the New START Treaty with the Russian Federation. Press statement’, US Department of State, 3 Feb. 2021.

Table 1. The Russian nuclear arsenal, January 2021

Type of nuclear warhead	Deployed warheads	Warheads in storages	Total
<i>Strategic nuclear warheads</i>	1,625	960	2,585
<i>Non-strategic nuclear warheads</i>			
Navy	–	935	935
Air and missile defense	–	387	387
Tactical aircraft	–	500	500
Army	–	90	90
Total non-strategic	–	1,912	1,912
<i>Awaiting dismantlement</i>	–	–	1760
TOTAL	1,625	2,872	6,257

Source: Kristensen, H.M., and Korda, M., ‘Russian nuclear forces’, *SIPRI Yearbook 2021*, pp. 346–357.

and technological information when using technical means to count the number of warheads stored are extremely sensitive issues for each side. Therefore, reaching an agreement on nuclear warheads control is an extremely difficult organizational and technical task. This article analyzes the main problems related to this topic.

Russian and US Nuclear Arsenals

There are no official published data on the types and numbers of nuclear warheads in the Russian arsenal, only estimates provided by non-governmental experts, and the range of these estimates is quite wide.

According to the *SIPRI Yearbook*, at the beginning of 2021 Russia had 6,257 nuclear warheads for various armed services in its arsenal (see Table 1).

According to Russian officials, all the warheads intended for non-strategic delivery systems have been consolidated at the facilities of the 12th Main Directorate of the Ministry of Defense (12th GUMO).³ The units of the 12th GUMO, after receiving nuclear warheads from production facilities, are responsible for storage, maintenance, repair, and delivery of the warheads to combat units. The lifespan of Russian nuclear warheads is limited, so in order to maintain the arsenal even at reduced levels, Russia continues to produce new warheads to replace those being decommissioned.⁴

According to official information, the United States had 3,750 nuclear warheads in its active stockpile in September 2020, and 2,000 warheads awaiting dismantlement.⁵ There is no official data on the number, type, and purpose of the warheads, but only the estimates by non-governmental experts, as presented in Table 2.

The United States had not produced new plutonium pits, the essential component of any nuclear warhead, since 1989.⁶ However, plutonium aging, leading to a degradation of the stability of nuclear warheads, has put the resumption of the production of new plutonium pits on the agenda.⁷ In 2002, production was resumed, but there have been

³ 'Statement by Mikhail I. Uliyanov, Acting Head of the Delegation of the Russian Federation at the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Cluster 1: nuclear disarmament)', 1 May 2015; RIA Novosti, 'Lavrov: the US is preparing Europe to use nuclear weapons against Russia', 28 Feb. 2018 <<https://ria.ru/20180228/1515460467.html>>.

⁴ RIA Novosti, 'Rosatom fulfilled its obligations under the state defense order in 2018 by 100 per cent', 23 Nov. 2018 <<https://ria.ru/amp/20181123/1533354090.html>>.

⁵ 'Fact Sheet Transparency in the US Nuclear Weapons Stockpile', 5 Oct. 2021.

⁶ Plutonium pit – the component of a nuclear warhead consisting of parts made of weapons-grade plutonium and designed to initiate a fusion reaction through the energy released by the plutonium fission chain reaction during the explosion.

⁷ US Department of Energy, Undersecretary for Nuclear Security, 'Letter Report to the NNSA', 6 Apr. 2020.

Table 2. The US nuclear arsenal, January 2021

Type of nuclear warhead	Deployed warheads	Warheads in storage	Total
<i>Strategic nuclear warheads</i>	1800	1770	3570
<i>Non-strategic nuclear warheads</i>	100 ^a	130	230
Total in active stockpile	1900	1900	3800
<i>Awaiting dismantlement</i>	–	–	1750
TOTAL	1900	1900	5550

^a Circa 100 nuclear gravity bombs are placed at six NATO airbases in Europe: Incirlic (Turkey), Aviano and Ghedi Torre (Italy), Buchel (Germany), Kleine Brogel (Belgium), and Volkel (the Netherlands). The nuclear gravity bombs in Europe placed in the vaults at the airbases should be counted as deployed ones.

Source: Kristensen, H.M., and Korda, M., ‘United States nuclear forces’, *SIPRI Yearbook 2021*, pp. 334–345.

produced no more than 20 units per year.⁸ According to Donald Trump’s administration plans, US plutonium core production was expected to reach 80 per year by 2030: 50 at the Los Alamos National Laboratory facility and 30 at the Savannah River Site. Based on the 50-year lifespan of US nuclear warheads, this annual production of plutonium cores is sufficient to maintain the total arsenal of all types of nuclear warheads at 4,000.

In February 2020, the US announced the deployment of W76–2 low-yield warheads on SLBMs.⁹ This warhead reportedly has a yield less than 10 kilotons and is a modification of the W76–1 warhead, which has a yield of about 100 kilotons.

⁸ Kusia, C., ‘US Produces First Plutonium Pit Since 1989’, *Armscontrol.org* [n.d.]; US Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration, ‘Final Environmental Impact Statement for Plutonium Pit Production at the Savannah River Site in South Carolina’, Sep. 2020.

⁹ US Department of Defense, ‘Statement on the Fielding of the W76–2 Low-Yield Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile Warhead’, 4 Feb. 2020.

Nuclear Warhead Control in US–Russian Nuclear Arms Limitation Agreements

Limited control measures on nuclear warheads were first developed and implemented under the INF Treaty of December 1987. According to the Treaty, the nuclear warheads of liquidated land-based missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers were to be dismantled at the declared sites.¹⁰ However, warhead elimination procedures called for crushing (flattening) or explosive elimination of only the warhead bodies. No control measures were applied to the nuclear explosive device, which was removed from the warhead prior to the arrival of the missile at the destruction site. This implied the possibility of their use in other nuclear warheads. For example, nuclear explosive devices from the W85 warheads released during the destruction of Pershing II intermediate-range missiles were used in the United States to equip the B61–10 tactical gravity bombs.¹¹ This type of bombs was withdrawn from the active stockpile in 2016.

Limited control measures on the number of warheads deployed on strategic delivery vehicles were provided for in the START I Treaty. Under this treaty, the sides had shared the information on the number of warheads assigned to deployed ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers. Inspections were envisioned to confirm that ICBM and SLBM warheads did not contain more warheads than the number attributed to those missiles. No more than 10 such inspections could be conducted per year, and no more than one missile (ICBM or SLBM) could be verified in each inspection.¹²

¹⁰ Harahan, J. P., *On-Site Inspections Under The INF Treaty. A History of the On-Site Inspection Agency and Treaty Implementation, 1988–1991* (Department of Defense: Washington, DC, 1993), pp. 124–135.

¹¹ Kristensen, H.M., and Norris, R.S., ‘The B61 family of nuclear bombs’, *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 2014, vol. 70, no. 3, pp. 79–84.

¹² Dyakov, A., ‘Nuclear warheads and weapon-grade materials’, Arbatov, A., and Dvorkin, V. (eds.), *Nuclear Reset: Arms Reductions and Non-Proliferation* (ROSSPEN: Moscow, 2011), pp. 225–248. [In Russian].

During inspection, warheads themselves were covered with soft or hard covers so as not to reveal the warhead parameters, the most important of which is the “ballistic coefficient,” which determines the way warheads move in dense layers of the atmosphere. However, the use of covers, especially hard ones, made it impossible to find out certainly how many warheads were deployed on these missiles. In addition, the penetration aid installed at the missile front section, heavy decoys in particular, also made it difficult to count the number of warheads when using the covers.

The existing New START Treaty provides a procedure for controlling the number of “operationally deployed” strategic warheads, but only those deployed on ICBMs and SLBMs. For this purpose, the inspecting party may use equipment certified by the inspected party to conduct radiation measurements to verify the number of warheads mounted on the delivery vehicle and whether this number is consistent with the declared one. This eliminates the difficulties encountered in conducting inspections under the START I procedure.

The number of nuclear warheads intended for delivery by heavy bombers is not verified. Under the New START, each bomber counts as one delivery vehicle and one warhead, and the treaty’s warhead limits refer to the number of warheads mounted on ICBMs and SLBMs and the total number of heavy bombers equipped for carrying nuclear weapons. At present the warheads assigned to them are in storage at bomber airbases or in central storage facilities. This agreed approach to establishing numerical limits and control procedures of the New START Treaty demonstrates the difficulty of implementing control measures over nuclear warheads in storage.

Problems of Control over Nuclear Warheads

Apparently, the establishment of a treaty regime between the United States and Russia to control all the nuclear warheads, strategic and non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed, would imply sharing baseline data on their types and numbers and implementing verification procedures to confirm these data. However, the *political preconditions* imposed

by the parties, as well as the organizational and technical aspects of implementing such control make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the parties to agree on this issue in the near future. This has been repeatedly pointed out by Russian and US experts.¹³

Political aspects. The most important of these political conditions is Russia's initial position that any negotiations on non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNWs) must be preceded by the consolidation of these weapons within the national territories. This position was reiterated recently.¹⁴ This, in turn, requires the withdrawal of US non-strategic nuclear warheads from Europe and, in effect, a change in NATO's current nuclear policy. Apparently, it will not be easy, because it would take effort and time to develop an agreed position and to reach consensus, given the different positions on this issue among a large number of NATO member states.¹⁵

Organizational aspects. Implementing controls over the entire arsenal of nuclear warheads, as opposed to controlling only deployed strategic warheads, will require the development and implementation of broader and more intrusive control procedures. Such procedures would have a significant impact on the operation of the nuclear weapons complexes of the parties.

¹³ Arbatov, A., 'Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons', Arbatov, A., and Dvorkin, V., (eds.), *Nuclear Reset: Arms Reductions and Non-Proliferation* (ROSSPEN: Moscow, 2011), pp. 198–211. [In Russian]; Diakov, A., 'Verified Reduction of Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons', Armscontrol.ru, 18 Feb. 2001; Podvig, P., Serrat, J., *Lock Them Up: Zero-deployed Non-strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe* (UNIDIR: Geneva, 2017); Gottemoeller, R., 'Rethinking Nuclear Arms Control', *The Washington Quarterly*, 2020, vol. 43, no. 3, pp. 139–159; Acton, J. M., MacDonald, T. D., Vaddi, P., 'Revamping Nuclear Arms Control: Five Near-Term Proposals', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 14 Dec. 2020.

¹⁴ Interfax, 'Ambassador Antonov named Russia's condition for discussing the issues of strategic stability with the US', 26 Oct. 2021 <<https://www.interfax.ru/world/799524>>.

¹⁵ Pifer, S., 'Arms control options for non-strategic nuclear weapons'. Nichols, T., Stuart, D., and McCausland, J. D. (eds.) *Tactical Nuclear Weapons and NATO* (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College: Carlisle Barrack, PA, 2012), pp. 411–436.

For example, control over the arsenal of non-strategic nuclear warheads must take into account the fact that dual-capable systems are used to deliver them. It is impossible to find out by external observation whether the system is armed with a nuclear or conventional warhead, and this poses particular organizational problems with respect to any agreement on the control over non-strategic warheads.¹⁶

It is also necessary to take into account the asymmetry between the Russian and US nuclear weapons complexes, which is due to the fact that the service lifespan of Russian warheads is estimated to be half of that of US warheads, which have a service life of more than 40 years.¹⁷ For this reason, Russia produces significantly more warheads annually than the United States. The US side may consider this circumstance as a potential opportunity for Russia to circumvent the limits on the number of nuclear weapons set by the treaty and will obviously require control procedures at all stages of the warhead life cycle. This has been repeatedly pointed out in the papers by US experts. For example, an interagency group set up by the United States immediately after the ratification of New START to study the possibility of including NSNWs in the verifiable limitation process concluded that the initial step in this process should be transparency measures not only with respect to the storage sites of warheads, but also their types and numbers.¹⁸ And a recent study made by the US National Academy of Sciences on verification measures in future nuclear arms limitation treaties points to the need for a broad inspection regime that considers all warheads at all stages of their life cycle, including production and disposition.¹⁹

The life cycle of nuclear warheads includes their production, transportation to storage sites or delivery vehicles where they are deployed, the movement of warheads between sites, and their

¹⁶ Arbatov (note 13).

¹⁷ Diakov, A. S., Miasnikov, E. V., and Kadyshchev, T. T., *Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons: Problems of Control and Reduction* (MIPT Center for Arms Control, Energy and Environmental Studies: Dolgoprudny, 2004), p. 18. [In Russian].

¹⁸ Pifer (note 15).

¹⁹ Hruby, J. et al (eds.), *Nuclear Proliferation and Arms Control Monitoring, Detection, and Verification: A National Security Priority: Interim Report* (The National Academies Press: Washington, DC, 2021).

technical supervision and maintenance. At the end of their service life, the warheads are removed from their delivery vehicles or from storage and transported to pre-factory assembly/disassembly facilities, where they are awaiting final dismantlement. Given the special measures of secrecy that surround the production, transportation, and storage of warheads, each side will try as much as possible to limit access by the other side's inspectors to its military nuclear facilities in order to minimize the disclosure of sensitive information. Thus, reaching agreement on full-scale control of warheads requires an extremely high degree of trust and openness between the parties, as well as agreements on the protection of sensitive information. The current nature of the relations between Russia and the United States is far from what is required to accomplish this task.

Technical aspects. Verification of baseline data on the number of non-deployed warheads available to each side will require the use of technical means different from those currently in use. These means must confirm with great validity that the inspected object provided to the inspecting party is a declared nuclear warhead. While controlling warheads in storage, the inspecting party, for the same reasons as while controlling deployed strategic warheads, will not have direct access to the warhead, but only to the container in which it is contained. Therefore, the technical means used for inspection will have to identify with high confidence that the object in the container is indeed a nuclear warhead, identify it, and at the same time prevent disclosure of sensitive design information. The technical means and procedures used for container inspections should provide assurance to the inspecting party that the container being inspected does not contain shielding to disguise the presence of a warhead in it.

The research conducted jointly by Russian and US nuclear specialists as part of the 'Lab-to-Lab' program in the 1990s identified and developed authentication methods only for nuclear warheads being decommissioned and sent for disposal.²⁰ The main objective of these studies was to develop methods that would provide high confidence that

²⁰ Dyakov (note 12).

the inspected object was indeed a warhead, while ensuring that design, technological or other sensitive information about it could not be leaked to the inspecting party.

The method of radiation certification of warheads, coupled with the technology of information barriers, was proposed and tested to control the authenticity of the inspected object. The equipment used in this method made it possible to measure individual characteristics of the gamma-neutron field inherent to a particular type of warheads. The recorded characteristics of the gamma-neutron field (the radiation template) of an actual warhead of the same type as the decommissioned warheads could be used then by comparison to control all other warheads of that type during their transportation and storage phases. Since such measurements are extremely intrusive, in the interest of information security their use could be possible only with the presence of information barriers. In this case, the equipment used measures and records the radiation characteristics of the inspected object, compares them with the reference template and, without providing the inspector with information about these characteristics, reports “yes” if the measured and reference templates are identical, or “no” otherwise.

The fundamental disadvantage of this methodology for use in controlling an active warheads stockpile is the need to convince the inspecting party, without disclosing sensitive information, that the reference radiation template used came from an actual warhead and not from a simulated one.

A number of non-governmental research groups are currently developing methods for verifying nuclear warheads using passive and active detection of a much greater number of characteristics and increasing reliability of their identification, combined with reliable

prevention of disclosure of sensitive information.²¹ However, all of the proposed methodologies require further serious development and testing before they could be adopted for the purposes of nuclear warheads stockpile control. Such developed and certified means with reliable information barriers are not currently available to the parties.

Possible Solutions

In the light of the above the US insistence on achieving control of the full arsenal of nuclear warheads as early as in the next US-Russian agreement on nuclear arms reduction after the New START Treaty expiration date will be virtually impossible to fulfill. However, taking into account the desirability of continuing the treaty process of nuclear arms control, the parties could take steps aimed at facilitating conditions for the future involvement of nuclear weapons in the verification process, while not impeding the progress of control and reduction of the parties' strategic nuclear arsenals.

The problem of controlling non-strategic nuclear warheads could be solved by taking into account the following circumstances. Currently, Russian NSNWs and part of US NSNWs are in central storage, away from the delivery vehicles. The New START Treaty sets limits and control measures on the number of "operationally deployed" strategic warheads. Nuclear gravity bombs and cruise missiles in storage intended for heavy bombers, as well as warheads offloaded from deployed ICBMs and SLBMs, are not counted because they are not "operationally deployed" and control measures are not provided for

²¹ Glaser, A., Barak, B., Goldston, R., 'A Zero-knowledge Protocol for Nuclear Warhead Verification', *Nature*, 2014, pp. 497–502; Goldston, R. J., d'Errico, F., Di Fulvio, A., Glaser, A., Philippe, S., and Walker, M. 'Zero Knowledge Warhead Verification: System Requirements and Detector Technology', 55th Annual INMM Meeting, 20–24 July 2014, Atlanta, Georgia; Hecla, J. J., Danagouliau, A., 'Nuclear Disarmament Verification via Resonant Phenomena', *Nature Communications*, 2018, no. 9 (1259); Engel, E. M., Danagouliau, A., 'A Physically Cryptographic Warhead Verification System Using Neutron Induced Nuclear Resonances', *Nature Communications*, 2019, no. 10 (4433).

them. Moving non-strategic nuclear warheads to central storage facilities from forward storage bases located in proximity to their delivery vehicles would essentially mean transferring them to a “non-rapidly-deployable” regime, and they might not be subject to control measures, similar to the practice adopted in New START. This approach to NSNWs does not require the parties to disclose the numbers, types, and technical condition of their warheads, which has been a serious stumbling block in all attempts to reach agreement on non-strategic weapons.²²

The transition to classifying all nuclear warheads as “deployed” and “non-deployed” instead of dividing them into “strategic” and “tactical” ones largely eliminates the problem of numerical asymmetry between the US and Russian NSNWs stockpiles, which is constantly emphasized by Western politicians and military. In terms of strategic stability, the breakthrough potential of stored strategic warheads is no less, and probably more, than that of stored operational-tactical weapons.

During the 2020 consultations on the extension of the New START Treaty, the US side argued that the treaty limits 92% of the US arsenal of nuclear warheads, while the Russian arsenal is limited to only 45%.²³ How these percentages were calculated is easy to guess. According to the data exchange under the New START Treaty, the United States has 1,391 strategic warheads deployed in 2020, and Russia has 1,379 strategic warheads deployed.²⁴ The Americans apparently counted these 1,391 strategic warheads and 100 non-strategic warheads deployed in Europe, while for Russia were counted 1,379 and 1,800, respectively. All Russian NSNWs were counted as deployed, while non-deployed strategic warheads, of which the United States has over 2,000, were not counted in these calculations.

Taking into account the total number of strategic and non-strategic nuclear warheads in the arsenals of the parties provides us with a different picture. According to the *SIPRI Yearbook 2021*, the United States had 3,800 warheads in active arsenal, including 1,800 deployed

²² Podvig, Serrat (note 13).

²³ ‘Special Presidential Envoy Marshall Billingslea on the Future of Nuclear Arms Control’, Hudson Institute, 21 May 2020.

²⁴ Bureau of Arms Control, Verification And Compliance, ‘New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms’, Fact Sheet, 1 Dec. 2020.

and 1,770 non-deployed strategic warheads, and 230 non-strategic warheads as well.²⁵ Russia has 4,495 warheads in the active arsenal, namely 1,625 deployed and 960 non-deployed strategic warheads, and 1,912 non-deployed non-strategic warheads.²⁶ Thus, the difference in the total number of warheads between the United States and the Russian Federation does not exceed 18%, and the issue of numerical asymmetry does not exist as such.

Therefore, as the first step in controlling NSNWs, there could be an agreement to control only empty non-strategic nuclear weapons storage facilities at forward bases.²⁷ Inspector access to a storage facility without nuclear warheads and scheduled maintenance procedures is easier to arrange and conduct because it will not lead to disclosure of sensitive information. Reaching an agreement on inspection of empty NSNWs forward storage bases does not have to pose significant difficulties. However, transporting warheads from forward bases to central storage facilities entails certain organizational, technical, and economic costs, as well as major strategic issues at the highest political level.

For the United States, implementing the idea of “non-deployed” non-strategic warheads involves moving all the US warheads located at airbases in Europe to central storage facilities on its own soil. This would give Russia and the United States an opportunity to organize mutual inspections of empty airfield storage facilities located in NATO countries and Russian storage facilities at forward bases.

Obviously, progress toward treaty accounting, verification, and eventually irreversible elimination of nuclear warheads cannot be made without resuming the “Lab-to-Lab” activities conducted in the past. Therefore, it would be an important step right now to resume cooperation between Russian and US nuclear specialists to develop and agree on procedures and measures of technical control over nuclear warheads, including those in storage, and procedures for their transparent and irreversible disassembly and dismantlement.

²⁵ *SIPRI Yearbook 2021: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2022), pp. 334–345.

²⁶ *SIPRI Yearbook 2021* (note 25), pp. 346–357.

²⁷ Arbatov (note 13).

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The implementation of the proposed solutions could facilitate both the conclusion of the follow-on US-Russian START agreement and, in the future, the development of measures for full transparency and control regime over nuclear warheads.

Further steps to control, count for, and eventually irreversibly eliminate nuclear warheads are the subject of much broader, global decisions related to general nuclear disarmament in a step-by-step and multilateral ways. This path has to include many stages and components, with chief ones among them being the initial declarations by states, regular updates to the information contained in the initial declarations, and a system of coordinated technical controls and inspections of facilities subject to agreements on the reduction and elimination of nuclear warheads.

Clearly, this is not possible in general terms without a significant easing of the current international tensions. The next US-Russian nuclear arms limitation treaty, with a mutually acceptable compromise on arsenal controls, could be a major step in this direction.

PART II. EXPERT INSIGHTS

5. Concepts and Key Factors of Cyberwarfare
6. On the New Quality of the US Middle East Policy
7. Safety of Navigation in the Waters of the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf

5. CONCEPTS AND KEY FACTORS OF CYBERWARFARE

Pavel KARASEV

Presently, the expert community and political elites of the world's leading countries have an understanding that information technologies are an important tool for the realization of national interests that can serve many purposes – from cyber espionage to the use of force or information-psychological influence. However, no agreed or generally accepted definition of “cyberwarfare” and of what constitutes “an armed attack in cyberspace” has been developed. Despite the fact that the international community has acknowledged the need for an appropriate terminological apparatus¹, it still does not exist. For example, relevant definitions have not been produced during all the years of work of the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. At the same time, the 2015 GGE report specifically mentions the threat of using ICT tools for military purposes incompatible with the maintenance of international peace and stability: “A number of States are developing ICT capabilities for military purposes. The use of ICTs in future conflicts between States is becoming more likely.”²

¹ This has been noted, for example, in United Nations, General Assembly, ‘Report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security’, Document A/65/201, 30 Jul. 2010, p. 8 <[https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/469/57/pdf/N1046957.pdf? OpenElement](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/469/57/pdf/N1046957.pdf?OpenElement)>.

² United Nations, General Assembly, ‘Report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security’, Document A/70/174, 22 Jul. 2015, p. 6 <[https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/228/35/pdf/N1522835.pdf? OpenElement](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/228/35/pdf/N1522835.pdf?OpenElement)>.

A better understanding of the factors that determine the state of tension in the ICT environment, current cyber capabilities, red lines, as well as the search for possible ways to reduce tension in this area, requires analysis of the current state and evolution of the conceptual, doctrinal and logistical aspects of cyberwarfare.

Definitions of Cyberwar

Several relevant definitions can be found in national and various institutional documents, and they can be used to highlight the characteristics of what is currently understood as “cyberwar” or “warfare in cyberspace”.

The “Russian Federation Armed Forces’ Information Space Activities Concept” uses the term “information war”, which is defined as “the confrontation between two or more states in the information space with the purpose of inflicting damage to information systems, processes and resources, critical and other structures, undermining the political, economic and social systems, a massive psychological manipulation of the population to destabilize the state and society, as well as coercion of the state to take decisions for the benefit of the opposing force.”³

In the United States, there is a similar term – “information operations”, which is defined as “the integrated employment, during military operations, of information-related capabilities in concert with other lines of operation to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of adversaries and potential adversaries”; as well as the term “cyberspace operations” – “the employment of cyberspace capabilities where the primary purpose is to achieve objectives in or through cyberspace.”⁴

³ Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, ‘Russian Federation Armed Forces’ Information Space Activities Concept’ [n.d.] <<https://eng.mil.ru/en/science/publications/more.htm?id=10845074@cmsArticle>>.

⁴ US Department of Defense, ‘Joint Publication 1–02 Department Of Defense Dictionary Of Military And Associated Terms 8 November 2010 (As Amended Through 15 February 2016), (2016)’, p. 58, 110 <https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jpl_02.pdf>.

The UK National Cyber Strategy defines “offensive cyber” as “adding, deleting or manipulating data on systems or networks to deliver a physical, virtual or cognitive effect...”⁵

The French Ministry of Armed Forces defines cyberattacks as “a malicious act of hacking in cyberspace. Cyberattacks can be the action of an isolated person, a group, a State. They include disinformation, electronic espionage... clandestine modification of sensitive data on a battlefield or the disruption of a country’s critical infrastructure...”⁶

The German Cyber Security Strategy states that a cyberattack “is an effect on one or more other information technology systems in or through cyberspace with the aim of completely or partially impairing their IT security through information technology means.”⁷

A publication prepared by the Institute of Information Security Issues (IISI) of Moscow State University and the East-West Institute defines cyberwar as “an escalated state of cyber conflict between or among states in which cyberattacks are carried out by state actors against the adversary’s cyber infrastructure as part of a military campaign”⁸ and can be formally declared by an authority of one of (all) the parties or commence without a declaration and being carried out *de facto*.

The above definitions highlight the conceptual characteristics inherent in cyber- or information war, actions in cyberspace and information operations. First of all, it should be noted that Russia, China and a number of other states follow the paradigm of “information

⁵ UK Government, ‘National Cyber Strategy 2022’, 2022, p. 128 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1053023/national-cyber-strategy-amend.pdf>.

⁶ Ministère des Armées, ‘La cybersécurité au ministère des Armées’ [n.d.] <<https://www.defense.gouv.fr/nos-expertises/cyberdefense-au-ministere-armees#title-9319>>.

⁷ Bunderministerium des Innern, ‘Cyber-Sicherheitsstrategie für Deutschland 2016’, Nov. 2016, p. 46 <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/themen/it-digitalpolitik/cybersicherheitsstrategie-2016.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3>.

⁸ Rauscher, K., and Yashchenko, V., Critical Terminology Foundations 2 (EWI/IISI: New York, 2014), p. 32.

security”⁹, while the United States and Western countries – the paradigm of cybersecurity, which until recently actually reduced security issues only to technical issues, ignoring the issues of information influence, like in the context of violent extremism online. Information security considers not only cyber threats, but also information-humanitarian ones that are implemented through a targeted harmful impact on the consciousness of individuals and society. At the same time, over the past few years, there has been a conceptual convergence of these paradigms.

Thus, today actions in the ICT environment are not limited only to cyber influence, but also include information-humanitarian, or cognitive, impact on individual or collective consciousness. At the same time, information and cyber impact is not limited to virtual space, but can also cause physical effects – including in critical infrastructure. Another important characteristic is that cyber and information influence, depending on specific doctrine, can be carried out in support of military campaigns in traditional operational spaces, as well as independent actions, possibly even in peacetime.

US Views on the Military Use of the ICT Environment

The United States is at the forefront of the process of militarization of the ICT environment, and the evolution of the US approaches in this area can be considered as one of the key models for conceptualization of the military application of ICTs. Consideration of the US position is also necessary in view of the fact that this country largely determines the policy of the NATO military-political bloc.

In the early 1990s the outlook was that the US military establishment, and American society alike, is striving to take advantage of the information revolution and its new opportunities – the result of rapid

⁹ The term “informatcionnaya bezopasnost”, despite being sometimes used in Russia as an equivalent to “information security” (generally understood as protection of the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of data), has a different meaning in official documents.

development of cyberspace, microcomputers and relevant information technologies.¹⁰ The first directive of the US Department of Defense to feature general provisions of the information warfare appeared back in December 1992. This document defined it as “the competition of opposing information systems to include the exploitation, corruption or destruction of the adversary’s information system through such means as signals intelligence and command and control countermeasures while protecting the integrity of one’s own information system from such attacks.”¹¹

The US Department of Defense Directive S-3600.1 was issued in 1996 and defined a broader concept of “information operations” rather than that of information warfare.¹² According to this document, they are “actions taken to affect adversary information and information systems while defending one’s own information and information systems”¹³; it is also noted that the Department of Defense must be prepared for missions from peace to war – implying that information operations are carried out both in wartime and in peacetime. Experts admit, “The fact that the United States was writing strategy to conduct operations in peacetime against nations was considered very risky, therefore IW remained highly classified throughout much of the 1990s.”¹⁴

Early 2000s marked important changes in US approaches to the military use of ICTs. The Joint Vision 2020, adopted in 2000, emphasized that the United States should strive for “full spectrum dominance”, including in the information space.¹⁵ Then, the Quadrennial

¹⁰ Molander, R., Riddile, A. and Wilson, P., *Strategic information warfare* (RAND: Santa Monica, CA, 1996), p. xi.

¹¹ US Department of Defense, ‘Department of Defense Directive TS-3600.1 Information Warfare’, 1992, p. 1 <<https://archive.org/details/14F0492Doc01DirectiveTS3600.1>>.

¹² US Department of Defense, ‘Department of Defense Directive S-3600.01’, 1996, <https://archive.org/details/DODD_S3600.1>.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁴ Armistead, L. (ed.) *Information Operations: warfare and the hard reality of soft power*. – 1st ed. (Potomac Books: Washington, D.C., 2004), p. 23.

¹⁵ US Department of Defense, ‘Joint Vision 2020’, June 2000, p. 6 <<https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=446826>>.

Defense Review 2001 singled out cyberoperations as an independent activity, and recognized cyberspace as a new arena of military competition.¹⁶

The National Military Strategy for Cyberspace Operations – a statutory document for conducting operations in cyberspace – was issued in 2006.¹⁷ Among other things, the Strategy confirms that activities in cyberspace are carried out with the use of integrated offensive and defensive options and across national boundaries.¹⁸

The creation of the US Cyber Command¹⁹ in 2010 was an important practical step in the development of cyber capabilities. This structure is engaged not only in the protection of military systems and networks, but also conducts operations in cyberspace and facilitates coordination between all branches of the military.

In International Strategy for Cyberspace, adopted in 2011, the United States proclaimed its right to use military force in response to a cyberattack: “When warranted, the United States will respond to hostile acts in cyberspace as we would to any other threat to our country... We reserve the right to use all necessary means – diplomatic, informational, military, and economic – as appropriate and consistent with applicable international law, in order to defend our Nation, our allies, our partners, and our interests.”²⁰

Under Donald Trump, leaning towards further militarization of the ICT environment became stronger than ever, and this is reflected in the 2018 Department of Defense Cyber Strategy, in the form of two fundamentally new concepts – “persistent engagement” and

¹⁶ US Department of Defense, ‘Quadrennial Defense Review 2001’, 2001, p. 7 <<https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/defenseReviews/QDR/qdr2001.pdf>>.

¹⁷ US Department of Defense, ‘The National Military Strategy for Cyberspace Operations’, Dec. 2006, p. 110 <<https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=35693>>.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁹ See US Department of Defense, ‘U.S. Cyber Command Fact Sheet’, May 2010 <<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAE/NSAE424/docs/Cyber-038.pdf>>.

²⁰ The White House, ‘International Strategy for Cyberspace’, May 2011, p. 14 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/international_strategy_for_cyberspace.pdf>.

“defend forward”²¹, which open up the possibility of continuous covert cyberoperations in the networks of potential adversaries. In addition, Cyber Command was given greater independence, and some administrative barriers²² that regulated the coordination of offensive cyberoperations were removed.

By the end of 2021, the Biden administration had not yet published significant documents on military cybersecurity, but in April 2021 issued a document titled “Imposing Costs for Harmful Foreign Activities by the Russian Government: Fact Sheet”.²³ It says nothing on revising or loosening of Trump’s policy, nor does it say anything about its support or development thereof. Until the new US cyber defense strategy emerges, this can be regarded as a sign that “persistent engagement” and “defend forward” concepts will be developed and implemented.

Summing up, it can be noted that the United States has consistently developed its cyber capabilities and today has the doctrinal, organizational and material and technical capabilities to conduct both defensive and offensive operations in the ICT environment. Cyberspace has been recognized a theater of operations, and a significant cyberattack can be considered an armed attack – triggering an associated response. At the same time, the US strategic planning documents reserve the possibility of conducting cyberoperations against a potential adversary during peacetime. Particularly dangerous from the point of view of possible escalation is the entrenchment at the level of strategy of approaches that justify and even direct the conduct of military cyberoperations during peacetime on the territory of potential adversaries.

²¹ US Department of Defense, ‘2018 Department of Defense Cyber Strategy: Summary’, 2018, p. 1 <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Sep/18/2002041658/-1/-1/1/CYBER_STRATEGY_SUMMARY_FINAL.PDF>.

²² Sanger, D., ‘Trump Loosens Secretive Restraints on Ordering Cyberattacks’, *The New York Times*, 20 Sep. 2018.

²³ The White House, ‘Imposing Costs for Harmful Foreign Activities by the Russian Government: Fact Sheet’, 15 Apr. 2020 <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/15/fact-sheet-imposing-costs-for-harmful-foreign-activities-by-the-russian-government/>>.

Position of Other Nations and Associations

The NATO military-political alliance unites 30 states within the framework of a common security policy, including in the ICT environment. The North Atlantic Alliance is consistently developing the doctrinal and organizational foundations for conducting offensive and defensive operations in cyberspace.²⁴ The NATO Enhanced Cyber Defence Policy, adopted in 2014, recognized that the fifth article of the North Atlantic Treaty is applicable to cyberspace. In July 2016, at the NATO Warsaw Summit, cyberspace was recognized as a domain of operations²⁵, and in February 2017, an updated Cyber Defence Plan²⁶ and a roadmap for the military development of cyberspace were adopted. In November of the same year, at a meeting of defense ministers of the North Atlantic Council, a decision was made to create a NATO Cyber Operations Center.²⁷

The major military powers of Europe are also on the path of building up their defensive and offensive capabilities in the ICT environment. It was announced in December 2016 that a structure similar to the US Cyber Command would be created in France. Jean-Yves Le Drian, the then French Defense Minister, stated that a cyberattack could constitute an act of war, which would require an appropriate response from a new specialised unit known as Cybercom.²⁸ The “Cyber Defense Strategic Review”, adopted in 2018, marked the beginning of a review and strengthening of France’s approaches to military operations in the ICT

²⁴ NATO, ‘Wales Summit Declaration’, 5 Sep. 2014. <https://www.nato.int/cps/ru/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm?selectedLocale=en>.

²⁵ NATO, ‘Warsaw Summit Communiqué’, 9 Jul. 2016. <https://www.nato.int/cps/ru/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm>.

²⁶ NATO, ‘Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Defence Ministers’, 16 Feb. 2017. <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_141340.htm?selectedLocale=en>.

²⁷ NATO, ‘NATO Defence Ministers meet to continue the Alliance’s adaptation for the 21st Century’, 7 Nov. 2017. <https://www.nato.int/cps/ru/natohq/news_148357.htm?selectedLocale=en>.

²⁸ ‘Worried by hacker threat, France prepares army response’, *Phys.org*, 12 Dec. 2016.

environment. The paper addresses the issue of cyberattack responses, which are allowed when prevention, cooperation and negotiation fail. The response may be given using cyber or other means. The strategy also highlights that a major cyberattack could be interpreted as armed aggression under Article 51 of the UN Charter.²⁹ In 2019, the offensive military doctrine was released, which, among other things, introduced the principle of risk management in the preparation and conduct of offensive operations: reduction of the risk of escalation in an asymmetric environment or the risk of collateral damage or unforeseen indirect impact on civilian infrastructure.³⁰

The formation of the UK Cyber Force began in 2011–2013 with the creation of the Defence Cyber Operations Group.³¹ The UK National Cybersecurity Strategy 2016–2021 states: “We have the means to take offensive action in cyberspace, should we choose to do so... We will have the means to respond to cyberattacks in the same way as we respond to any other attack, using whichever capability is most appropriate, including an offensive cyber capability.”³²

Germany created the Cyber and Information Domain Service in 2016–2017. Speaking at the opening ceremony, German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen said: “If the German military’s networks are attacked, then we can defend ourselves. As soon as an attack endangers the functional and operational readiness of combat forces,

²⁹ Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale, ‘Revue stratégique de cyberdéfense’, 12 Feb. 2018, pp. 162–163 <<http://www.sgdsn.gouv.fr/uploads/2018/02/20180206-np-revue-cyber-public-v3.3-publication.pdf>>. [in French].

³⁰ Ministère des Armées, ‘Éléments publics de doctrine militaire de lutte informatique offensive’, 2019, p. 9 <<https://www.defense.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/ema/EI%C3%A9ments%20publics%20de%20doctrine%20militaire%20de%20lutte%20informatique%20OFFENSIVE.pdf>>. [in French].

³¹ UK Government, ‘The UK Cyber Security Strategy: Protecting and promoting the UK in a digital world’, Nov. 2011, p. 26. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60961/uk-cyber-security-strategy-final.pdf>.

³² UK Government, ‘National Cyber Security Strategy 2016 to 2021’, 2016, pp. 9–10 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/567242/national_cyber_security_strategy_2016.pdf>.

we can respond with offensive measures.”³³ The German Cyber Security Strategy states that cyber defense will be integrated into the planning, structures and processes of overall defense. In order for the German armed forces to be able to perform their duty in cyberspace, their capabilities are being expanded, the security architecture of their IT systems is being consolidated, and previously disparate structures are being combined within a new, separate military organizational area.³⁴

The position of Russia on the issues of the military-political use of the ICT environment was first detailed in the 2011 document “Russian Federation Armed Forces’ Information Space Activities Concept”. In particular, it proposes that “Cyberspace conflict settlement shall be carried out in the first place by means of negotiation, conciliation, addressing to the UN Security Council or regional agencies or agreements, or by other peaceful means.”³⁵ At the same time, it is possible, “In case of the conflict escalation in the information space and its extension to the critical phase, to invoke a right for individual or collective self-defense using any ways and means that do not run counter to the standards and principles of the international law.”³⁶ In February 2017, the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Sergei Shoigu, speaking at the “government hour” in the State Duma, said that over the past four years information operations forces and their command and control structure have been created in Russia.³⁷

On the foreign policy edge, the efforts of Russian diplomacy are aimed at preventing the militarization of the ICT environment, up to the institution of a ban on the destructive military-political use of ICT. In 2015, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for International Cooperation in the Field of Information Security, Ambassador-at-Large of the Russian Foreign Ministry Andrei

³³ ‘German military can use “offensive measures” against cyber attacks: minister’, *Reuters*, 5 Apr. 2017.

³⁴ Bunderministerium des Innern (note 7).

³⁵ Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (note 3), para. 3.2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Interfax, ‘Information operations Forces created by The Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation’, 22 Feb. 2017 <<https://www.interfax.ru/russia/551054>>.

Krutskikh noted that the position of Russia and its partners in the SCO and BRICS is to “not legalize or regulate conflicts in the information space, but to prevent the use of ICT for military-political purposes.”³⁸

Considering the foregoing, it can be stated that in many aspects the leading NATO states follow the US path in building the doctrinal, organizational and material and technical capabilities of conducting cyberoperations, but they take into account certain national aspects and priorities. So far, none of these countries has adopted the policy of “persistent engagement” and “defend forward” in their pure form, but there is no certainty that this will not happen in the near future.³⁹ If we compare this to the position of Russia, it can be noted that Russia follows the latest trends and has created its own “information command” and corresponding units. At the same time, from a doctrinal point of view, Russia does not set itself the task of conducting offensive operations in the information space, which can be explained by the policy of “conflict prevention” in the information space. While maintaining the general focus of foreign policy on finding ways to prevent or limit conflicts in the ICT environment, the creation of cyber and information potential for Russia will be an inevitable consequence of the need to ensure national security against a backdrop of the development of offensive and defensive cyber capabilities in other states.

Factors of Escalation

To date, cyberattacks have not led to a significant military escalation of tensions, primarily military ones. It seems that this does not happen due to a combination of several factors. First, all the major players (nation-states) have drawn “red lines”, which cyberattacks and what damage they consider unacceptable, thereby cementing some of the foundations of the deterrence policy. For example, in June 2021, NATO allies

³⁸ Chernenko, E., ‘We managed to agree against the backdrop of confrontation and sanctions’, *Kommersant*, 17 Aug. 2015 <<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2790234>>.

³⁹ For example, the policy of active cyber defence, adopted in the UK National Cyber Security Strategy, does not directly mention intrusion into the networks of a potential adversary. See UK Government (note 32), pp. 33–34.

noted in their Brussels Summit Communiqué that they “recognise that the impact of significant malicious cumulative cyber activities might, in certain circumstances, be considered as amounting to an armed attack.”⁴⁰ Second, the ICT environment is a man-made domain and it is transboundary, anonymous, and global. All these properties, which are a product of the technical and technological aspects of current global information networks architecture, greatly complicate fast and accurate attribution, i. e. determining the source of a cyberattack. And this, in turn, increases the risk of erroneous responses and inadvertent escalations, especially when it comes to possible “hack-back” cyberattacks.

On the other hand, a number of factors increase the likelihood of escalation. First, there are no international legal mechanisms that could help reduce risks in the ICT environment. The norms, rules, and principles of responsible behavior of states adopted within the framework of the UN GGE are “soft” law, i. e. they are not binding. The second key point in this regard is that a number of states are promoting the concept of the so-called “public attribution”, in which the perpetrator is determined not through the establishment of facts, due process, and proof of guilt, but by “naming” (or “appointing”) the entity responsible for the attacks, often for political reasons. Third, a relatively low “entry threshold” can lead to a significant expansion of the circle of actors capable of possessing and using cyberweapons. Given the complexity of attribution, we cannot rule out the possibility of third parties carrying out false flag attacks to provoke a conflict. Fourth, it is widely believed in certain military circles⁴¹ that cyber means help fully respect the principles of international humanitarian law (IHL) of proportionality and distinction⁴², and they are, therefore, more attractive

⁴⁰ NATO, ‘Brussels Summit Communiqué’, 14 Jun. 2021 <https://www.nato.int/cps/ru/natohq/news_185000.htm?selectedLocale=en>.

⁴¹ NATO, ‘Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the North Atlantic Council at the level of Defence Ministers’, Nov. 2017 <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_148417.htm?selectedLocale=en>.

⁴² See Melzer, N., *International Humanitarian Law – a Comprehensive Introduction* (ICRC, 2016), pp. 17–20 <<https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/DOC/icrc-4231-002-2019.pdf>>.

than the use of force in traditional sense. However, the facts show that it is currently not possible to guarantee compliance with the principles of IHL when using cyberweapons.⁴³

The most important factor is that at the moment a number of countries demonstrate political will for more active use of the destructive ICT capabilities, despite the possible risks. In this regard, we can recall that, for example, Russia and China are named as the main competitors in the US Department of Defense Cyber Strategy 2018⁴⁴, and former US national security adviser John Bolton said in June 2019: “The purpose [of cyber offensives]... is to say to Russia, or anybody else that’s engaged in cyberoperations against us, ‘you will pay a price’”.⁴⁵ In June 2019, the US carried out a cyberattack⁴⁶ against Iranian units that were allegedly involved in the attack on oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman.⁴⁷ That same month, *The New York Times* published an article⁴⁸ alleging that US intelligence agencies had gained unauthorized access to the networks and systems of Russian facilities associated with the generation and transmission of energy.

Cyberattacks on computer networks and SCADA systems of critical infrastructure, especially on facilities containing dangerous forces⁴⁹, as well as attacks on military infrastructure carry the greatest risk of possible material and human losses – and escalation. The tendency

⁴³ Karasev, P., ‘Militarization of Cyberspace’, Arbatov, A., Bubnova, N. (eds.) *Security and Arms Control 2017–2018: Overcoming the Imbalance of the International Stability* (IMEMO: Moscow, 2018), pp. 247–259. [in Russian].

⁴⁴ US Department of Defense (note 21).

⁴⁵ “‘They will pay a price’: Bolton says US has expanded ‘offensive cyber operations’ against Russia”, *Russia Today*, 11 Jun. 2019.

⁴⁶ McLaughlin, J., Dorfman, Z., and Naylor, S. D., ‘Pentagon secretly struck back against Iranian cyberspies targeting U.S. ships’, *Yahoo News*, 22 Jun. 2019.

⁴⁷ Hafezi, P., Brice, M. ‘Trump says “Iran did do it,” as U.S. seeks support on Gulf oil tanker attacks’, *Reuters*, 14 Jun. 2019.

⁴⁸ Sanger, D., Perlroth, N., ‘U.S. Escalates Online Attacks on Russia’s Power Grid’, *The New York Times*, 15 Jun. 2019.

⁴⁹ According to Article 56 ‘Protection of works and installations containing dangerous forces’ of the 1977 Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, such works and installation include dams, dykes and nuclear electrical generating stations.

of nuclear powers to saturate command and control systems with digital technologies – as part of the modernization of their nuclear forces – inevitably leads to the emergence of potential cyber vulnerabilities and an increase in the risks of unintentional escalation in the sphere of strategic stability.⁵⁰ Also, insufficiently studied are the potential risks of military use of autonomous systems with AI.

* * *

In the context of an acute lack of trust and the transformation of the geopolitical map of the world, it is equally extremely difficult to implement effective prevention or control over cyber conflicts. The facts show that the international community has already embarked on a cyber arms race, and individual countries have openly proclaimed dangerous practices that prioritize offensive cyberoperations. Continuously growing cyber risks, especially against a backdrop of international instability, exacerbate the need to find ways and frameworks to de-escalate tension in the ICT environment. The concern of the international community with the threats emanating from the ICT environment has been invariably expressed in the UN General Assembly resolutions “Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in

⁵⁰ For more details on cyber vulnerabilities of nuclear forces command and control see: Unal, B., Lewis, P., *Cybersecurity of Nuclear Weapons Systems: Threats, Vulnerabilities and Consequences* (Chatham House: London, 2018) <<https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/cybersecurity-nuclear-weapons-systems-threats-vulnerabilities-and-consequences>>; Futter, A., *Cyber Threats and Nuclear Weapons New Questions for Command and Control, Security and Strategy* (Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies: London, 2016) <https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/cyber_threats_and_nuclear_combined.1.pdf>.

the context of international security”, which have been adopted annually since 1998⁵¹, when Russia voiced at the UN the concern over the danger of “information wars”⁵².

The process of developing rules for the responsible behavior of states in the ICT environment has led the international community to the realization of existing contradictions. In practice, this was reflected in the absence in 2017 of a UN GGE consensus report, the adoption in 2018–2019 of alternative resolutions “Advancing responsible State behavior in cyberspace in the context of international security”⁵³, as well as the formation in 2018 of two parallel groups – a new GGE with the leading role of the United States and an Open Ended Working Group (OEWG), the creation of which was initiated by Russia and China.⁵⁴ Despite this, all key nations continued to discuss the rules, principles, and norms aimed at preventing conflicts and military-political confrontation in the ICT environment, not only on a multilateral basis⁵⁵, but in a bilateral format.

At the Russia-US summit in June 2021, cybersecurity issues were given special attention, and the negotiations resulted in the creation of a joint working group. One of the tasks that was set for its members

⁵¹ Resolutions, by years: 2020 – A/RES/75/240; 2019 – A/RES/74/29; 2018 – A/RES/73/27; 2017 – A/C.1/72/L.44; 2016 – A/RES/71/28; 2015 – A/RES/70/237; 2014 – A/RES/69/28; 2013 – A/RES/68/243; 2012 – A/RES/67/27; 2011 – A/RES/66/24; 2010 – A/RES/65/41; 2009 – A/RES/64/25; 2008 – A/RES/63/37; 2007 – A/RES/62/17; 2006 – A/RES/61/54; 2005 – A/RES/60/45; 2004 – A/RES/59/61; 2003 – A/RES/58/32; 2002 – A/RES/57/53; 2001 – A/RES/56/19; 2000 – A/RES/55/28; 1999 – A/RES/54/49; 1998 – A/RES/53/70.

⁵² United Nations, General Assembly, ‘Role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields. Letter dated 23 September 1998 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General’, Document A/C.1/53/3, 30 Sep. 1998, p. 2. <<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N98/284/58/pdf/N9828458.pdf?OpenElement>>.

⁵³ 2018 – A/RES/74/28; 2019 – A/RES/73/266.

⁵⁴ See Report of the Secretary-General A/72/327 and Report of the First Committee A/73/505.

⁵⁵ The United States took part in the work of the OEWG, and Russia joined the GGE.

was to develop a common understanding of what critical infrastructure is “off limits”.⁵⁶ It seems that the adopted decisions have given a positive impetus to bilateral and international cooperation. This conclusion can be drawn from the fact that the UN GGE and the OEWG completed their work in a positive way, and at the end of 2021, Russia and the United States submitted to the UN General Assembly a joint resolution “Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, and advancing responsible State behavior in the use of information and communications technologies”. The resolution emphasizes that “it is in the interest of all States to promote the use of information and communications technologies for peaceful purposes and to prevent conflicts arising from the use of information and communications technologies”. At the same time, it is noted that “that a number of States are developing information and communications technology capabilities for military purposes”, and that “the use of information and communications technologies in future conflicts between States is becoming more likely”.⁵⁷

Synchronization of efforts and, to some extent, harmonization of positions, is certainly a positive signal – and it is necessary to build on success, by realizing, as noted in the resolution, “the possibility of future elaboration of additional binding obligations, if appropriate”. Despite the fact that at the moment the work of the joint Russian-American group on cybersecurity issues has been put to a halt, Russian officials express the hope that the United States will return to the negotiating table.⁵⁸ Taking into account all the risks, the urgent need to develop mandatory de-escalation mechanisms in the ICT environment is

⁵⁶ The White House, ‘Remarks by President Biden in Press Conference’, 16 Jun. 2021. <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/06/16/remarks-by-president-biden-in-press-conference-4/>>.

⁵⁷ United Nations, General Assembly, ‘Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, and advancing responsible State behavior in the use of information and communications technologies’, Document A/RES/76/19, 6 Dec. 2021, p. 1.

⁵⁸ Yegorov, I., ‘Security Council of the Russian Federation: The United States has once again proved that they cannot be trusted’, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 7 Apr. 2022 <<https://rg.ru/2022/04/07/sovbez-rf-soedinennye-shtaty-v-ocherednoj-raz-dokazalichto-im-verit-nelzia.html>>.

obvious. In the conditions of the most acute tension in international relations and the lack of decision time, any significant incident in the ICT environment (which any of the parties will perceive as a transition of the “red lines”) can provoke an escalation with increasingly destructive countermeasures. Taking into account the identified escalation factors and points of tension, it seems important to prioritize the development of a common understanding of cyber threats to military and strategic stability, and then – frameworks for preventing cyber incidents in this area. At the same time, it is well worth to once again consider the possibility of implementing the proposal voiced in 2020 by the President of Russia to conclude a global agreement on the adoption of a political commitment not to launch a cyberstrike first – by analogy with the doctrine of no-first use of nuclear weapons, adopted by some states.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ President of Russia, ‘Statement by President of Russia Vladimir Putin on a comprehensive program of measures for restoring the Russia – US cooperation in the field of international information security’, 25 Sep. 2020 <<http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/64086>>.

6. ON THE NEW QUALITY OF THE US MIDDLE EAST POLICY

Alexey DAVYDOV

The qualitative difference of the foreign policy of the newly elected 46th President of the United States is the absence of a new clearly expressed view on the order of things in the Middle East. In his first year in office, Democrat Joseph Biden remained to some extent committed to the principles of his predecessor, partymate Barack Obama, while on some issues did not deviate from the line of the Republican Donald Trump. At the same time, the current administration has chosen to pursue its new foreign policy initiatives in completely different regions of the world, primarily in Europe and Asia. Thus, after two decades of very active Middle East policy, for the first time the White House did not formulate a renewed region-wide strategy toward the Middle East.

These developments in Washington's strategy create an open field of interpretation: are they signs of a new frontier in the US Middle East policy, opening a phase of limited and/or more pinpoint involvement in regional processes, or perhaps a temporary pause of the current Democrat administration before intensifying its impact on them? Determining whether the observed straying of the US Middle East strategy from its previous vector is opportunistic or long-term will require looking at the characteristics of its previous phases of intensification and attenuation.

The Middle East in the US Strategy

For most of the history of US relations with the countries of the Middle East, the provision of US national interests (that had primarily internal political importance), and secondly, the dynamics of extra-regional processes, closely related to Washington's development of relevant extra-regional foreign policy strategies, were the most significant factors influencing an increase in the priority of events in the Middle

East for the US strategic planning. Basing on these features, one can trace certain stages (or waves) in the evolution of the American Middle East policy.

At the first stage, which refers to the period of emergence of the political subjectivity of the regional countries in the international arena, the US administrations actively built relationships with Middle Eastern partners in order to ensure favorable conditions for access to regional sources of hydrocarbons, as well as to weaken the positions of Western European powers in the Middle East, primarily France and the UK. In particular, under President Franklin D. Roosevelt and later, Washington's efforts focused on building relations with regional elites, especially in Saudi Arabia, which served, among other things, to further reduce the influence of London, whose position was severely damaged by the 1956 Suez crisis.¹

The second stage was characterized by the rise of bipolar confrontation, when the countries of the region were involved in the logic of the Cold War, either by becoming part of the respective politico-military blocs (NATO and the Warsaw Pact Organization) or by developing partnerships with the Soviet Union and the United States. During this period, the most significant interest of the United States was to support its regional allies.

Strengthening security interests and its military-political presence in the region, Washington relied on relations with Turkey, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Iran under the Shah and Egypt under Anwar Sadat. Interaction with Riyadh was crucial for securing oil supplies from the OPEC member countries and for influencing the dynamics of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Military relations served as the basis of the so-called "Northern Tier" – a chain of NATO (Turkey)

¹ 'Memorandum by the Under Secretary of State (Acheson) to the Secretary of State', 890.50/10–945, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers*, 1945, vol. 8 <<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v08/d20>>; Khakhalkina, E.V., 'The Suez Crisis of 1956 – A Turning Point in British Foreign Policy?', *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 2016, no. 404, pp. 156–164. [In Russian].

and CENTO (Iraq, Iran, Pakistan) members in the region² that meant to contain Soviet expansion towards the oil regions of the Persian Gulf, as well as to serve as a market for the products of the American military-industrial complex (MIC).³ A significant challenge to the existence of this chain was the revolution in Iran in 1979, but even without Tehran it continued to fulfill its functions until the end of the Cold War.

Among the US alliances in the region, the alliance between the United States and Israel gradually established itself as one of the most important. The strategic nature of the relationship with Israel was determined by deep ties – military-political, commercial-economic, cultural-religious, as well as by close communication at the societal level, so that it became known in expert-political discourse as a “special relationship”, along with the transatlantic relations.⁴ The United States systematically promoted strengthening of the capacity of the State of Israel by regularly allocating economic and military assistance to it,⁵ vetoing or voting against various anti-Israel resolutions in the UN Security Council and General Assembly,⁶ and consistently upholding

² Davydov, A.A., ‘The Systemic Crisis of U.S.-Turkish Relations Under D. Trump’, *Vestnik MGIMO-Universiteta*, 2019, no. 4, pp. 145–160. [In Russian].

³ Kislov, A.S., ‘U.S. Middle East Policy’, Trofimenko, G.A., *Modern U.S. Foreign Policy* (Nauka: Moscow, 1984), vol. 2, pp. 252–278. [in Russian]; Kremenyuk, V.A., *United States: Fighting Against the National Liberation Movement* (Nauka: Moscow, 1983), pp. 187–195 [in Russian]; Jackson, G., ‘Who Killed Détente? The Superpowers and the Cold War in the Middle East, 1969–77’, *International Security*, 2020, vol. 44, no. 3, pp. 129–162.

⁴ Davydov, A.A., Samarskaya, L.M., ““Special relations” between the United States and Israel: structural foundations and the Trump factor’, *Mirovaya ekonomika I mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, 2020, vol. 64, no. 10, pp. 40–51. [In Russian].

⁵ Sharp, J., ‘U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel’, Congressional Research Service, 7 Aug. 2019, p. 2. <<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL33222>>.

⁶ *U.N. Security Council: U.S. Vetoes of Resolutions Critical to Israel (1972 – Present)*. Jewish virtual library. A project of AICE <<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/u-s-vetoes-of-un-security-council-resolutions-critical-to-israel>>.

the principle of its qualitative military superiority over neighboring countries.⁷ This type and quality of bilateral relations continued after the end of the Cold War.

The third and longest wave of evolution of the US strategy in the Middle East turned out to be the most intense and noticeable. The systemic shift occurred with the end of the US–Soviet confrontation. The crisis in the Soviet Union and socialist system in a whole confirmed in the strategic goal-setting of the United States the belief in the superiority of its own model of social development and its potential for global expansion.⁸ The belief of the US political establishment in the interrelation of liberal democracy and capitalist relations formed the basis of the White House policy vector of promoting in other countries liberalization of economic relations to indirectly stimulate their political transformations.

Eventually, this process did not bypass the countries of the Middle East, although it did not immediately enter its active phase. In the 1990s, the US still did not emphasize so intensively the issues of democracy and human rights in its Middle East strategy. This approach was based on the sad experience of Algerian democratization. Because of the severe socio-economic crisis that Algeria was undergoing as it moved away from the socialist development model, Islamist forces came to power after the December 1991 parliamentary elections. The administration of George H. W. Bush chose not to interfere in the democratic process, and this subsequently led to much criticism against it, since the election results were actually annulled by the Algerian military, and the Islamic Salvation Front party was banned.⁹

⁷ Zanotti, J., 'Israel: Background and U. S. Relations', Congressional Research Service, 31 July 2018 <<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33476.pdf>>.

⁸ The White House, 'National Security Strategy of the United States', 1 Mar. 1990; Clinton, W., 'Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on Administration Goals', The American Presidency Project, 17 Feb. 1993 <<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-congress-administration-goals>>.

⁹ 'Algeria: Democracy Betrayed', *The New York Times*, 14 Jan. 1992; Gerges, F., *America and Political Islam. Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 1999), pp. 73–79.

At this stage, the US deliberately cooperated with non-democratic regimes, guided by the principle of maintaining regional stability to pursue its core interests in the energy and security sectors.¹⁰ A striking example was the relationship of the United States with Egypt and the monarchies of the Persian Gulf.¹¹ In general, in the 1990s the main focus of Washington was not on issues of democratization, but on problems of a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as liberalization of trade relations with the countries of the region.¹²

Meanwhile, gradually, the issue of supporting democratization of the Middle Eastern states began to occupy an increasingly prominent place in the Washington's strategy. This was manifested both in an increase in the volume of relevant political assistance and in the gradual crystallization of a full-fledged regional strategy to promote democratization processes. The catalyst for this was two key factors.

The first was *the deterioration of the US relations with Iraq*. For some time after the 1979 Iranian revolution, Washington supported Saddam Hussein's government, hoping to use it to carry out its goals in the Middle East against Tehran.¹³ But occupation of Kuwait predetermined the aggravation of bilateral (US–Iraqi) relations and the subsequent application of a democratization strategy initially in relation to one country, but then throughout the region. In the 1990s,

¹⁰ The White House, 'Basic National Security Strategy', National Security Decision Directive № 238, 2 Sep. 1986, p. 14 <<https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-238.pdf>>.

¹¹ Cox, M., Lynch, T.J., and Bouchet, N. (eds.) *US Foreign Policy and Democracy Promotion: from Theodore Roosevelt to Barack Obama* (Routledge: New York, 2013), p. 170.

¹² Markakis, D., *US Democracy Promotion in the Middle East: The Pursuit of Hegemony* (Routledge: New York, 2016), pp. 91–95; US Department of State, 'American Objectives in the Middle East', 14 June 1996 <<https://1997–2001.state.gov/regions/nea/960514.html>>.

¹³ The White House, 'U.S. Policy toward the Iran-Iran War', National Security Decision Directive № 114, 26 Nov. 1983 <<https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-114.pdf>>; The White House, 'Measures to Improve U. S. Posture and Readiness to Respond to Developments in the Iran-Iraq War', National Security Decision Directive № 139, 5 Apr. 1984 <<https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-139.pdf>>; The White House, 'U.S. Policy Toward the Persian Gulf', National Security Directive № 26, 2 Oct. 1989 <<https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsd/nsd26.pdf>>.

Washington exerted sanctions on Baghdad for the genocide of the Kurds, “reclassified” Iraq as a sponsor of terrorism, – status, which had been removed during its war with Iran, and carried out direct bombing of targets on its territory.¹⁴ The US also began to promote the growth of separatist sentiments in Iraqi Kurdistan by funding non-governmental organizations to strengthen self-government institutions.¹⁵

A qualitatively new step was the adoption in 1998 of the Iraq Liberation Act, which normatively enshrined the goal of a change of power in the country with its subsequent democratization.¹⁶ By doing so, the United States created in its national legislation a mechanism that legalized the overthrow of a foreign government on the basis of unilateral recognition of it as a violator of international norms.

The second trend consisted in *the formation in the USA by the end of the XX century of a certain set of views regarding the genesis and nature of international terrorism*. Thus, even during the period of intensification of the Cold War, the American Middle East strategy relied primarily on the positions of local elites, while national liberation movements and Islamist political forces were perceived in the US as challenges to the built-up structure of relations in the Middle East. Trends such as the Arab–Israeli conflict, first oil embargoes and strengthening of the anti-imperialist forces appealing to Islam were seen as potential destabilizing factors for Washington’s position in the region.¹⁷

The revolution in Iran in 1979 has intensified this skeptical perception of Islamist political and internal national liberation movements. It had a deep impact on the US regional goal-setting not only because it led to a weakening of regional structures beneficial to

¹⁴ Sushentsov, A.A., *Small Wars of the United States. U.S. Political Strategy in the Conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000–2010s* (Aspect-Press: Moscow, 2014), p. 177–178. [In Russian].

¹⁵ US Agency for International Development, ‘Strategic Evaluation of the U.S. Government Humanitarian Assistance Program in Northern Iraq’, Mar. 1996 <https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDABM622.pdf>; National Endowment for Democracy Annual Reports from 1991 to 2001.

¹⁶ US Congress, Public Law № 105–338 ‘Iraq Liberation Act of 1998’, 31 Oct. 1998 <<https://www.congress.gov/105/plaws/publ338/PLAW-105publ338.pdf>>.

¹⁷ Kislov (note 3); Kremenyuk (note 3).

the United States. Washington had experienced situations of strategic failures quite shortly before the fall of the Shah's regime – for example, in Vietnam, and in Cuba. The main significance of the Iranian crisis was that the US was directly hit in the form of the seizure of the American embassy and holding hostages. The situation of almost complete helplessness, which lasted more than a year, had a serious impact on the views and the moral and psychological state of the US political establishment and American society, and it essentially predetermined their attitude both to the new Iranian authorities and to the nature of political Islam in general. Subsequently, opinion polls, the rhetoric of officials, and even the content of federal bills have increasingly demonstrated a tendency to associate manifestations of terrorism, in particular the bombings in New York in 1993 and Oklahoma in 1995, not so much with the actions of specific states or organizations, but with the very nature of Islamic and Middle Eastern regimes.¹⁸

The terrorist attacks of 11 September, 2001 were the trigger for a sharp increase in involvement of the United States not only in relations between the Middle East countries, but also in attempts to reshape them internally. Ideas about the success of the methods of promoting democracy for the reconstruction of societies during the Cold War and about the socio-political nature of terrorism and its relationship with political Islam created the prerequisites for moving away from the previous principles of maintaining stability in the region towards the creation of a large macro-regional strategy of democratization.

Washington has brought together in one framework of the Greater Middle East the countries of North Africa and the Middle East, as well as Central and South Asia, whose common feature was the predominance of the Islamic religion in their culture. In contrast to positions in the American discourse that democracy is alien to Arab

¹⁸ 'Attacks on U. S. Muslims Surge Even as Their Faith Takes Hold', *The New York Times*, 28 Aug. 1995; Slade, S., 'The Image of the Arab in America: Analysis of a Poll on American Attitudes', *Middle East Journal*, 1981, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 143–162; Gerges (note 9), pp. 40–50; US Congress, 'The Omnibus Counterterrorism Act of 1995', 5 May 1995 <<https://www.congress.gov/104/bills/s390/BILLS-104s390is.pdf>>.

countries in principle,¹⁹ the newly elected George W. Bush administration has emphasized the universality of democratic values in all countries.²⁰ Another innovation of the neoconservatives in the White House policy was justification of the possibility of military overthrow of authoritarian regimes based on the notion of self-development of the democratic institutions, provided that there are no totalitarian authorities that interfere in their development.²¹ Republicans designated a circle of this kind of regimes under the name “axis of evil,” which in addition to the DPRK and Cuba included four countries of the Muslim East: Iraq, Iran, Syria and Libya.²² Finally, the Bush administration identified as key first steps in spreading democracy in the Middle East the launch of a military campaign in Afghanistan, whose imperatives were *post-facto* positioned as liberating,²³ and the military invasion of Iraq, which was seen in the Republican administration’s plans as a future bridgehead for democratic revolution in the region.

The implementation of the democratization strategy in the Middle East countries in the next decade and a half has shown in practice that such approaches to the composition of new political spaces

¹⁹ Cordesman, A.H., ‘Transitions in the Middle East: An Address to the 8th U.S. Mideast Policymakers Conference’, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 9 Sep. 1999 <https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/me_transitions%5B1%5D.pdf>; Brumberg, D., ‘Democratization in the Arab World? The Trap of Liberalized Autocracy’, *Journal of Democracy*, 2002, vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 56–68; Norton, A. ‘The Puzzle of Political Reform in the Middle East’, Fawcett, L. (ed.) *International Relations of the Middle East* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2017), pp. 127–147.

²⁰ The White House, ‘National Security Strategy of the United States of America’, 17 Sep. 2002, pp. 1–4; ‘National Security Strategy of the United States of America’, 16 Mar. 2006, pp. 1–12.

²¹ Jervis, R., ‘Understanding the Bush Doctrine’, *Political Science Quarterly*, 2003, vol. 118, no. 3, pp. 365–388.

²² Bush, G.W., ‘Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union’, The White House, 29 Jan. 2002; Bolton, J., ‘Beyond the Axis of Evil: Additional Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction’, The Heritage Foundation, 6 May 2002.

²³ Hassan, O., Hammond, A., ‘The rise and fall of American’s freedom agenda in Afghanistan: counter-terrorism, nation-building and democracy’, *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 2011, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 532–551.

were inconsistent and rather limited. This strategy, based on a very high level of the US involvement in the dynamics of public relations in Middle Eastern countries, often led to crises and was unproductive, undermining Washington's position in the region.

The Launch and Crisis of the Democratization Strategy

The highly ideologized nature of the Iraqi campaign has led to initially inflated expectations that ordinary Iraqis would favorably accept the invasion of the US military and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime. This overestimation has delayed US efforts to build an acceptable system of government in the country; the latter began to take place only when the civil confrontation was already escalating.²⁴ Sunni segments of society and the former political and military elites were marginalized, and this created the conditions for strengthening of radical terrorist groups in Iraq, including the Islamic State (IS, or ISIS). Weakening of state institutions and strengthening of the position of the Shiite majority in society facilitated Iran's growing influence on Iraqi politics.

During the Arab Spring, the ideological imperatives of the new Middle East strategy have led, among other things, to the fall of the US-allied authorities in Egypt. As in the early 1990s, in 2011 Washington faced the choice of supporting either the incumbent loyal president Hosni Mubarak or the protesting opposition taking to the streets, among which the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood movement had a significant influence. The Obama administration's decision favoured the latter. But even considerable foreign economic aid to the Egyptian authorities under the new president Mohamed Morsi failed to curb their

²⁴ Davydov, A.A., 'The American Experience of "Promoting Democracy" in Iraq in the Early 2000s', *SShA i Kanada: ekonomika, politika, kul'tura*, 2015, no. 10, pp. 68–83. [In Russian].

policy either in dismantling the remaining democratic institutions or in issues regarding Egypt's fulfillment of obligations under the Camp David agreements with Israel, which were significant to Washington.²⁵

The Libyan campaign also turned into negative consequences, first of all for the US allies in Europe. The support by the North Atlantic Alliance air operation of anti-government forces against the regime of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 has led to the fall of the latter. The complete social destabilization that followed allowed various manifestations of the black market with access to European countries to take root – from organized illegal flows of migration and drug trafficking to trade of small arms and light weapons.

A series of catastrophic consequences of campaigns to support democracy in Iraq, Libya and Egypt has led to a turning point in the Washington strategy already during the Syrian conflict. As the Syrian civil war intensified in 2011–2012, B. Obama's team initially proceeded from the basic demand of Bashar Assad's resignation. However, the establishment of control of the Islamic State over a large part of the territories of Iraq and Syria, up to areas in the immediate vicinity of Damascus, sharply increased the risk of a complete collapse of the Syrian statehood and the further spread of terrorist forces. To avoid further unpredictable expansion of IS, Washington was forced to actually abandon demands for the president's resignation in favor of maintaining the system of governance in Syria.²⁶

The most recent wave of US attention to the region began with the *de facto* elimination of the concept of democratization of the Greater Middle East during the presidency of Donald Trump. The new holistic vision of Washington's regional policy was formulated by the Republican team not around the idea of internally transforming the region, but as part of a strategy of maximum pressure on Iran and containment of its influence in neighboring countries.

²⁵ Bartenev, V. I., 'American Aid to Egypt after the Arab Spring: Domestic and External Determinants', *SShA i Kanada: ekonomika, politika, kul'tura*, 2020, no. 8, pp. 54–74. [In Russian].

²⁶ Davydov, A. A., 'U.S. Approaches to Combating the "Islamic State": Can We Move from the Deadlock?', IMEMO RAS, 5 Oct. 2015. [In Russian].

The anti-Iranian pivot of the Trump administration was highly consistent, as it expressed the positions of Republicans, in sharp contrast to the views of Democrats. Since the seizure of the US Embassy in Iran in 1979, the consensus against the Iranian theocratic regime has been firmly established in the views of Republicans and Democrats. Tehran's support for Shiite movements in the Middle East, its development of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery vehicles, as well as open calls at the official level to destroy the United States and Israel, have all been the matters of concern to both American political parties. But over time, their differences over how to address the challenges and threats posed by Iran became increasingly apparent. Democrats saw in dialogue with Tehran the possibility of a phased leveling of its expansion not by force, but by diplomatic means, while Republicans preferred forceful pressure measures.

In the most contrasting form, the bipartisan contradictions manifested themselves during the conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran (JCPOA) in 2015: the Democratic administration under Barack Obama eventually limited negotiations to the discussion of the Iranian nuclear program, while Republicans insisted on including in the negotiations the issues of the development of intermediate- and short-range missiles and financing Hezbollah. It was these root differences that led to the polar reversal of policy toward Iran and the Middle East as a whole with Donald Trump's coming to the White House.²⁷ Intra-elite contradictions in the United States encouraged Republicans to promptly implement anti-Iranian and pro-Israeli initiatives to build them on for a long term.

The price of this promotion was not only the undermining of the WMD nonproliferation regime due to the re-imposition of sanctions against Tehran. With its withdrawal from the JCPOA, the United States actually devalued the reputation of a negotiable actor in international relations, primarily in the eyes of European NATO allies. In addition,

²⁷ Davydov, A., Kislitsyn, S., 'On the New US Sanctions Regime against Iran', *Mirovaya ekonomika I mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, 2018, vol. 62, no. 2, pp. 28–36. [In Russian].

according to some estimates, the internal political strife between Democrats and Republicans created a rift in the foundation of the long-term US strategic lines not only on a regional, but also on a global scale.

A Complicated Picture Before the New Administration

A long period of direct influence on the social development processes of Middle Eastern countries has left a very complex legacy for the new administration in the US foreign policy in the Middle East. After the first year of his term, J. Biden remains the first American president in 20 years not to offer an updated strategic vision of the US policy towards the region. The Democratic administration has not formulated any macro-regional strategy similar in scope to that of the Greater Middle East, the global war on terror, or even the strategy of maximum containment of Iran. The most notable feature of the Democratic team's stylistics was the preference to maintain existing positions than to try to promote some innovative approaches. The USA continued to move within the framework of the established trend of reducing involvement in the affairs of the region and focused on a limited range of traditionally interesting narratives that do not always have a single strategic root.

Almost as soon as it took office, the administration faced the difficult legacy of its predecessors' problematic strategic planning. The catastrophic end of American participation in the war in Afghanistan was not only the culmination of the longest US military campaign in its history, but also the symbolic end of a twenty-year era of attempts to democratize the Greater Middle East. The human, financial and military resources spent on socio-economic development and functioning of national security forces and state institutions of Afghanistan turned out to be comparable to the amount of assistance allocated by the United States for the post-war reconstruction of Europe.²⁸ And the campaign's

²⁸ Davydov, A., 'Continuous US War in Afghanistan', *Puti k miru i bezopasnosti*, 2019, no. 2 (57), p. 42. [In Russian]; Davydov, A., 'US Foreign Aid: Development Aid as an Instrument of Foreign Policy (Part 2)', *Puti k miru i bezopasnosti*, 2018, no. 2, p. 15. [In Russian].

final result was a lightning (by historical standards) capture of power by the Taliban right after the US and NATO military contingents left the country and an even greater aggravation of the already difficult humanitarian situation in the country.²⁹

A testament to the lack of any groundbreaking strategic initiative from Joseph Biden's team was the absence of a practical revision of the results of Trump's anti-Iranian and pro-Israeli policies. On the one hand, Biden retained ideological unity with his predecessor Democrat B. Obama, in matters of both phased containment of Tehran through dialogue and leveling the Palestinian–Israeli conflict by supporting Palestinians with humanitarian and economic assistance and condemning Israeli settlement-building practices. Meanwhile, in the first year and a half of its term, Biden's administration clearly chose to keep things in their current state and redirect its attention to problems in other regions.

Thus, the ambitious project to democratize the Greater Middle East ultimately drew in an unprecedented amount of resources, but ended with the failure of political and diplomatic attempts to resolve the Afghan conflict and the catastrophic denouement of the whole set of problems of conducting a military campaign in this country. This is likely to lead to a prolonged wave of reflection and rethinking of a number of basic principles of foreign policy, including the methods of expansionism and promotion of democracy.

Meanwhile, the unprecedented costs incurred do not provide sufficient grounds to speak of a complete failure of the American strategy in the region and of undermining of their positions. The US decision to end not only the military, but also the economic involvement in the dynamics of the Afghan processes has significantly reformatted their policy towards the crisis in the country. Washington retained frozen funds of the previous government in the accounts of American banks, as well as the ability to resume deliveries of large volumes of economic and humanitarian aid.³⁰

²⁹ Davydov, A.A., 'Peace at the turn of a new era', IMEMO RAS, 10 Sep. 2021. [In Russian].

³⁰ 'Biden administration freezes billions of dollars in Afghan reserves, depriving Taliban of cash', *Washington Post*, 17 Aug. 2021.

Moreover, with its national and international legal levers of sanctions pressure on the Taliban, which has the status of a terrorist organization, the United States remains perhaps the most significant actor who ensures influence over the situation around Afghanistan. Given the already established strategic line in Washington to contain China and Russia, it is difficult to imagine a more suitable security crisis in their neighboring areas for this purpose. On the one hand, the disastrous situation in Afghanistan creates favorable conditions for the spread of a destabilization zone and a whole set of problems – migration, diseases, hunger, drug and weapons trafficking, proliferation of extremist ideology – to neighboring countries. And on the other hand, the Taliban’s continuing status as a terrorist organization potentially allows the United States to impose sanctions for any form of economic interaction to restore the country.

Such a policy by Washington and its allies has a high chance of entailing one of the still invisible, but very significant consequences. The lack of multilateral consensus on the current situation sets a precedent for radical movements like Taliban to go from an underground insurgent organization to a notable factor, if not a participant, in international affairs. In the Middle East, events surrounding the Taliban’s rise to power in Kabul are likely to have at least significant symbolic implications for the forces of political Islam.

As for the policy towards Iran and the nuclear deal with it, the second most important aspect of the US policy in the Middle East, the previous Republican administration’s decision to resume and partially tighten sanctions against Tehran made it extremely difficult for the United States itself to make any progress on Iran. The American strategy on Iran, which has been extremely inconsistent over the past five years, has undermined Tehran’s already low trust in the negotiation process on its nuclear program.

The Democrats’ arrival in the White House almost immediately collapsed the former intensity of anti-Iranian rhetoric not only in Washington, but also in the countries of the region. If under the Trump administration the United States was building relations with Middle Eastern countries (primarily with the Gulf monarchies, Israel, and also

with Arab countries)³¹ in line with the unified logic of containing Tehran, then the change of team in the White House introduced additional uncertainty into the prospects of American politics. And Tehran's signing of an agreement on a comprehensive strategic partnership with Beijing in 2021³² created, in turn, even incentives for Washington to extend the sanctions regime.

Meanwhile, the US relations with key regional allies – Israel and Saudi Arabia – will depend on further developments on the Iranian track. The potential for worsening interaction between Washington and Tel Aviv occurs not only due to the complex nature of relations between the Israeli establishment and politicians of the Democratic Party, who traditionally focus Israel on the Palestinian problem, settlement building, and human rights issues. The fact is also that Israel may follow the previous practice of trying to influence the negotiation process on the Iranian nuclear problem either directly or indirectly, through manipulation of public opinion in the United States on the basis of inter-party contradictions between Republicans and Democrats. Nevertheless, the very nature of not just interstate, but inter-societal bilateral ties between the two countries still leaves the systemic preconditions for maintaining the non-opportunistic character of US–Israeli relationship in the foreseeable future.³³

It is difficult to outline a similar picture when analyzing US–Saudi relations. The existing potential for a positive shift in relations between the United States and Western countries in a whole with Tehran may become an additional factor for aggravation of the US relations with Saudi Arabia. As the economic ties between the KSA and China strengthen³⁴ and the US dependence on foreign energy supplies

³¹ Katzman, K., 'Coalition-Building Against Iran', Congress Research Service, 12 Mar. 2019 <<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11132>>.

³² 'Coalition-Building Against Iran', *The New York Times*, 11 July 2021.

³³ Davydov et al. (note 4).

³⁴ Reuters, 'Saudi Arabia pips Russia to be China's biggest oil supplier in 2020', 20 Jan. 2021.

is gradually decreasing,³⁵ the US Congress is accumulating bills advocating the introduction of various kinds of pressure on Riyadh, be it restrictions on military, technical, educational and other cooperation between the US and KSA, or the imposition of sanctions because of human rights violations and the situation in Yemen.³⁶

Trends of recent years reflect the generally persistent tension in Washington's bilateral relationship with Riyadh. At the same time, it is unlikely that it will reach an anti-Iranian "magnitude" in the short term. In the turbulent international global and regional dynamics, having an ally with a complex but historically close relationship is not a cost, but rather an asset that could get a second wind in the United States, especially amid heightened competition with China.

The US-Turkish relationship at the current stage is another striking example of the same development. Despite the existing dissatisfaction of both Democrats and Republicans with Ankara's policy, after the crisis in relations in 2016–2017 both countries managed to find a consensus on the direction of the expansionist aspirations of the Turkish leadership, primarily towards the post-Soviet space and the conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa. Turkey's pressure on its Western allies – provocations of migration and border crises, appeals to infringement of the rights of Muslim minorities in Europe, the controversy over the Kurds in the region, the crisis in the Mediterranean due to the discovery of gas fields in the disputed territories of Cyprus,³⁷ as well as the supply of Russian S-400 air defense systems – created serious tension within the North Atlantic Alliance. But the Western-centric structure of Turkey's economic and investment ties (more than half of its trade turnover falls on its European allies), along with the existing

³⁵ Forbes.ru, 'For the first time in 70 years, the United States became a net exporter of oil', 30 Nov. 2019 <<https://www.forbes.ru/newsroom/finansy-i-investicii/388527-ssha-vpervye-za-70-let-stali-netto-eksporterom-nefti>>. [In Russian].

³⁶ Dynkin, A.A., Baranovsky, V.G., Machavariani, G.I., Kobrinskaya, I. Ya. (eds.) *Russia and the world: 2021. Economics and Foreign Policy. Annual Forecast* (IMEMO RAS: Moscow, 2020), p. 116. [In Russian].

³⁷ Surkov, N. Yu., 'Regional Priorities and Russia's Partners in the Eastern Mediterranean', *Vestnik Voronezhskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Serija: Istorija. Politologija. Sociologija*, 2021, no. 4, pp. 84–89. [In Russian].

difficult situation in its economy, clearly demonstrated Ankara's deep economic dependence back under the Trump administration, which raised duties on imports of steel and aluminum to the US.³⁸ In addition, Washington still retains significant levers over Turkey's policy in the form of sanctions for the supply of Russian S-400, pressure over human rights issues, and potential support for the opposition in the 2023 Turkish parliamentary and presidential elections.

With a considerable probability, Washington will continue the already emerging line of active or at least "silent" support for Turkish expansionism in the Muslim East, as well as in the northern and eastern directions, i.e. activities like Turkey's backing Ukraine's position on Crimea, military assistance to Azerbaijan in the conflict with Armenia, increasing involvement in Central Asian affairs by strengthening solidarity with the Turkic peoples. Such an advance in Turkish positions is not likely to be sharply opposed in the Middle East until it affects the interests of the United States and its allies, the Kurds and Israel.

* * *

In general, the beginning of the third decade of the new century clearly demonstrates the completion of the latest stage of evolution of Washington's strategy in the region. At the same time, the decrease in US attention to the Middle East observed today is caused to a greater extent by a change in the long-term global priorities of the United States, rather than by a opportunistic shift of power in the White House.

Decades of evolution of the US strategy in the Middle East show that changes in its priorities were influenced primarily by two groups of factors. Firstly, the intensification of American policy in the region was caused by the development of direct economic and social relations between the US and the countries of the region; this was most typical,

³⁸ Davydov (note 2), p. 157.

for example, for US relations with Israel, based on both Washington's strategic regional interests and inter-social ties with Israel, as well as for partnership with Saudi Arabia.

The second factor included either major extra-regional strategies of the United States or combating threats emanating from the region, which Washington perceived as existential. Opposition to the Soviet Union and attempts to democratize the Greater Middle East were among these core imperatives, closely linked to issues of regime change and the reshaping of intra-regional relationships that required US policy in the Middle East to follow certain contours for decades.

In the absence of, firstly, deep economic, public and other structural linkages between most countries of the Middle East and the United States, and secondly, a common strategic framework subordinating all the many bilateral US policies to each of the countries to achieve certain goals, during the 2010s the US regional strategy began to fragment into a multitude of narratives that were not always interrelated. In this regard, the Middle East, if to exclude a number of private issues, faces the prospect of occupying a peripheral position in the long-term US strategic goal-setting.

It is this trend that Washington has shown in its Middle East policy over the past decade under three different presidents. Intensification of the US–Turkish partnership in the post-Soviet space, tightening of the anti-Iranian political vector and the sanctions regime, democracy promotion practices in Syria and Libya, as well as attempts to resolve the Arab–Israeli conflict demonstrate the different vector imperatives of American foreign policy. Today, of the most significant trends in Washington's global strategy, the logic of policy in the region can be determined by the anti-Chinese line insofar as relations with the Middle Eastern countries will help to weaken Beijing's current or prospective positions. However, today this vector in the regional dimension manifests itself extremely pointwise, and its scale cannot yet indicate the beginning of a completely new stage of the United States policy in the Middle East.

7. SAFETY OF NAVIGATION IN THE WATERS OF THE ARABIAN SEA AND THE PERSIAN GULF

Stanislav IVANOV

Maritime communications crossing the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea are strategically important for the world economy and energy sector; they remain the main routes for exporting hydrocarbons from the region to Europe and Asia, as well as for importing necessary goods to the Middle East. Of particular importance are the so-called ‘bottlenecks’: the Suez Canal, the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait and the Strait of Hormuz. These routes bring to the world market about a third of all the hydrocarbons produced in the world (oil and liquefied natural gas), the main consumers of which are the countries of the Asia-Pacific region and Europe. The incident with the container ship *Ever Given*, which ran aground in the Suez Canal in March 2021 and blocked the waterway for several days, demonstrated the direct dependence of world market prices on the functioning of the canal and this the most important segment of the sea route.

Armed conflicts and civil wars in a number of Middle Eastern countries (Syria, Yemen), the Palestinian-Israeli and Iranian-Israeli confrontations, the increasing struggle for influence within the Islamic world between Shiite and Sunni communities, the activity of radical Islamist jihadist groups like the Islamic State (banned in Russia) – all this has a negative impact on regional security and hinders the development of land transportation (pipeline, rail, road) in the region.

Despite the understanding of the importance of shipping in this region to global energy security and income stability of the Gulf states (Iran, Iraq, Arab monarchies), these maritime routes remain dangerous for seafarers and shipowners. The risks of shipping in the region remain high, and insurance fees and expenditures to ensure the safety of ships are steadily increasing.

Maritime Incidents as a Consequence of Iran's Confrontation with the United States, Israel and the Persian Gulf Monarchies

Hijackings, bombings and shellings of ships as part of Iran's hybrid and proxy wars with the United States, Israel and a number of Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf continue to take place in the Arabian Sea region with an enviable regularity. As a rule, it is impossible to identify the nationality of the attackers, and no one assumes responsibility for such attacks. In some cases these could be non-state actors such as the Yemen's Houthi rebels, members of terrorist groups or mercenaries. They may act on their own initiative or in the interests of certain special services. We should not forget that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is a kind of a state within a state and can conduct clandestine operations abroad independently, coordinating them only with the Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The American newspaper *The New York Times* observed lately that Israeli and Iranian forces have intensified their fight at sea in recent years, and they have organized a series of attacks on each other's ships. 'Israel and Iran have fought a clandestine war across the Middle East for years, mainly on the ground and in the air. Now ships are under attack in the Mediterranean and Red Seas,' the article said. According to it, since 2019, Israeli commandos have attacked at least 10 ships carrying Iranian cargo; the Iranian side, however, believes that about 20 ships were attacked. For the most part, these were vessels carrying fuel or military equipment to Syria or Yemen. 'The extent of Iran's retaliation is unclear. Most of the attacks are carried out clandestinely and with no public claims of responsibility,' the article stated.¹ Meanwhile, both sides use sea (limpet) mines, short-range missiles, torpedoes and drones.

On 13 June, 2019 there were explosions on two tankers in the Gulf of Oman near the Strait of Hormuz: *Kokuka Courageous*, owned by a Japanese shipping company, and *Front Altair*, owned by a Norwegian one. According to experts, limpet mines have been used in these attacks. The ships were carrying 'Japan-related' cargo. The crews

¹ Kingsley, P., Bergman, R., Fassihi, F., and Schmitt, E., 'Israel's Shadow War With Iran Moves Out to Sea', *The New York Times*, 26 Mar. 2021.

of the ships were evacuated by Iranian rescue services to the Iranian port of Jask, on the coast of the Gulf of Oman. Shortly after the incident, oil prices surged by 3.5% on average.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said the incident ‘suspiciously’ coincided with a visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Iran, adding that the United States was responsible for the increased tensions in the region. Against the backdrop of worsening relations vis-a-vis Iran, Washington has sent more of its naval forces to the region in May 2019. From that moment four vessels were attacked in the Gulf of Oman near the port of Fujairah: the tankers *Amjad* and *Al-Marzoqah* of the Saudi company *Bahri*, the Norwegian-flagged tanker *Andrea Victory*, and the UAE-registered ship *A. Michel*. The authorities of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United States rushed to accuse Iran of involvement in these incidents, but Tehran vehemently denied the charges.

On 14 September, 2019 pro-Iranian Houthi rebels from Yemen used UAVs and cruise missiles to attack the Khurais oil field and the primary oil refining plant at the Abqaiq field in Saudi Arabia. The material and financial damage to the KSA oil industry from this attack was rather significant.

On 7 April, 2021 there was an explosion in the Red Sea on an Iranian ship which escorted civilian vessels. The ship was allegedly carrying out intelligence activities for the IRGC. The Pentagon confirmed that the US side was aware of the incident but had no involvement whatsoever. Iran has confirmed the attack and said that it believes it was undertaken by Israeli subversive units.²

² ‘Israel hit an Iranian ship in the Red Sea’, *Lenta.ru*, 7 Apr. 2021. <<https://lenta.ru/news/2021/04/07/strike/>>.

‘Not only government agencies, but also some proxy forces from among local militants may be behind such terrorist attacks,’ says Vladimir Sazhin, a Senior Researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. In his opinion, the terrorists’ actions are aimed at further exacerbating the situation in the region.³

In late July 2021, the Liberian-flagged tanker *Mercer Street* was attacked in the Arabian Sea. The ship’s operator *Zodiac Maritime* is owned by Israeli businessman Eyal Ofer. As a result of the incident, two crew members died, a Romanian citizen and also a British citizen who was allegedly in charge of security of the ship. The US attributed responsibility for the drone attack on the ship in the Arabian Sea to Iran. The Iranian Foreign Ministry called statements about Tehran’s involvement in the attack on the Israeli tanker ‘contradictory and unfounded.’

On 4 August, 2021 the crew of the tanker *Asphalt Princess*, after being hijacked in the Gulf of Oman by armed Iranians, managed to disable the engines and thus foiled the attempted hijacking, *The Times* newspaper reported, citing sources in the British government. One of the crew members explained that the tanker was en route from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas in the Strait of Hormuz to the Omani port of Suhar.⁴

There also have been cases of simulated hijackings of tankers. Allegedly, Iranian authorities or private individuals purchased civilian maritime vessels circumventing the US sanctions in order to transport oil products domestically or to use them as fuel storage facilities. If the seller could not formally transfer the ship to Iran, he could send it to maritime areas adjacent to the Iranian coast, where the vessel was “seized” by the “unknown persons”. After that, the ship “disappeared” in one of the Iran’s ports, and the crew evacuated.

³ Podrugina, V., Petlevoy, V. ‘Tanker Explosions in the Gulf of Oman Increase the Probability of Conflict between the US and Iran’, *Vedomosti*, 14 June 2019. <<https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2019/06/13/804155-vzrivi-tankerov-omanskom>>.

⁴ Rose, D., Brown, L., and Pfefer, L. ‘Tanker crew foiled Asphalt Princess hijack attempt by Iran’s commandos’, *The Times*, 5 Aug. 2021.

In July 2020, for example, the *Gulf Sky* oil tanker went missing off the coast of the UAE with its entire crew. The ship's transponder, which transmitted location signals, was disabled for several weeks. In late August 2020, when the transponder reappeared, the *Gulf Sky* was going west along the southern coast of Iran. It was later learned that the ship had been renamed *Rima* and the Dominican flag had been changed to the Iranian flag. The newly registered owner was the mining company *Moshtag Tejarat Sanat* with an office in Tehran. There are good reasons to believe that the ship now belongs to the IRGC's 'shadow fleet,' which is used to transport and store oil products to circumvent international sanctions.⁵

Such incidents in the region's waters are increasingly frequent and are accompanied by mutual accusations of the involvement of the conflicting parties: Iran on the one hand, and Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United States, on the other. The coming to power in 2021 of President Ebrahim Raisi in Iran and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett in Israel, who have declared intransigence in their approaches to each other's foreign policy, is unlikely to help ease the confrontation in the region. In this regard, hybrid and proxy wars between Israel and Iran are expected to continue, which could be accompanied by a further increase in terrorist activity in the region, including the danger to the strategically important maritime communications in the Middle East.

Militarization of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman

Iran's confrontation with the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia is accompanied by an unprecedented arms race and militarization of the region. During his presidency, Donald Trump paid considerable attention to the establishment of an anti-Iranian military bloc in the Middle East. Not coincidentally, shortly after his election, as early as in May 2017, Trump visited Riyadh, where at the summits of

⁵ Cheetham, D., 'Gulf Sky: 'Our ship was hijacked and taken to Iran'', *BBC News*, 1 Sep. 2021.

the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and at the meeting with the king of Saudi Arabia, he stated: ‘From Lebanon to Iraq and Yemen, Iran funds, arms, and trains terrorists, militias and other extremist groups that spread destruction and chaos across the region. For decades, Iran has fueled the fires of sectarian conflict and terror.’⁶

In the course of the visit, a large-scale deal was concluded to supply Riyadh with the advanced US weapons and military equipment worth \$110 billion. The agreement included modernization of all branches of the KSA’s Armed Forces, further improvement of Saudi air and missile defense systems and communications equipment, enhancement of cybersecurity, supply of “smart weapons,” transfer of the 150 UH-60 *Black Hawk* helicopters, re-equipment of border control and coast guard forces.⁷

Saudi Arabia in 2017–2018, primarily due to its involvement in the conflict in Yemen, carried the heaviest military burden in the world of 8.8% of GDP, being on the third place in the world (after the US and China) for its military spending.⁸ In 2020, its military spending was about \$57.5 billion, and its military burden was 8.4% of GDP. Although there was a decline in expenditures in comparison with previous years, Riyadh remained in the fifth place in the world military spending in 2019 and in the sixth in 2020.⁹

It should be noted that the Gulf monarchies have been actively purchasing weapons from the US and NATO countries and have a significant arsenal of advanced armored vehicles, artillery, air defense

⁶ Belen’kaja, M., ‘President Trump’s First Tour. How the U.S. is Assembling a New Alliance Against Iran’, Carnegie Moscow Center, 23 May 2017. <<https://carnegiemoscow.org/commentary/70048>>.

⁷ Pankova, L.V., Gusarova, O.V. (eds.) *Military-Economic Development and Security* (Ves’ Mir: Moscow, 2020), p. 266. [In Russian].

⁸ Tian, N., ‘Global Developments in Military Expenditures’, *SIPRI Yearbook 2019: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2019), p. 246.

⁹ Tian, N., Lopes Da Silva, D., and Marksteiner, A., ‘Global Developments in Military Expenditures’, *SIPRI Yearbook 2021: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2021), pp. 237–252.

systems, missiles of different types, aircraft, UAVs and warships. If we add to the military capability of Saudi Arabia the capabilities of its closest allies in the region (the UAE and Bahrain), as well as more than 40,000 US servicemen stationed at 15 military bases in the Arab countries of the Gulf,¹⁰ the US and NATO warships permanently on alert in its waters, strike carrier groups and nuclear attack submarines that occasionally arrive there – then we get a very solid concentration of forces in a relatively small area.

Large-scale naval exercises of the world's leading powers and their regional allies are regularly held there. For example, from 25 October to 15 November 2019, the US-led naval exercises took place in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, as well as in the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Aqaba, involving ships from 56 nations, including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and several other regional countries.¹¹

On 27–30 December, 2019 Russia, China and Iran conducted joint naval exercises '*Maritime Security Belt*' in the northern Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman. The maneuvers involved a ship group of the Russian Navy's Baltic Fleet consisting of the frigate *Yaroslav Mudry*, the medium-sized sea tanker *Yelnya* and the rescue tug *Viktor Konetsky*.¹² Iran itself conducts regular exercises of its Navy and Air Force in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

According to SIPRI, Iran's military budget in 2020 was \$15.8 billion. Its sufficiently high expenditures have allowed the country to be among the top-20 countries with the highest military spending over the past several years. In addition, there is extra-budgetary (hidden) financing of certain items of military expenditures in the republic due to the shadow economy; according to some estimates, this includes expenditures on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The total number of the Iranian Armed Forces (including reservists) is 950,000

¹⁰ 'US Military Presence in the Middle East', *Kommersant*, 8 Jan. 2020. <<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4214954>>.

¹¹ Ivanov, S.M., 'Confrontation between Saudi Arabia and Iran as a Factor of Instability in the Persian Gulf', *Zarubezhnoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 2020, no. 9, pp. 17–20. [In Russian].

¹² 'Joint exercises of the navies of China, Iran and Russia began in the Indian Ocean', *Voennoe obozrenie*, 27 Dec. 2019. [In Russian].

servicemen. In peacetime the Armed Forces (AF) of the country consist of two separate structures: the Army and the IRGC.¹³ The Iranian leadership objectively assesses the capabilities of its potential adversaries in the Persian Gulf, along with the nuclear triad of the Israeli Armed Forces and, realizing the danger of a direct armed confrontation with these forces, focuses on the so-called “asymmetric response” in case of their attack on Iran. With the necessary curtailment of the military component of the Iranian nuclear program under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the Iranian authorities give the priority to the development of various types of missile armaments and the national Navy. It is no coincidence that D. Trump, motivating his decision to withdraw from the JCPOA nuclear deal, stated the need to conclude a new agreement with Iran that would also limit the development of its missile program.

Tehran’s successes in missile development are becoming increasingly evident: the national industry has already created solid- and liquid-propellant ballistic and cruise missiles with a range from 300 to 3,000 km.¹⁴ On 22 April, 2020 Tehran announced the successful launch of first Iranian satellite for military purposes codenamed *Nour*, which was launched into orbit at an altitude of 425 km using a two-stage *Kased* rocket.¹⁵ Thus, Iran can now hit targets with its missiles not only in the waters of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, but throughout the adjacent Arabian Peninsula and Israel.

Iranian air defense systems are also improving. Back in 2017 Iran tested the *Bavar-373* surface-to-air missile system equipped with *Sayad-4* missiles, capable of detecting targets over 300 km away, hitting them at a distance of 200 km and an altitude of up to 27 km.¹⁶

¹³ Ivanov, S.M., ‘Armed Forces of Iran’, *Zarubezhnoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, 2021, no. 4, pp. 10–17. [In Russian].

¹⁴ Sazhin, V., ‘Presentation of New Iranian Missiles – A Clear Message to Washington’, *Mezhdunarodnaja zhizn*, 27 Aug. 2020 <<https://interaffairs.ru/news/show/27270>>.

¹⁵ Khodarenok, M., ‘In spite of Washington: Iranian “Light” Shone in Orbit’, *Gazeta.ru*, 22 Apr. 2020 <<https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2020/04/22/13058173.shtml>>.

¹⁶ US Military Presence... (note 10).

The second most important for Tehran component of the modern armed forces after missile weapons is the national Navy: surface combatants (67), including frigates, corvettes, minesweepers, landing craft, missile and patrol boats (six frigates, three corvettes, several dozen patrol ships, landing craft and minesweepers, hundreds of boats of various classes).¹⁷ By comparison, the KSA Navy also has more than 60 surface ships of various classes (frigates, corvettes, missile, patrol and other boats, minesweepers, landing crafts) – but a significant shortcoming of the Saudi Navy is the absence of submarines and the weakness of its mine countermeasures. Riyadh is trying to compensate this by strengthening the naval aviation force (planes and helicopters), the air defense system and coastal artillery. The KSA Navy recently received from the US a batch of the 10 MH-60R *Sea Hawk* anti-submarine helicopters.¹⁸

The Iranian leadership pays special attention to submarine fleet, which is primarily deployed in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. However, there were cases of long (more than two months) autonomous voyages of Iranian submarines in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The most powerful force of the Iranian submarine fleet are three Russian-made Project 877EKM diesel-electric submarines (*Paltus* or *Varshavyanka*, in the Western classification – *Kilo*). They are capable of performing a wide range of missions, including actions against enemy surface combatants and submarines, laying mines, launching cruise missiles and torpedoes, and conducting subversive and reconnaissance operations. These submarines are distinguished by a fairly high speed and low noise, which increases the stealth of their operations.

The Iranian Navy also includes over 25 small diesel-electric submarines of its own production. In order to provide combat support to the special forces, the Iranian Navy has the relevant types of naval equipment. These include a number of swimmer delivery vehicles of *Al-Sabehat* type. Despite relatively small size, they can cause problems not only for the military and civilian vessels of the Persian Gulf monarchies, but also for the Israeli, US and NATO fleets. In the shallow waters of

¹⁷ Ivanov (note 13).

¹⁸ Ivanov (note 11).

the Persian Gulf, warships, including aircraft carriers, can become targets for small submarines, boats and the Iranian Navy's Special Forces, especially if the element of surprise is used. To this end, Tehran also maintains a so-called "mosquito fleet," hundreds of small boats and specially equipped motorboats that employ the tactics of Somali pirates: attacks on ships in the dark or in poor visibility (fog, smoke screens). They can place limpet mines on enemy ships, launch drones and short-range missiles in their direction.

Iran is consistently and thoroughly developing the national submarine industry using available foreign experience and taking into account the geographical features of the country (about 2,500 km of coastline in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman alone). It should be noted that back in December 2016, the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani ordered to start designing a nuclear-powered submarine. The Iranian leadership also plans to build a naval base in the Syrian port of Latakia, which would mean the permanent presence of Iranian surface combatants and submarines in the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁹

Iranian authorities have repeatedly stated their readiness to mine the fairways of the Strait of Hormuz as an asymmetrical response to any act of aggression against Tehran. To avoid the financial and economic risks of disrupting navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, Tehran announced the launch of a project to build the Goureh–Jask oil pipeline, which will allow Tehran to ship oil to tankers from the southern coast of its country, bypassing the Strait of Hormuz.²⁰

It can be assumed that the rivalry between Riyadh and Tehran for the role and influence in the Muslim world and the Persian Gulf will continue in the coming years. The Iranian leadership is unlikely to abandon its aggressive foreign policy to support Shiite communities in the Arab countries, and the Al-Saud royal family will respond by making every effort to maintain the dominant position of the ruling Sunni elites in the Middle East. To compensate the losses from the curtailment of its nuclear program, in which Tehran saw a guarantee of national security,

¹⁹ Ivanov, S., "Tehran's "Steel Sharks", *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 Mar. 2019 <https://nvo.ng.ru/armament/2019-03-15/7_1037_perspective.html>.

²⁰ Ivanov (note 11).

Iran began to accelerate the development of modern non-nuclear forces (missiles, submarine fleet, drones, etc.). Iran also has in plans to consolidate its political and religious influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, and other Arab countries, where pro-Iranian (Shiite) communities have become active in recent years with Tehran's support.

The Iranian fundamentalists also intend to continue waging hybrid and proxy wars with Israel by the hands of Hamas from the Gaza Strip and the Lebanese Hezbollah from Lebanon and Syria. With the help of the Yemeni Houthis, the Iranian authorities intend to continue their subversive war against Saudi Arabia and its allies (UAE, Bahrain) in the south of the Arabian Peninsula. Using its navy Tehran expects to supply arms and ammunition to its proxy forces in the region.

* * *

The unprecedented arms race in the region with the participation of Saudi Arabia, its partners in the GCC, and Iran, the presence of a large contingent of US and NATO armed forces on a permanent basis, maneuvers and exercises of their fleets in the waters of the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the adjacent part of Indian Ocean – all this creates a real threat of new local conflicts and, as a result, possible global energy and economic crises.

Obviously, it is time to intensify the efforts of the UN Security Council and intermediary countries to find a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian problem, and to establish a dialogue between Tehran and Riyadh. Demilitarization of the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea could improve the security of navigation in this region, strategically important for the world economy and trade communications.

PART III. DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCE MATERIALS

10. Key Documents of the Russian Federation on National Security, Defence and Arms Control (January–December 2021)

III. KEY DOCUMENTS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ON NATIONAL SECURITY, DEFENCE AND ARMS CONTROL (JANUARY–DECEMBER 2021)

Sergey TSELITSKY

Legislative acts

Federal Law № 1-FZ of 29 January 2021 ‘On Ratifying the Agreement on Renewing the Treaty between Russia and the United States on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Offensive Arms of April 8, 2010’

The Federal Law was passed by the State Duma (SD) on 27 January 2021, approved by the Federation Council (FC) on 27 January 2021 and signed by the President of the Russian Federation (President) on 29 January 2021.

Federal Law № 140-FZ of 26 May 2021 ‘On Ratifying the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan on Military Cooperation’

The Federal Law was passed by the SD on 11 May 2021, approved by the FC on 19 May 2021 and signed by the President on 26 May 2021.

Federal Law № 158-FZ of 7 Jun. 2021 ‘On Denunciation of the Treaty on Open Skies by the Russian Federation’

The Federal Law was passed by the SD on 19 May 2021, approved by the FC on 2 Jun. 2021 and signed by the President on 7 Jun. 2021.

Federal Law № 237-FZ of 1 Jul. 2021 ‘On Ratifying the Agreement on Cooperation of the State Parties of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Combating Crimes in the Field of Information Technology’

The Federal Law was passed by the SD on 15 Jun. 2021, approved by the FC on 23 Jun. 2021 and signed by the President on 1 Jul. 2021.

Federal Law № 240-FZ of 1 Jul. 2021 ‘On Ratifying the Agreement on the Joint (Integrated) Communication System of the Armed Forces of the State Parties of the Commonwealth of Independent States’

The Federal Law was passed by the SD on 15 Jun. 2021, approved by the FC on 23 Jun. 2021 and signed by the President on 1 Jul. 2021.

Federal Law № 366-FZ of 19 November 2021 ‘On Ratifying the Agreement on the Joint Engineering Unit for Humanitarian Demining of the Armed Forces of the State Parties of the Commonwealth of Independent States’

The Federal Law was passed by the SD on 21 October 2021, approved by the FC on 10 November 2021 and signed by the President on 19 November 2021.

Federal Law № 368-FZ of 19 November 2021 ‘On Ratifying the Protocol Extending the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the People’s Republic of China on Notification of Ballistic Missile and Space Rocket Carrier Launches of October 13, 2009’

The Federal Law was passed by the SD on 26 October 2021, approved by the FC on 10 November 2021 and signed by the President on 19 November 2021.

Federal Law № 451-FZ of 30 December 2021 ‘On Ratifying the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan on the Establishment of the Joint Regional Air Defence System of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan’

The Federal Law was passed by the SD on 16 December 2021, approved by the FC on 24 December 2021 and signed by the President on 30 December 2021.

2. Normative acts

Government Order of the Russian Federation № 321-r of 12 February 2021 ‘On Signing the Protocol Extending the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Belarus on the Use and Maintenance of the Radio Station Vileika located on the Territory of the Republic of Belarus of January 6, 1995’

Government Order of the Russian Federation № 322-r of 12 February 2021 ‘On Signing the Protocol Extending the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Belarus on Finishing the Construction, Usage, and Maintenance of the Baranovichi Node of the Missile Warning System Located on the Territory of the Republic of Belarus of January 6, 1995’

Government Order of the Russian Federation № 423-r of 19 February 2021 ‘On Signing the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Military Cooperation’

President’s Directive № 45-rp of 19 February 2021 ‘On Ratification of the Protocol on Amendments to the Agreement on Peacekeeping Activities of the Collective Security Treaty Organization of October 6, 2007’

President’s Executive Order № 109 of 19 February 2021 ‘On Amendments to the List of Dual-use Goods and Technologies that can be Used in the Creation of Weapons and Military Equipment and are subjected to Export Controls, approved by President’s Directive of December 17, 2011’

President’s Executive Order № 213 of 12 April 2021 ‘On Approving the Principles of State Policy of the Russian Federation on International Information Security’

Government Order of the Russian Federation № 1527-r of 9 Jun. 2021 ‘On Terminating the Application of the Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the United States of America Regarding the ‘Open Land’ of June 17, 1992’

Government Decree № 979 of 23 Jun. 2021 ‘On Submitting to the President of the Russian Federation for Ratification of the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Sudan on the Establishment of a Logistics Point for the Navy of the Russian Federation on the Territory of the Republic of Sudan’
President’s Executive Order № 400 of 2 Jul. 2021 ‘On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation’

Government Order of the Russian Federation № 2564-r of 14 September 2021 ‘On Signing the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan on Cooperation in the Field of International Information Security’

Government Order of the Russian Federation № 3072-r of 29 October 2021 ‘On Signing the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Cameroon on Military Cooperation’

President’s Directive № 372-rp of 22 December 2021 ‘On Signing the Protocol on Amendments to the Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan on Cooperation on Border Issues of September 2, 2011’

President’s Directive № 373-rp of 22 December 2021 ‘On Signing the Fourth Protocol on Amendments to the Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization of October 7, 2002’

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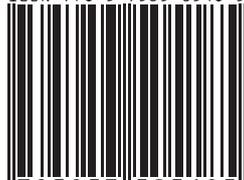
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