

# RUSSIA'S SUPPORT FOR ZERO: TACTICAL MOVE OR LONG-TERM COMMITMENT?

BY SIMON SARADZHIAN

Foreword: "Thinking about Zero: Could Elimination of Nuclear Weapons Make the World Safe for a Rogue Non-Nuclear Superpower?"

*By Graham Allison*



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**HARVARD Kennedy School**  
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Cover Image : Russian generals look into an opened silo of a Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missile at an undisclosed location in Russia in this 2001 photo.

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## I. FOREWORD

### THINKING ABOUT ZERO: COULD ELIMINATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS MAKE THE WORLD SAFE FOR A ROGUE NON-NUCLEAR SUPERPOWER?

*By Graham Allison*

The clarion challenge to leaders of the world to “embrace the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons” and to act urgently to realize an ambitious agenda of specific initiatives to move to that end has seized imaginations. It has also provoked new thinking about what most members of the Cold War national security establishment long thought was a lofty but operationally utopian goal. The fact that four of the bluest-chip American statesmen of this generation—Nunn, Kissinger, Perry, Shultz—are now leading advocates of this view has caused strategic thinkers around the world to pause, to reflect, and to begin to reexamine questions they thought had been answered in the 1980s. I, a veteran Cold War thinker, count myself among those who have revisited issues once thought settled.

The observation that “where you stand depends on where you sit” was coined as a quip about positions taken by participants inside governments’ policymaking processes. It applies to nations as well, where understandably, a nation that has a relative advantage in one currency of power, and disadvantage in another, will be more likely to favor international rules of the game that preserve its freedom of action in using the first, and constrain or eliminate other states’ freedom of action in the second.

Some American supporters of the four statesmen’s vision have explained their conversion from opposition to this concept in the 1970s and 1980s to advocacy today in just these terms. During the Cold War, when the U.S. found itself facing overwhelming Soviet conventional superiority, nuclear weapons seemed an appropriate “equalizer.” Unable to match the threat of 100 Soviet divisions at the Fulda Gap, the U.S. deployed thousands of tactical nuclear weapons across Europe and developed a doctrine that required their early use to deter a potential conventional blitzkrieg that the U.S. and NATO were certain to lose.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, disappearance of the Soviet Union and radical downsizing of the Soviet military establishment, the U.S. proclaimed itself “the sole remaining superpower.” Since the end of the Cold War, U.S. annual military spending has averaged

more than twenty times Russian defense spending. Indeed, as the IISS Military Balance notes, U.S. defense spending now exceeds funds expended by all other nations in the world combined.

Despite significant inefficiencies in these investments, nonetheless, such an overwhelming difference in effort, especially when contrasted with Russian investments, has left the U.S. with a significant advantage in conventional weapons and warfare. Smart conventional bombs delivered by aircraft or missile can hit any coordinates around the world that can be identified by GPS. Advances in Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence (C3I) allow real-time integration of data from satellites, drones and eyeballs in the sky that can be used to target an individual passenger in a car in Yemen or on a horse in ungoverned Pakistan.

Americans like to argue that since the Cold War ended and the U.S. and Russia are no longer adversaries, America's overwhelming non-nuclear military superiority need not concern Russians. These same Americans are slow to grasp the significance of repeated polls that ask citizens around the world to identify the nation that poses "the greatest threat to international peace and security." The answer by citizens in Germany, France, Turkey, Pakistan and even Britain is: the U.S. Not surprisingly, many Russians, including most in the Russian national security community, share this view.

For the Russian national security community, a number of post-Cold War events underline concerns. In 1995, without a UN Security Council authorization, but on the basis of agreement within NATO, President Clinton bombed Belgrade, Serbia, to coerce its leader Slobodan Milosevic to halt his offensive in Bosnia. In 1999, NATO once again used military force against Russia's traditional ally in the Balkans, seeking to oust the Serbs from Kosovo. Even pro-Western Russians wondered whether a future American president who judged some action of the Russian government unacceptable, for example a brutal war to prevent Chechnya's seceding, could be the target of a similar bombing campaign. Confidence that the answer was no, or not likely, for many Russians, is rooted in Russia's nuclear capability that provides, in effect, a security umbrella.

In January 2002, President Bush declared that Iraq, Iran and North Korea constituted an "axis of evil" and prescribed regimicide as the treatment for each. In April 2003, he launched a full-scale attack against Iraq that toppled Saddam Hussein's regime. Again, Russians asked what Russia could do to assure that the Russian government could never similarly be toppled or coerced. Many concluded that the answer was a nuclear equalizer.

Basic strategic logic underscores this point. As British strategist Lawrence Freedman noted after



the U.S. attack on Iraq: “If the Americans could not lose a conventional war between regular armies, their enemies would have to turn it into a different kind of war. They could go in two directions—up to weapons of mass destruction or down to guerrilla warfare and terrorism. The US fear after the attacks of 11 September 2001 was that the two might be combined, with terrorists employing weapons of mass destruction against US cities.”

The Bush administration’s unilateral withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, serious pursuit of missile defenses and re-emphasis of the role of nuclear weapons in the overall American posture fueled debate in the U.S. about what was called “American nuclear superiority,” including articles in *Foreign Affairs* and *International Security* about the feasibility of an American splendid first strike that could disarm Russia. These debates were followed carefully in the Russian national security establishment.

Russian security thinkers have begun reexamining the principles of “strategic stability” that emerged in the stalemate between Soviet and Russian nuclear forces that many called MAD: Mutual Assured Destruction. For many Russians, these criteria remain fundamental requirements for Russia’s national security. They include the demand that even in relations with a friend who could potentially become an adversary, Russian strategic forces (nuclear or non-nuclear) provide assurance against (1) an attack that could disarm Russia; (2) breakout capabilities that would provide the capacity to attack in a way that would be disarming; (3) military capabilities that would provide such a decisive advantage that Russia could be vulnerable to coercion (as Yugoslavia was in 1995 and 1999).

Thus, exploration of the conditions within which a state like Russia could imagine eliminating all of its nuclear arsenal has just entered the first inning of what will certainly be a nine-inning process. Initial Russian thinking about this nest of deep and serious questions is summarized informatively in the following piece by Simon Saradzhyan.



## II. INTRODUCTION

Until recently, it would have been difficult to imagine that the Russian leadership would embrace the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, given the roles they play in Russia's policies, including that of deterrent and equalizer in the overall military balance between Russia and the U.S. and its NATO allies, and even between Russia and China.

Distinguished arms control experts Ivo Daalder and Jan Lodal wrote recently that the U.S. might find Russia to be the most difficult country to convince to acquiesce to the "logic of zero" should Washington decide to pursue the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.<sup>1</sup> "A Russia-first diplomatic approach would...almost certainly doom the effort from the start," they wrote in an article published in November 2008.<sup>2</sup> Such skepticism was far from groundless, given the formidable range of different utilities that the Russian political-military leadership finds in nuclear weapons.

But political realities suggest the skeptics could be too pessimistic. In March 2008, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov became the first top Russian official to publicly praise the idea of nuclear disarmament revived in a series of op-eds and statements by George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn, collectively referred to as the Four Horsemen. Then, in September 2008, Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin asserted that he had come to believe the world can fully eliminate nuclear weapons. And April 2009 saw presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev sign a declaration that commits their countries to seeking a world without nuclear weapons.

More recently, President Medvedev signed off in May 2009 on Russia's new Strategy of National Security Through the Year 2020, which introduces a commitment to Zero, arguing that "Russia's sustainable long-term development" depends on progress "towards a world free of nuclear weapons, and the creation of conditions of equal security for all." Reacting to this repeated endorsement of Zero by the nation's leaders, even the chief of the main component of Russia's strategic

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1 Therefore, these experts suggest that, while pursuing an intensive dialogue with Russia, the U.S. should get other nations on board. And once the main players are on board, moving towards "Zero," Russia would be more likely to join the process. "With the vast majority of the countries in the world committed to a new path, and with the United States and other key nuclear powers very much part of that global commitment, remaining a holdout on this critical issue, especially if it can be linked to other matters of interest to Russia, will become more and more difficult," they argue. Ivo Daalder and Jan Lodal, "The Logic of Zero: Towards a World without Nuclear Weapons," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2008.

2 *Ibid.*

nuclear triad has come to concede that nuclear weapons may eventually lose their significance and Russia may abandon its nuclear status “as a result of...a change in the nature of international relations.”<sup>3</sup>

However, while publicly endorsing the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, the Russian leadership has also continued to believe that the nation’s nuclear arsenal is of vital importance to its defense, security, foreign and even domestic policies. Apart from deterring other nuclear powers and compensating for Russian conventional forces’ inferiority to Western armies, the existence of its nuclear arsenal also re-affirms Russia’s great power status in the eyes of both foreign audiences and its domestic constituency. It likewise accommodates the institutional interests of the nuclear weapons sector in the military-industrial complex and the armed forces per se.

Therefore, the Russia-first approach of the new U.S. administration in its nuclear disarmament efforts has yielded an initial success, but can succeed in the longer-term only if the value of possessing nuclear weapons decreases in the eyes of Russian leaders. Such a devaluation could occur under a number of conditions, which Russia insists are mandatory and which include (but are not limited to) the resolution of regional conflicts and the codification of guarantees that no hostile country or alliance will have an overwhelming superiority in conventional armed forces over Russia and its allies.

This article will start with a short overview of key doctrines and other strategic documents that codify Russia’s position on the roles of nuclear weapons, nuclear arms control and, in particular, the elimination of nuclear weapons. It will then offer an overview of the positions held on these issues by key Russian stakeholders and will assess the consolidated Russian position. Nuclear weapons play a number of key roles in Russia’s defense and security posture. In peacetime, they prevent forceful pressure and deter aggression against Russia or its allies. In wartime, the functions assigned to Russia’s nuclear weapons by its strategic documents include: a first-use option in response to large-scale aggression that poses a critical threat to national security; de-escalating aggression or defeating an aggressor in a large-scale war in any scenario, including one in which the enemy massively uses WMD; and achieving cessation of military operations under conditions that are acceptable for Russia.

Although powerful contingents within the Russian leadership ascribe significant value to the various roles played by the country’s nuclear arsenal, they have nonetheless enumerated *consecutive or simultaneous external conditions necessary* for Russia to embark on the road towards eliminating

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3 “Russian Strategic Missile Troops chief about deterrence, security, launch plans,” BBC translation of *Interfax-AVN*, April 12, 2009.

nuclear weapons. These include: universal implementation of existing nuclear arms control and nonproliferation treaties; further and irreversible cuts in U.S.-Russian nuclear arsenals; constraints on U.S. missile defense and enhancement of Russian conventional forces; and resolution of major conflicts. Subsequently, there will be a verifiable accounting of all nuclear powers' nuclear arsenals, their reduction and elimination, followed by guarantees that no country or sub-state actor would be able to develop/acquire such weapons in the future.

Granted there are major obstacles to negotiating Zero, but Russia's current nuclear posture also entails major costs and risks, including WMD proliferation and the risk of nuclear terrorism. Growing support for Zero by state and non-state actors alike offers a unique opportunity for Russia and other responsible nations. The article will conclude that there are overarching nuclear security interests, such as the need to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons and prevent nuclear terrorism, that compel Russia to embark on the path to a world free of nuclear weapons, formidable obstacles notwithstanding.

### III. RUSSIA'S MAIN DOCUMENTS ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND DISARMAMENT

**1. The Strategy of National Security Through the Year 2020** is the first of Russia's strategic documents to introduce an unequivocal commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons. "The formation of propitious conditions for Russia's sustainable long-term development is [to be] achieved through ensuring strategic stability, including consistent progress toward a world free of nuclear weapons and the creation of conditions of equal security for all," says the strategy, which President Medvedev signed in May 2009. The strategy also says Russia will facilitate the involvement of other nuclear powers in the pursuit of strategic stability and will continue working to strengthen nonproliferation regimes.

The new strategy proclaims that Russia adheres to "principles of stability and predictability in the sphere of strategic offensive arms" with special importance attached to reaching "new full-fledged bilateral agreements on the further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms." Russia is prepared to discuss further reductions in nuclear potentials through bilateral and multilateral agreements on the condition that they not undermine strategic stability, according to the strategy. The document likewise reaffirms Russia's commitment to pursue bilateral reductions in nuclear arsenals with the U.S., but also vows that Russia, while avoiding an arms race, will strive to maintain parity should the U.S. pursue a global missile defense. Russia will "exert all necessary efforts ... to maintain, in the least expensive way, parity in strategic offensive weapons with the United States in the case of deployment of a global missile defense system and implementation of the concept of a lightning-fast global strike using strategic delivery systems armed with nuclear and conventional warheads."

The new strategy document says little about the use of nuclear weapons, whereas its predecessor, the 2000 National Security Concept, spelled out the purposes for which Russia could use such weapons, among them to "deter aggressions of any scale against it and its allies, including those [aggressions] using nuclear weapons" and to counter a conventional strike without spurring a major escalation to all-out nuclear use.<sup>4</sup>

**2. The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept** is another strategic document that refers to Russia's nuclear disarmament commitment. The concept, which was the first strategic document signed

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<sup>4</sup> The use of nuclear weapons may have been left out of the strategy document in anticipation of the new Defense Doctrine, which is expected to formulate policy on the use of nukes, and/or because Russia is waiting for the outcome of the ongoing arms control talks with the U.S. The new Defense Doctrine is to be adopted by 2010.

by President Medvedev after his inauguration, reaffirms Russia's commitments to negotiate reductions in strategic arms and to strengthen nonproliferation regimes. However, this July 2008 document did not commit Russia to eliminate nuclear arms, thus illustrating—by contrast with the 2009 national security strategy—the significant change in the Kremlin's position on Zero in less than a year.

The concept asserts that “the Russian Federation unswervingly fulfills its international obligations under international treaties in the sphere of nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, arms control and disarmament.” The document also notes that Russia “reaffirms its unflinching policy of developing multilateral foundations of nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and means of their delivery” and “is prepared to negotiate with all nuclear powers a reduction of strategic offensive weapons (intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles as well as heavy bombers and the warheads they carry) up to a minimum level sufficient to maintain strategic stability.” The concept also states that Russia “promotes the prevention of deployment of weapons in outer space and the establishment of a system of collective response to potential missile threats on an equal basis, and opposes unilateral actions in the field of strategic antimissile defense that are destabilizing the international situation.”<sup>5</sup>

**3. The 2000 Defense Doctrine** requires the Russian military to maintain nuclear forces capable of deterring aggression against Russia and its allies. It gives Russia the right to use nuclear arms first in a rather wide range of scenarios, including responses to both nuclear strikes and other types of WMD attacks, as well as to conventional attacks. The doctrine asserts that Russia “reserves the right” to use nuclear weapons “in response to large-scale aggression using conventional weapons in situations critical to the national security of the Russian Federation.”<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, the doctrine allows the Russian military essentially to sidestep Russia's Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) commitment to refrain from using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states. The doctrine allows such use if the non-nuclear weapons states are allied with states “that possess nuclear weapons” and attack Russia or its allies.<sup>7</sup> Under the document, Russia can also decide to selectively initiate the use of nuclear weapons to “demonstrate resolve,” as well as to respond to a conventional attack on its nuclear forces, C3I sites (including satellites), atomic power plants and other nuclear targets, according to former deputy chairman of the

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5 The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, July 12, 2008.

6 Defense Doctrine of the Russian Federation, approved by a presidential decree on April 21, 2000, and published in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* on April 22, 2000.

7 *Ibid.*

State Duma's defense committee and renowned strategic arms expert Alexei Arbatov.<sup>8</sup> The 2000 doctrine has been described as obsolete by a number of Russian policy influentials and as of April 2009 the General Staff of the Armed Forces was working to draft a replacement. The new doctrine, according to Secretary of the Security Council Nikolai Patrushev's May 2009 estimate, should be completed and presented by the end of 2009, but it remains unclear what the new document may say on Russia's nuclear posture.

#### **4. The 2003 Urgent Goals for the Development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation**

assigns the Strategic (Nuclear) Deterrent Forces the following missions: "In peacetime—prevention of forceful pressure and aggression against Russia or its allies; in wartime—de-escalation of aggression, including cessation of military operations on conditions that are acceptable for Russia; and inflicting the prescribed damage on the enemy." The document defines de-escalation of aggression as "coercing the enemy to end military operations by threatening to deliver or delivering strikes of various scales, including use of conventional and/or nuclear means of destruction." The document also identifies the development of strategic nuclear forces, which it defines as "strategic deterrence forces," among the priorities of military reform.<sup>9</sup> The document says the Russian armed forces should be able to repel and defeat an aggressor in a large-scale war in any scenario, including one in which the enemy "massively" uses weapons of mass destruction. It also warns that a conventional regional war may escalate to use of nuclear weapons if either of the warring sides has such weapons.<sup>10</sup> Like the 2000 Defense Doctrine, the Urgent Goals refers to four types of conflicts: an armed conflict, a local war, a regional war and a large-scale war, noting that nuclear weapons can be used in the last two types.<sup>11</sup> While reaffirming the role of deterrence that nuclear weapons play, the Goals note the limits of these weapons as an equalizer for conventional forces' weakness. "When we speak about the nuclear deterrence factor, especially when this notion is applied to deterrence of threats associated with use of conventional forces by the enemy, we should also take into account that under contemporary conditions such deterrence can be effectively carried out ONLY if highly equipped and combat-ready general-purpose forces are available," says the document, which has been referred to in the Russian press as the Defense Ministry's "White Book."<sup>12</sup>

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8 Alexei Arbatov, "Reducing the Role of Nuclear Weapons," presentation delivered at International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament "Achieving the Vision of a World Free of Nuclear Weapons," Oslo, Norway, February 26-27, 2008.

9 Defense Ministry, "Aktualnye Zadachi Razvitiya Vooruzhennykh Sil Rossiiskoi Federatsii" (Urgent Goals for the Development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation), Krasnaya Zvezda, October 11, 2003.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

**5. The draft Strategy of Development of the Armed Forces Through 2030** reaffirms the importance of the nuclear arsenal's roles as a deterrent and an offset for the country's relatively weak conventional forces. The draft strategy, currently being worked on by the Defense Ministry, identifies the availability of strategic nuclear arms in the arsenals of a number of countries and the development of a global missile defense shield by the U.S. as major threats to Russia.<sup>13</sup> Other threats include Western powers' "growing technological and military-technical supremacy," the possibility of arms being deployed in space, the unilateral use of force by the U.S. and its NATO allies and the proliferation of WMD.<sup>14</sup> The draft document asserts that the Russian armed forces will continue to deploy new land-based ballistic missiles, strengthen the naval and air force components of the strategic nuclear forces and upgrade command and control systems in the next two decades. The strategy also provides for development of a defense system that would repel strikes carried out from both air and space.<sup>15</sup> It remained unclear as of May 2009 when exactly the strategy would be finalized and adopted.

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13 As part of the response to U.S. missile defense, Russia has already threatened to deploy Iskander missiles in the Kaliningrad exclave to target planned facilities in East Europe. This response also includes the development of hypersonic warheads that would be able to penetrate the NMD, as well as the production and deployment of intermediary-range missiles if Russia's call for internationalization of the INF remains unheeded and Russia abrogates this treaty. Such missiles can be built "in a very short period of time" as Russia has kept all the blueprints and technology, warned Nikolai Solovtsov, then-Commander of the Strategic Missiles Forces. Vladimir Shishilin, "*Ne Isterika, a Otvetye Shag*" (Not Hysterics, But Steps Taken in Response), *Interfax*, July 9, 2008.

14 Excerpts from the draft document, which was leaked to national media in August 2008. Simon Saradzhyan, "Russian military, fighting to reform," *ISN Security Watch*, August 8, 2008.

15 In spite of repeated hints from the U.S. that weaponization of space is inevitable, Russian generals and policy makers continue to assert that it should be prevented. Then-President Vladimir Putin even warned in his well-known 2007 Munich speech that weaponization of space would usher in a new era. He said "in Russia's opinion, the militarization of outer space could have unpredictable consequences for the international community, and provoke nothing less than the beginning of a nuclear era." Vladimir Putin, speech and answers to questions, Munich Conference on Security Policy, Munich, Germany, February 10, 2007.



## IV. POSITIONS OF RUSSIA'S KEY STAKEHOLDERS ON ROLES OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

### 1. The Executive Diarchy

a) **President Dmitry Medvedev.** Until the spring of 2009, Medvedev had kept silent on the idea of eliminating nuclear weapons even as both his predecessor, Vladimir Putin, and his foreign minister, Lavrov, were speaking favorably of “global Zero.” Finally, Medvedev threw his support behind the idea of a world free of nuclear weapons in a statement read by Lavrov on his behalf at a UN disarmament conference in March 2009: “I fully share the commitment of U.S. President Barack Obama to the noble goal of ridding the world of the nuclear threat and see here fertile ground for joint work.”<sup>16</sup>

Less than a month later, Medvedev reaffirmed his support for global Zero by signing a joint statement with Obama at their summit in London where the two leaders agreed to “reset” relations between the two countries. “We committed our two countries to achieving a nuclear free world, while recognizing that this long-term goal will require a new emphasis on arms control and conflict resolution measures, and their full implementation by all concerned nations,” the April 1, 2009, statement said.<sup>17</sup> In addition to committing to a nuclear-free world, Medvedev and Obama also outlined some of the immediate steps that needed to be taken on the road to such a world, such as strengthening the NPT and negotiating a new binding, verifiable reduction of strategic arsenals below the levels set by the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), also known as the Moscow Treaty.<sup>18</sup>

Medvedev further elaborated on his vision of a nuclear-free world on April 20, 2009, in Helsinki, saying that he agreed with the list of preconditions for Zero that Obama had outlined in his speech in Prague on April 5, 2009, and wanted to add three of his own. “We noted that the U.S. president said in Prague that it [elimination of nuclear weapons] can be achieved under a number

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16 Sergei Lavrov, Address at Plenary Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, Switzerland, March 7, 2009.

17 President Dmitry Medvedev of the Russian Federation and President Barack Obama of the United States of America, Joint Statement, London, Great Britain, April 1, 2009.

18 The 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), also known as the Moscow Treaty, provides for the two countries’ strategic arsenals to be cut to 1,700–2,200 operationally deployed warheads each. Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, May 24, 2002. While supporting further cuts in the new treaty, Medvedev and other Russian policy-makers didn’t specify to what level. Henry Kissinger is believed to have won a verbal commitment from Medvedev in December 2009 to have the U.S. and Russia cut their nuclear arsenals to 1,000 warheads, according to a *Daily Telegraph* report in February 2009. “Cold warrior Henry Kissinger woos Russia for Barack Obama,” *Daily Telegraph*, February 6, 2009.



President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev looking on as Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Michael Mullen, left, and Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Gen. Nikolai Makarov sign the Joint Understanding for the START Follow-on Treaty, Monday, July 6, 2009, at the Palace of the Kremlin, in Moscow. (AP Photo/Haraz N. Ghanbari)

of conditions. I will not repeat these conditions after the U.S. president, but they are fair. On my part, I would like to cite several more conditions, under which such an agreement can be reached along with a new quality of security.”<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Medvedev said: “First of all, the deployment of weapons in space must be prevented. Second, it is inadmissible to compensate for nuclear cuts by building up strategic systems equipped with conventional weapons. Third, the impossibility of creating ‘reversible nuclear potentials’ must be guaranteed.”<sup>20</sup> Medvedev then elaborated on one of these three conditions. He said that the START follow-up should introduce reductions not only in warheads, but also their launch systems, including ICBM’s, SLBM’s and long-range heavy bombers. The Russian leader also said the START follow-up should limit deployment of strategic offensive arms to the signatories’ territories. Medvedev’s reference to the need to ban weapons in space came as a veiled reaffirmation of Russia’s opposition to the U.S. missile defense system plans. Such a system, were it to emerge, should be “global” and there should be discussions with Russia and the EU on the issue, Medvedev said.<sup>21</sup> Medvedev reiterated his support for Zero in a statement issued in Amsterdam in June 2009, but then sought to make the first step on the road to that

19 RIA Novosti, “Novy Dogovor SNV Dolzhen Ogranichivat Sredstva Dostavki Boezaryadov – Medvedev,” (New Treaty on Strategic Nuclear Arms Must Limit Means of Delivery of Warheads,) April 20, 2009.

20 Prime-TASS, “D. Medvedev Prizval Predotvratit Razmeshchenie Oruzhia V Kosmose I Garantirovat Nevozmozhnost Sozdania Vozvratnykh Yadernykh Potentsialov” (Dmitry Medvedev Called for Prevention of Deployment of Weapons in Space and for Guarantees of Impossibility of Reversible Nuclear Potentials), April 20, 2009.

21 RBK-Ukraina, “Protivoraketnaya Oborona Dolzhna Byt’ Globalnoi – D. Medvedev” (Dmitry Medvedev: There Will be a Missile Defense), April 20, 2009.

goal—the replacement of START with a treaty that would further reduce U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals—conditional on U.S. missile defense, a move that could slow down the pace of U.S.-Russian arms control negotiations.<sup>22</sup> Obama and Medvedev met again in Moscow in July 2009. At this summit, neither of the two leaders mentioned the elimination of nuclear weapons in either the documents they signed or the statements made. And the Joint Understanding for the START Follow-on Treaty, which they signed during their July 6, 2009, summit, didn't come up to expectations of those who had hoped for deep cuts in both nations' strategic nuclear arsenals.

**b) Prime Minister Putin.** While still president, Putin once welcomed a decision by an international organization founded by Russian entities with the aim of advocating for the elimination of nuclear arms to hold a conference on “preventing a nuclear catastrophe.” In his welcoming note to the conference, organized by the Luxembourg Forum on Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe, then-President Putin didn't touch upon the elimination of nuclear arms; however, he did focus on the need to strengthen nonproliferation regimes, specifically the NPT. “The main [danger] is international terrorism, the risk of nuclear arms or materials related to these arms ending up in the hands of terrorists,” Putin said, referring to post-Cold War “dangers” in his May 24, 2007, address to the participants. In the address, Putin called the NPT “the most important component of international security and stability” and asserted that it is this treaty that should be used to “neutralize new challenges to the nonproliferation regime.”<sup>23</sup>

It was not until he had left the Kremlin in the spring of 2008 that Putin began to explicitly endorse the idea of eliminating nuclear weapons. When asked at a meeting with U.S. experts in September 2008 what he thought of the idea of eliminating one class of nuclear weapons, such as ground-based nuclear weapons, Prime Minister Putin said: “Had I been told just two or three years ago, I wouldn't have believed that it would be possible, but I believe it is now quite possible to liberate humanity from nuclear weapons... Why should we be keeping the world constantly in apprehension of some nuclear disaster? Especially when there are so many aspirations on behalf of other states to acquire nuclear weapons. We believe that we had better close this Pandora's box.”<sup>24</sup>

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22 “The vast majority of countries and peoples wants a world free of nuclear weapons. Russia shares this noble goal,” Medvedev said in this declaration before linking reductions of U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals in the START follow-up treaty conditional on constraints on U.S. missile defense. Dmitry Medvedev, “Declaration by President of Russia,” Amsterdam, Netherlands, June 20, 2009.

This new demand could be an attempt to bargain for more concessions in the START follow-up now that the Obama administration has indicated it may revise the Bush administration's position on missile defense. However, it is a risky game since the U.S. can live without extending START, maintaining or even increasing the current numbers of strategic delivery systems and warheads, while Russia cannot.

23 “Welcoming Notes. President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin,” Luxembourg Forum on Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe, May 24, 2007.

24 Transcript of meeting of Vladimir Putin with members of the Valdai Discussion Club in Sochi, Russia, September 11, 2008.

The timing of Putin's statement suggests that he had factored in both then-presidential candidate Barack Obama's public vow to pursue elimination of nuclear weapons and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's March 2008 statement that the United Kingdom is ready to work for "a world that is free from nuclear weapons," as well as the call for Zero by Shultz, Perry, Kissinger and Nunn in their Wall Street Journal commentaries.

Putin reiterated his endorsement of Zero in May 2009. When asked to comment on Japan's efforts to have the world "completely give up nuclear arms," Putin said: "I approve of them. I think we should work towards universal and total nuclear disarmament. We should all share this goal. Yet no one should abuse it, using these terms and this field of international philosophical thought for selfish ends. If this plan is implemented, it should be universal. One or two countries cannot afford unilateral disarmament while others build up their nuclear arsenals."<sup>25</sup> Putin again voiced support for Zero in June 2009. He told visiting German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier that Russia is willing to abandon nuclear weapons if all nuclear weapons states do the same. Putin said: "What do we need atomic weapons for? Did we invent them or ever use them? If those who made the atomic bomb and used it are ready to abandon it—as are, I hope, other nuclear powers officially and unofficially owning them—of course, we will welcome and facilitate this process in all ways."<sup>26</sup> Overall, however, Putin appears to be more wary than Medvedev in his assessment of U.S. intentions vis-à-vis nuclear disarmament, which should come as no surprise, given the dismal outcome of his initiative to forge a rapprochement with the U.S. in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and the general snubbing of arms control by the previous U.S. administration.

Despite leaving the Kremlin to become prime minister in 2008, Putin continues to play a key role in shaping Russia's foreign, security and defense policies. Unlike previous prime ministers, who mostly stuck to managing the economy and domestic social issues, he regularly comments on these policies. His standing on these issues is all the more important given that he may return to the Kremlin. In a May 2009 interview he made it clear that he intends to remain prime minister until 2012 and hinted that he may run for president that year.<sup>27</sup>

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Transcript provided to the author by the World Security Institute (WSI), Washington, D.C. A WSI staff member recorded this statement at the meeting and WSI verified it with Putin's press service in December 2009. Also cited in Andrei Kolesnikov, "Tak Davajte Zhe Dogovarivatsya" (So Let Us Strike an Agreement), *Kommersant*, September 12, 2008. Also cited in Richard Beeston "Putin Tells Britain: Relations Can Only Improve When You Remove Dissidents," *Times of London*, September 12, 2008.

25 Vladimir Putin's interview to *Kyodo Tsushin*, Japan, the *NHK Japan Broadcasting Corporation*, Japan, and the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, Japan, official web site of the prime minister of Russia, May 10, 2009.

26 David Nowak, "Putin: Russia might abandon nukes if others do," *Associated Press*, June 10, 2009.

27 Vladimir Putin, "Opening Remarks at Meeting with Heads of the Russian Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Energy Complexes," Moscow, Russia, June 9, 2006.

While endorsing the idea of nuclear disarmament, both Medvedev and Putin have also reaffirmed, on a number of occasions, the importance of nuclear weapons in Russia's defense posture. "We must guarantee our capacities of nuclear deterrence in various military and political conditions, in various military and political situations," Medvedev told senior Russian commanders at a testing ground in September 2008.<sup>28</sup> In a June 2006 address to the top managers of the nuclear weapons industry, then-President Putin made it clear that the Kremlin considers the nuclear arsenal an important part of the country's great power status. "Our country's nuclear potential is of vital importance for our national security interests. The reliability of our 'nuclear shield' and the state of our nuclear weapons complex are a crucial component of Russia's world power status."<sup>29</sup>

Putin has also noted the deterrence role played by nuclear weapons, asserting in 2003 that "the main foundation of national security in Russia remains, and will remain for a long time to come, nuclear deterrence forces."<sup>30</sup>

These statements show that both Medvedev and Putin had identified nuclear weapons as a central pillar of Russia's defense and security architecture before they publicly embraced Zero. In fact, it may be the case that they see the Obama administration's drive for Zero as a ploy to solidify U.S. military superiority over Russia, which would obviously be more formidable in a nuclear-free world unless it is constrained, but they still choose to endorse the idea of launching an international nuclear disarmament process. The reasons for such an endorsement, enumerated below, include at least one obvious benefit for Russia: Disarmament would require reductions in the number of strategic nuclear arms held by the U.S. and Russia and this would, in turn, make nuclear deterrence more affordable for Moscow. The two Russian leaders may also realize that rejecting the idea of Zero, which has been endorsed not only by the U.S., but also by China, Britain and a number of other countries, would allow critics to blame Russia for hindering arms control at a time when nonproliferation regimes are already increasingly strained.

**2. Defense Ministry.** The Russian military's perception of the role that nuclear weapons play in

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28 Dmitry Medvedev, "Opening Address at a Meeting with Commanders of Military Districts," Dmitry Medvedev, official web site of the Russian President, September 26, 2008.

29 Vladimir Putin, "Opening Remarks at Meeting with Heads of the Russian Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Energy Complexes," official web site of the Russian President, June 9, 2006.

30 Vladimir Putin, "Speech at a Meeting with the High Command of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation," Moscow, Russia, October 3, 2003.

Russia's defense and security posture has been, perhaps, best formulated by the *chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, Nikolai Makarov*: "Strategic nuclear forces are a sacred thing for us," Makarov said in June 2009.<sup>31</sup>

As stipulated in the aforementioned defense doctrine, the Defense Ministry foresees a number of scenarios for possible use of Russia's nuclear forces, including a response not only to nuclear but also to conventional attacks. As Makarov observed, "the nuclear force is the Russian armed forces' main deterrent." Speaking to members of the State Duma's defense, security and budget committees on February 9, 2009, Makarov said: "It has been such a deterrent, remains such a deterrent and can develop."<sup>32</sup> In his address to the legislators, Makarov reiterated Russia's first-use policy, singling out one of several scenarios of such use that had been formulated in Russia's strategic documents. Russia will use nuclear weapons first if aggression against Russia becomes so overwhelming that it cannot be stopped by conventional means, he said. Moreover, the utility of nuclear forces may further expand to include deterrence of "non-military threats," according to Makarov. "As for the nuclear forces, there may emerge new threats that only the threat of their [nuclear weapons'] use would prevent. Therefore, their role may increase within the framework of the armed forces' new outlook," Makarov told the lawmakers. Makarov did not specify what these new threats that might require the use of nuclear weapons as a deterrent could be. However, he did observe that "on one hand, the purely military threats are decreasing, but new threats are emerging all the time."<sup>33</sup> By foreseeing a greater utility for nuclear weapons, Russia's top brass could be seeking both to avoid cuts in the funding of Russia's strategic triad and to get a greater say in the renewed arms control dialogue between Russia and the U.S.

Russian commanders prize their nuclear weapons as an equalizing, or compensatory, instrument to make up for the weakness of their conventional forces. Then-*Commander of the Strategic Missile Forces Nikolai Solovtsov* said in June 2009 that nuclear forces will remain an equalizer that will buy time to improve conventional forces. "In the short-term, reliance on nuclear weapons will provide sufficient time and balance of forces to revamp the armed forces of the RF [Russian Federation] and elevate them to a qualitatively new level."<sup>34</sup>

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31 Vladimir Isachenkov, "Russian general links arms cuts to missile shield," *Associated Press*, June 5, 2009.

32 RIA Novosti, "*Genshtab VS RF po-prezhnemu rassmatrivaet yadernoe oruzhie osnovnym sderzhivayuschim faktorom*" (General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation Continues to See The Main Deterrence Factor in Nuclear Weapons), February 9, 2009.

33 News.ru, "*Glava Genshtaba rasskazal, chto budet s planami obnovlenia armii v krizis i kak RF zaschititsya ot vneshnikh ugroz*" (Chief of the General Staff Described What Would Happen to the Plans of Reforming the Armed Forces at a Time of a Crisis), February 9, 2009.

34 RIA Novosti, "*Yaderny shchit dast Rossii vremya na formirovanie novogo oblika armii – RVSN*" (Strategic Missile Forces: The Nuclear Shield of Russia Will Buy Time to Revamp the Armed Forces), June 10, 2009.



Russian generals think nuclear weapons could be used to stop an overwhelming aggression by conventional forces, including a hypothetical attack by NATO on the Kaliningrad exclave. “Such proposals are being made,” former senior *Defense Ministry official Viktor Zavarzin* said in September 2008 when asked if Russian authorities are considering whether to deploy nuclear weapons in this Baltic exclave.<sup>35</sup> At the time, there was no need to deploy such weapons, but, in principle, there are no international legal constraints that would prevent Russia from doing so, said Retired Colonel General Zavarzin, who is now chairman of the State Duma’s defense committee. The Defense Ministry’s press service declined to comment on Zavarzin’s statement, but noted that he is “of course a statesman.”<sup>36</sup> In 2001, U.S. papers reported, citing U.S. intelligence sources, that Russia had already moved nuclear weapons to the exclave, but Russian officials denied this. The generals also have gamed out such scenarios. In the summer of 1999, the Russian armed forces gamed out use of nuclear weapons to stop aggression from the West. The exercise, dubbed “Zapad-99,” or “West-99,” and held in the wake of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, demonstrated explicitly Russia’s growing reliance on its tactical nuclear forces in planning to repel a hypothetical NATO aggression.<sup>37</sup> An unprovoked Western attack on Kaliningrad was the central scenario in Zapad-99.<sup>38</sup> Having failed to stop the enemy’s advance by conventional means, the command of the defending side ordered Russian long-range aviation to send one bomber to simulate the firing of a Kh-15 cruise missile on the battlefield. This strike made the enemy stop out of concern that the conflict could escalate into an all-out war.<sup>39</sup>

The Russian top brass has also war-gamed the use of nuclear weapons to localize armed conflicts. Ahead of such an exercise in 2000, then-*chief of the General Staff’s Main Operational Directorate Colonel General Yury Baluevsky* said that the joint exercise of the Siberian and Far Eastern military districts—aimed at developing methods of “localizing and neutralizing” armed conflicts and tactics for fighting “large bandit formations” in border regions—would involve the simulated use of nuclear weapons.<sup>40</sup>

Russian commanders have also pointed to nuclear weapons’ role as a substitute for advanced long-range non-nuclear precision strike systems. As then-*Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev* noted

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35 Gazeta.ru, “*Yadernaya Osen*” (Nuclear Fall), September 4, 2008.

36 *Ibid*

37 Vladimir Georgiyev, “On a Soviet Scale,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, June 19, 1999. Translated by *Russica Izvestia*.

38 Giles Whittell and Michael Evans, “Putin redeploys nuclear arms on Baltic coast,” *Times of London*, January 4, 2001.

39 Sergey Sokut, “*Balkansky variant ne proshel*,” (The Balkan Variant Didn’t Work), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, June 24, 1999.

40 Factsheet, “Russia: Archived Substrategic (Tactical) Nuclear Weapons Developments,” undated, web site of the Nuclear Threat Initiative.



soon after the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, new conventional strike systems' "role in the system of inter-state relations, as the events in the Balkans have shown, has begun to approach in its significance the role of nuclear weapons."<sup>41</sup> Russia's military strategists acknowledge that Russian conventional forces lag behind their U.S. counterpart not only quantitatively but also qualitatively.

There are a number of other roles for nuclear weapons that such strategists, who are active-duty and retired senior officers, have discussed in the Russian Defense Ministry's official publications. These include disrupting command of the aggression, eliminating the threat of defeat and changing balance of forces to de-escalate aggression. One such article by Russian military strategists argues that non-strategic nuclear weapons can be used to de-escalate aggression without triggering an all-out nuclear war. "Implementation of the function of de-escalation implies real use of nuclear weapons or both demonstration of resolve and carrying out nuclear strikes against the enemy. It is expedient to accomplish this mission with the use of non-strategic nuclear weapons—foremost, operational tactical nuclear weapons, as this could exclude landslide-like escalation of the use of nuclear weapons" according to the article.<sup>42</sup> Nuclear weapons can also help to maintain combat stability of forces. One article in the Russian Defense Ministry's *Voennaya Mysl* publication notes that nuclear weapons can ensure combat stability of Russian troops on one theater of military operations.<sup>43</sup> "The possibility of limited use of nuclear weapons at a theater of military operations" would be a "counterbalance to the threat of a large-scale non-nuclear aggression from different strategic directions." (The article defines combat stability of forces as their ability to accomplish assigned missions in spite of an enemy's countering actions.)<sup>44</sup>

In addition to prizing nuclear weapons as an important instrument in their policy tool kits, Russian commanders also have a personal stake in resisting deep cuts to the nuclear triad, which gives jobs to them and to thousands of officers and soldiers.<sup>45</sup>

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41 Igor Sergeev, "Osnovy voyenno-tekhnicheskoi politiki Rossii v nachale XXI veka," (The Basis of the Military-Technical Policy of Russia in the Beginning of the 21st Century,) *Krasnaya Zvezda*, December 9, 1999.

42 V.I. Levshin, A.V. Nedelin, M.E Sosnovsky, "O primenenii yadernogo oruzhiya dlya deeskalatsii voyennykh deistviy" (On Use of Nuclear Weapons for De-escalation of Military Operations), *Voyennaya Mysl*, May 1999.

43 S.V. Kreydin, "Problemy yadernogo sderzhivania: boyevaya ustoychivost' yadernogo potentsial," (Problems of Nuclear Deterrence: Combat Stability of Nuclear Potential), *Voyennaya Mysl*, July 2000. The article also underscores the role of non-strategic nuclear weapons as an equalizer for the weakness of Russia's conventional forces.

44 *Ibid.*

45 Some of the officers have already demonstrated that they are prepared to join political protests to resist the downsizing of the Russian military currently planned by Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov. Earlier this year, active servicemen of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff's elite Berdsk brigade took part in a protest against the reform. Several officers of this commando brigade, which is to be disbanded as part of the reform, took part in the 200-strong protest whose participants demanded Serdyukov's resignation on March 8, 2009. That active duty officers would publicly protest the Kremlin's military policy and demand the defense minister's resignation is unprecedented for Putin's and Medvedev's Russia. Charles Clover and Isabel Gorst, "Russian defence reform stirs disquiet," *Financial Times*, March 18, 2009. The military has also shown their willingness to resist the planned reforms. In spring 2009, the Defense Ministry suspended its plan to relocate the

While intent on keeping nuclear weapons in their country's arsenal, the Defense Ministry's top officials have stated that they would support an extension or replacement of START as long as the entailed cuts do not go so deep as to undermine these weapons' capabilities as deterrents and equalizers. These conditions are quite similar to those voiced by Medvedev in his April 2009 Helsinki speech. One condition cited by the *head of the Defense Ministry's international department*, Yevgeny Buzhinsky, is that START's replacement confine all strategic offensive forces to the signatories' national territories. Buzhinsky presented this condition in 2008, even though it was the Russian side that was then trying to convince a reluctant Bush administration to negotiate an extension of START.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to seeking limits on the areas available for deploying strategic weapons, Russian commanders also want restrictions on U.S. missile defense and an end to U.S. efforts to develop long-range conventional precision-guided systems as preconditions for further cuts. In June 2009, Makarov, the chief of the General Staff, said that Russia will not agree to cuts in nuclear arsenals until the U.S. clarifies its intentions for missile defense in Europe. "We won't touch our nuclear potential while the situation in the world, including missile defense, remains unclear," Makarov said.<sup>47</sup> Russian generals clearly see nuclear weapons as a means of deterring the U.S. global missile defense and ensuring the capability of destroying elements of this defense in Europe. Russia has even considered deploying nuclear weapons in Belarus in response to the U.S. missile plans.<sup>48</sup>

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Russian Navy's headquarters from Moscow to St. Petersburg due to lack of funds and opposition by some of the top admirals. The relocation is estimated to cost more than \$1 billion. Some 80 percent of the headquarters' admirals and senior officers have refused to relocate to St. Petersburg. *Gazeta.ru*, "Pereezd shtaba VMF v Peterburg priostanovlen" (Re-location of the Naval Headquarters to St. Petersburg Suspended), April 21, 2009.

46 Rosbalt, "Mir Posle SNV-1" (The World after START-1), October 27, 2008. The need for territorial limitations was also voiced by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov during his speech at the 45th Munich Security Conference's panel "Non-proliferation, Arms Control and the Future of Nuclear Weapons: Is a Zero Option Possible?" in February 2009. Xinhua News Agency, "Russia urges 'a constructive response' from U.S. on START II treaty," February 6, 2009.

Another condition voiced by the Russian top brass is the irreversibility of whatever cuts below the current level of Russian and U.S. strategic arsenals are negotiated. Russian generals as well as Russian diplomats believe that, unlike the SORT treaty, the new accord should provide for elimination of strategic warheads as well as of their launch systems, including ballistic missiles and long-range bombers.

47 Vladimir Isachenkov, "Russian General Links Arms Cuts to Missile Shield," *Associated Press*, June 5, 2009.

48 Russian Ambassador to Belarus Alexander Surikov said in August 2007 that Russian tactical nuclear weapons could be deployed in Belarus in response to the U.S. missile defense plans. "In response to Washington's plans, Russia and Belarus can make a decision to build new joint military facilities, including nuclear ones," Surikov said. Surikov didn't elaborate on what kind of nuclear facilities may be built in Belarus, but Ivan Makushok, spokesman for the head of the executive committee of the Union State of Russia and Belarus, did. Makushok said the Soviet-era missile infrastructure remains in perfect condition with only two of the 81 launch pads destroyed in line with Belarus's NPT and other commitments. He also said there were well-equipped facilities to store and service missile and nuclear "equipment" as well as appropriate command and control posts. Vadim Solovyov and Viktor Myasnikov, "Moskva Nachala Yaderny Zondazh v Yevrope" (Moscow Has Begun to Probe in Europe), *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozrenie*, August 31, 2007. Belarussian president Alexander Lukashenko also said he was prepared to discuss deployment of Russian nuclear weapons in Belarus even though it would violate the NPT: "[I] should sit down with the president of Russia and calmly discuss and talk, for instance, about whether we will deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus or not." Nikolai Poroskov, "Taktichesky yaderny kozyr" (Tactical Nuclear Ace), *Vremya Novostei*, September 7, 2007.

Russian commanders have also long pointed out that it would be difficult for them to distinguish the launch and flight of long-range conventional missiles from a nuclear missile attack, especially since the U.S. administration has demolished the “firewall” between conventional and nuclear forces.<sup>49</sup> And while disagreements over ballistic missile defenses and space weapons could be resolved, major obstacles in the way of nuclear disarmament as seen by Russian commanders remain; these include the conversion of delivery systems of strategic nuclear warheads for conventional use and overall increases in the number of long-range conventional precision-guided systems in the U.S. arsenal. Arming ICBM’s with high-precision conventional warheads would “undermine ... international security as a whole,” Solovtsov warned in June 2009.<sup>50</sup>

In addition to supporting limited cuts in the strategic arsenal, the Russian top brass are also prepared to discuss codifying U.S. and Russian unilateral voluntary commitments to downsize tactical nuclear weapons into a comprehensive international treaty, but would oppose eliminating these weapons altogether unless a replacement could be found for their function as a deterrent. “Russia is not the U.S. ... which is separated from other countries by two oceans. Russia has a very complex situation on its southern borders. There are nuclear powers on Russian borders. Therefore, possession of tactical nuclear weapons is a factor that deters aggression,” said *Vladimir Verkhovtsev, the head of the Defense Ministry’s 12th Main Directorate*, which maintains and safeguards Russia’s nuclear arsenal, in 2007.<sup>51</sup> Verkhovtsev conditioned Moscow’s consent to negotiate U.S.-Russian cuts in tactical nuclear arsenals on guarantees that other countries would also cut their own non-strategic nuclear arsenals. “We are ready for such negotiations, but only if we include other countries in this process, foremost France and Great Britain,” he said.<sup>52</sup> The U.S. continues to maintain a tactical nuclear arsenal in Europe in what creates “conditions under which further steps by Russia towards a reduction in nuclear weapons would have a direct impact on its nuclear security,” Verkhovtsev said in September 2008.<sup>53</sup>

Russian Defense Ministry officials have also repeatedly called for internationalization of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), which is the only treaty at the moment that regulates

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49 Ivo Daalder and Jan Lodol, “The Logic of Zero: Towards a World without Nuclear Weapons,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2008.

50 RIA Novosti, “*Rossiya dolzhna imet ne menee 1,500 yadernykh boyezaryadov – RVSN*” (Strategic Missile Forces: Russia Must Have No Less Than 1,500 Nuclear Weapons), June 10, 2009.

51 V. Marechenkov, “*Rossiya gotova otvetit’ udarom na udar*” (Russia is Prepared to Respond to A Strike With A Strike), *KM-News.Ru*, September 9, 2007.

52 Vzgl'yad, “*Rossiya zovyot Yevropu obsudit s SShA sokraschenie yaderngo oruzhia*” (Russia is Urging Europe to Discuss Nuclear Arms Reduction with U.S.), September 3, 2008.

53 *Ibid.*

Russian and U.S. tactical nuclear weapons, warning that it would otherwise withdraw from this agreement, as other nations pursue intermediate-range missiles, which Russia does not have. Within the current framework of arms control, the threat to abrogate the treaty looks more like a bargaining chip than a genuinely intended course of action since either side's bowing out of the INF would allow the U.S. to deploy missiles that could deal a devastating blow to Russia's strategic nuclear triad with little warning by comparison to intercontinental missile attacks. However, if progress towards Zero reaches a stage at which nuclear weapons states were required to drastically reduce their nuclear arsenals and their delivery systems, then internationalization of the INF would become a real issue for Russia—a necessary condition for further cuts.

Overall, Russian commanders support the reduction of Russian and U.S. nuclear arsenals. Moreover, some of them would not even rule out a nuclear-free Russia in what, perhaps, reflects not so much their personal beliefs as the need to adapt their rhetoric in the wake of Putin's and Medvedev's statements supporting Zero and the U.S-Russian joint statements of April 1, 2009. Solovtsov said on April 12, 2009, that nuclear arms will continue to have an important role in the short term, but admitted that Russia may abandon its nuclear status in the case of changes in the international environment. "The nuclear status of Russia, as a historical reality, will be preserved until nuclear weapons lose their role of a deterrent as a result of either scientific-technical progress or a change in the nature of international relations," Solovtsov said.<sup>54</sup>

This statement by Solovtsov echoes the debate within the Russian top brass, which erupted in the late 1990s, on whether to downsize the strategic nuclear triad at a faster pace or to continue preferential funding of the strategic nuclear forces. Then-*Chief of the General Staff Anatoly Kvashnin* advocated the need to spend less on nuclear forces and more on conventional forces, while then-Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev, a career RVSN officer, opposed the idea. In 2001, Sergeyev resigned and the RVSN was subsequently downgraded from a branch of service to an arm of service. But his opponent Kvashnin was fired soon afterwards and funding continued to be skewed towards the strategic nuclear triad as the country's overall military budget grew, reaching nearly 1 trillion rubles in 2008. This is a clear sign that the debate over the redistribution of resources and funding between conventional and nuclear forces has died down, both among generals and their superiors in the Kremlin. After Kvashnin's departure, the advocates of greater resources for conventional forces appear to have made no concerted effort aimed at implementing this vision, even though two of the top positions under the current minister—who is a civilian and has no history

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54 BBC Monitoring, Translation of Interfax-AVN, "Russian Strategic Missile Troops chief about deterrence, security, launch plans," April 12, 2009.

of personal attachment to any particular element of the armed forces—are filled by representatives of the conventional forces. One first deputy minister, Alexander Kolmakov, is a career paratrooper, while another, Nikolai Makarov (the General Staff chief), is a career ground forces officer. It is worth noting that the Defense Ministry has been less vocal on the arms control issue since the departure of Sergei Ivanov from the post of defense minister. The current minister, Serdyukov, hails from the tax bureaucracy and is reluctant to speak at length on international arms control issues; instead, he has focused on trying to push through painful reforms, such as downsizing the officer corps, transforming the armed forces' organizational and command and control structures, overhauling finances and ridding the agency of redundant assets, such as farms.

One major reason that Russian commanders support the enhancement of arms control regimes, and the reduction of nuclear arsenals in particular, is that Russia cannot afford to maintain even its semblance of nuclear parity with the U.S. at current levels for much longer. The Russian military has estimated that the affordable minimum of warheads that would guarantee Russia's retaliatory capability is 1,500. This, at least, was the number cited by then-RVSN Commander Solovtsov in June 2009 when he stated the military's position on the arms cuts negotiations between Russia and the U.S. "We believe that we mustn't go below 1,500 warheads," Solovtsov said.<sup>55</sup> Under the latest START declaration issued by Moscow, Russia had 814 strategic delivery systems deployed with 3,909 warheads assigned to them.<sup>56</sup> Under the latest START declaration issued by Washington, the U.S had 1,198 strategic delivery systems deployed with 5,576 warheads assigned to them.<sup>57</sup> Both countries also have a number of warheads, which are designed for strategic delivery systems, that are stored or awaiting dismantling. Neither is required to disclose these numbers. A recent study estimates that Russia has 5,390 tactical nuclear warheads while the U.S. had some 500 operationally deployed non-strategic warheads as of January 2009.<sup>58</sup>

For Russia, parity in strategic nuclear weapons with the U.S. can be maintained if the two countries sign the START Follow-on Treaty. Medvedev and Obama already agreed in July 2009 to reduce their countries' strategic warheads to a range of 1,500-1,675, and their strategic delivery vehicles to a range of 500-1,100. Russia should be able to afford maintaining the number of warheads at the lower bracket of 1,500 even after it phases out its multi-warhead Soviet-era ICBM's around the year 2022, unless the current economic crisis deepens and becomes protracted. As for the number of Russia's delivery systems, by 2022, it could fall below the level that the two leaders have agreed upon,

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55 RIA Novosti, "Rossiya dolzhna imet ne menee 1,500 yadernykh boyezaryadov – RVSN" (Strategic Missile Forces: Russia Must Have No Less Than 1,500 Nuclear Weapons), June 10, 2009.

56 Fact Sheet, START Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms, as of January 1, 2009, as Compiled From Individual Data Submissions of the Parties, undated, U.S. Department of Defense.

57 *Ibid.*

58 Robert S. Norris & Hans M. Kristensen, "Nuclear Notebook: Russian Nuclear Forces, 2009," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, May 2009.

to around 380, including some 80 bombers, 140 SLBM's and 160 ICBM's, according to projections made by the renowned Russian nuclear arms expert Pavel Podvig of Stanford University.<sup>59</sup> Such a decline of more than 50 percent may cast doubt on Russia's guaranteed retaliation capability, especially if the two sides fail to negotiate constraints on the U.S. missile defense.

### 3. Foreign Ministry

a) **Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov** was the first top Russian official to publicly support the Four Horsemen's call for a world free of nuclear weapons. Speaking at the plenary session of the UN's Conference on Disarmament in Geneva on February 12, 2008, Lavrov said:

We hope that the American negotiators will heed the call of such well-recognized authoritative voices in this sphere, as George Shultz, William Perry, Sam Nunn and Henry Kissinger, who have provided a convincing rationale for the need to continue nuclear disarmament, strengthen international regimes of nonproliferation and maintain strategic stability on a multilateral basis. Many of their ideas are in concord with Russian initiatives, although there are of course, nuances, which require additional discussion in the process of reaching an agreement on concrete ways of achieving such complex goals.<sup>60</sup>

When asked to clarify Lavrov's statement, a ministry spokesman said Russia's strategic course is indeed geared towards a universal and comprehensive renunciation of nuclear arms.<sup>61</sup> A year later, Lavrov outlined some of the arms control measures and other conditions that the Russian leadership believes should be implemented on the road to Zero. He did so in the same March 2009 speech in which he voiced Russia's support for a world free of nuclear weapons on behalf of Medvedev. "In the sphere of nuclear disarmament, movement towards 'global Zero' is possible only under conditions of strategic stability and rigorous observation of the principle of equal security for all. This requires implementation of the entire set of measures needed for a sustainable and consistent disarmament process," Lavrov said.<sup>62</sup> Specifically, he said, Russia would agree to pursue

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59 Pavel Podvig, "Long-term force projections," Russian strategic nuclear forces blog, January 25, 2009.

60 In his statement, Lavrov also said his country "cannot be satisfied" with the fact that the UN Disarmament Committee's work has been all but blocked in the past ten years, as well as with the "stalemate in the sphere of disarmament, arms control and nonproliferation." He then outlined further that disarmament should be pursued "on the basis of reciprocity, observation of the equal-security principle and international legality." Sergei Lavrov, Address at Plenary Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, Switzerland, February 12, 2008.

61 Roman Dobrokhoto, "Disarming Arguments. U.S. and Russia Are Seriously Discussing the Idea of Universal Renunciation of Nuclear Arms," *Novye Izvestia*, February 13, 2008.

62 Sergei Lavrov, Address at Plenary Meeting of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, Switzerland, March 7, 2009.





Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, left, with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pushing the “reset button” during their meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, Friday, March 6, 2009. Lavrov was the first top Russian official to publicly support the Four Horsemen’s call for a world free of nuclear weapons (AP Photo/Fabrice Coffrini, Pool).

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Zero under the following conditions:

- All nuclear powers “incrementally” join the nuclear disarmament process pursued by the U.S. and Russia.
- Weapons are banned from space.
- No strategic delivery systems (ballistic missiles, long-range bombers) are converted to carry conventional warheads.
- Guarantees that no power can acquire nuclear weapons in the future.
- Guarantees that the NPT is not abused to pursue nuclear weapons programs.
- End to expansion of conventional forces.
- Resolution of regional conflicts.

In separate comments made in June 2009, Lavrov said Russia welcomed what he called Germany’s idea of linking negotiations on “reductions in nuclear weapons with progress in talks.” on reviving the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, in which Russia has suspended participation to protest



a number of NATO members' failure to join and ratify this agreement.<sup>63</sup> More recently, Lavrov said in June 2009 that success in "real and verifiable reductions in our nuclear arsenal...will provide hope that we can eventually achieve our common goal of a nuclear-free world."<sup>64</sup>

Lavrov has also been one of the first—if not the first—of Russia's top officials to offer an economic rationale for U.S.-Russian cooperation in the nuclear security/arms control sphere at a time of global financial crisis:

Our military expenditures constitute, by various estimates, five to 13 percent of America's. But even they are burdensome—true presumably for the U.S. as well, especially with the current financial crisis. We would like to reduce this burden and so we propose drawing practical conclusions from the obvious fact that in a globalizing world, international relations cannot be regulated by military force. Critically assessing the experience of the last ten years, it is simply essential to return to the general expectations of a "peace dividend" legitimately resulting from the end of the Cold War. This also concerns advancement towards the goal of nuclear disarmament, along with the preservation of continuity in the arms control process.<sup>65</sup>

**b) Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov** has been less upbeat about the prospects for Zero than his boss Lavrov. In two statements made in April 2009, Ryabkov asserted that a nuclear-free world is hardly achievable and appeared to have tried to harden Russia's position on Zero, as formulated earlier by Medvedev and Lavrov. While Medvedev in his April 2009 Helsinki speech simply said there should be no "building up strategic systems equipped with conventional weapons," Ryabkov made it clear that countries with superior conventional forces would need to cut them back to let Russia feel secure enough to proceed to Zero. "We cannot ignore the enormous imbalance in the sphere of conventional arms," said Ryabkov, who oversees arms control and relations with the U.S. at the Foreign Ministry. He also said that "options" that could somehow compensate for the absence of nuclear weapons in the Russian military's arsenal are "hardly being considered" by the Russian government. Without these weapons "one cannot speak about reliably ensuring Russia's national security," Ryabkov said.<sup>66</sup> In his statements, Ryabkov also reintroduced the resolution of (unspecified) conflicts as a condition for global Zero; this had previously been

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63 RIA Novosti, "*RF podderzhivaet ideyu ob uvyazke peregovorov po yadernomy razoorozheniyu i po DOVSE*" (Russian Federation Supports Linking Negotiations on Nuclear Disarmament and on CFE), June 10, 2009.

64 Sergei Lavrov, "Toward an Era of Trust; How Russian and U.S. interests align," *Newsweek*, June 27, 2009.

65 Sergey Lavrov, "Russian Foreign Policy and a New Quality of the Geopolitical Situation," Russian Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Yearbook 2008. No date is given, but first reported in the news in December 2008.

66 ITAR-TASS, "*Bezyaderny mir yedva li dostizhim, no neobkhodimo sokraschat' yadernoye vooruzhenie*" (A Nuclear Free World is Hardly Achievable, but Nuclear Weapons Must Be Reduced), April 22, 2009.

part of Russia's official position on Zero, but Medvedev did not mention it in his April 20, 2009, speech in Helsinki. Ryabkov said that there remained many spots of instability in the world that could explode. "These factors contribute to the general potential instability. Under such conditions, a nuclear-free world is hardly achievable," he said.<sup>67</sup>

And while Medvedev has referred to Zero as a "noble goal" and said nuclear disarmament is "the object of serious expectations," Ryabkov has suggested it is little more than a romantic notion: "No one is rejecting the idea of universal and full nuclear disarmament as a long-term goal. But it is as beautiful as [it is] far, as the song goes. It belongs more to the sphere of romanticism."<sup>68</sup>

Ryabkov also reiterated Russia's position that the immediate goal of nuclear disarmament should be a follow-up to START and other nuclear powers should join talks on reducing nuclear arsenals after such a document is signed. "With time, those states would also have to agree to get down in earnest to self-limitations or contractual limitations in the sphere of strategic armaments. At this stage, progress is possible without their participation. But afterward, it will be unavoidable," he said.<sup>69</sup> In addition to joining talks on further deep cuts beyond the START replacement, both states that have nuclear weapons and other countries will also need to give serious consideration "to the Russian proposal for imparting a universal character" to the INF, Ryabkov said.<sup>70</sup>

Ryabkov's view that these deep cuts in nuclear arsenals should be accompanied by conventional arms control arrangements guaranteeing that no country or alliance have conventional forces superior to Russia's is shared by the conservative wing of Russia's decision-makers and policy influentials. These include active and former top defense and security officials, such as Verkhovtsev, the head of the Defense Ministry's 12th Main Directorate, and Andrei Kokoshin, a former secretary of the Security Council. Ryabkov may be seeking to ally himself with these conservatives to try to harden Russia's overall position on Zero. However, it could also be the case that Ryabkov—who was appointed to his post by Medvedev in August 2008—is playing the "bad cop" on the issue on the Kremlin's orders, presenting tough demands that could be later dropped or modified in exchange for concessions from the U.S. side so that a better deal can be attained. Neither his boss Lavrov nor the prime minister or president has insisted on conventional arms

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67 ITAR-TASS, "*Bezyaderny mir yedva li dostizhim, no neobkhodimo sokraschat' yadernoye vooruzhenie*" (A Nuclear Free World is Hardly Achievable, but Nuclear Weapons Must Be Reduced), April 22, 2009.

68 *Ibid.* Ryabkov was appointed to his post by Medvedev in August 2008 and it is rather improbable that he would not toe the president's line on this issue. Most likely, Medvedev (and Putin) must have decided that Medvedev's speechwriters had been too soft on the issue and that the official position needed to be hardened.

69 Interfax, "Nuke talks should be limited to Russia, U.S. – official," April 21, 2009.

70 *Ibid.*

control arrangements guaranteeing that no country or alliance have conventional forces superior to Russia's; the discrepancy suggests that the condition articulated by Ryabkov is negotiable and is not prerequisite to striking a deal. Ryabkov's overall role in the U.S.-Russian arms control dialogue is bound to increase, given that he has become co-chair of two U.S.-Russian government-to-government working groups—on Arms Control and International Security and on Foreign Policy and Fighting Terrorism—set up by Medvedev and Obama during their July 2009 summit in Moscow as part of their U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission framework.

**c) Ambassador Sergey Kislyak**, Russia's envoy to the United States and Russia's top negotiator in the U.S.-Russian arms control talks, has stated that the elimination of nuclear weapons is achievable. Kislyak said the following of Zero in a November 2008 interview:

In order to achieve this goal, a lot of things need to be done. Certainly, the lower you go, the more complex the situation becomes. As we go down, we need to be sure that nuclear weapons are not going to appear in other countries. You need to work toward increasing the guarantees of nonproliferation at first. Secondly, we need to have all other [nuclear-armed states] on board. Third, while we are moving toward this goal, how are the other components of security to be assured? It is complex. It is a very, very complex goal, but it is a noble goal. We can work toward this goal.<sup>71</sup>

Kislyak reiterated his country's willingness to work with the U.S. to abolish nuclear weapons, but again warned that it would be a "difficult task" in a speech made in Washington D.C. in April 2009. "A lot of things need to be done so that while the two big nuclear powers pursue nuclear reductions—and hopefully others will join in—there wouldn't be others creating nuclear weapons elsewhere," he told a conference at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.<sup>72</sup>

**d) Ambassador Anatoly Antonov**, who headed Russia's delegation to the 2008 session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, was perhaps the first top Russian official to give a broad outline of conditions that would facilitate nuclear disarmament, as seen by Russia. On April 28, 2008, Antonov told the session: "It should be clear to everyone that complete elimination of nuclear arms can only be achieved through a gradual, phased movement towards the ultimate objective on the basis of equality and a comprehensive approach with the participation of all nuclear weapons states, in conditions of sustained strategic stability, and with full respect for the principle of equal

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71 Sergey Kislyak, interview with the Arms Control Association, November 26, 2008.

72 Shaun Tandon, "US say Russia arms treaty could take longer," *Agence France Presse*, April 7, 2009.

security for all states.”<sup>73</sup> Antonov then outlined a first draft of Russia’s conditions for a world free of nuclear weapons.<sup>74</sup>

Antonov further elaborated on Russia’s conditions for Zero in his May 4, 2009, speech at the third session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2010 NPT Review Conference.<sup>75</sup> The conditions he listed in the April 2008 and May 2009 statements included the following:

- START follow-up, including: “a provision saying that the Parties’ respective arms shall not be deployed outside their national boundaries”; “a provision regarding both offensive and defensive systems.”
- Unacceptability of compensating for nuclear reductions by developing strategic systems equipped with conventional weapons.
- Concentration of nuclear weapons within national boundaries.
- Prevention of militarization of outer space/no unilateral development of global missile defense.
- Eventual expansion of the U.S.-Russian dialogue on arms control to five-party talks.
- Internationalization of the INF treaty.
- Strengthening the NPT.
- Solution to the “nonproliferation problem” of Iran and North Korea.
- Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, including the Middle East.
- Early entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).
- Introduction and implementation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).
- Prevention of nuclear terrorism.
- Settling regional conflicts and ensuring the viability of key disarmament and nonproliferation instruments.
- Strengthening security guarantees for non-nuclear weapon states.
- Inadmissibility of creating so-called recoverable nuclear capabilities.

In his May 4, 2004, speech Antonov also commended nuclear disarmament advocacy by the Global Zero initiative, the International Commission on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament and the Luxemburg Forum.<sup>76</sup>

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73 Anatoly Antonov, Statement at the Second Session of Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, New York, United States, April 28, 2008.

74 Anatoly Antonov, Statement at the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, New York, United States, May 4, 2009.

75 *Ibid.*

76 *Ibid.*

**4. National Security and Intelligence Community.** Russia's foreign intelligence and national security establishment is interested in strengthening nonproliferation regimes, but would oppose deep cuts in nuclear arms as they continue to see the expansion of NATO and the U.S. military's prowess as major security threats. Like their military counterparts, top officials in Russia's foreign intelligence and national security communities have strong reservations about the nuclear postures of the U.S. and NATO. These suspicions run so deep that the *secretary of the Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev*, even warned in September 2008 that Ukraine may come to host nuclear weapons if it joins NATO. He and other leaders of the national security and foreign intelligence establishment can be expected to advocate for Russia to keep its nuclear arsenals at a level sufficient to retain their capacity as deterrent and equalizer.

These officials' reservations about U.S. and NATO nuclear posture vis-à-vis Russia are not only based on their own in-house analysis of the strategic balance, but are also fueled by assessments in the U.S. expert community that Russia's nuclear forces may soon lose their capability of inflicting assured destruction on the U.S.<sup>77</sup>

On one hand, top officials from Russia's foreign intelligence and national security establishment invariably refer in their public statements to the threats posed by the ongoing proliferation of WMD and WMD technologies. In fact, three of the four openly available reports ever released by post-Communist Russia's *Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR)* focus on proliferation of WMD, nuclear weapons and chemical weapons, respectively. Also, the Kremlin has told the SVR—formerly, the foreign intelligence wing of the KGB—that preventing proliferation should be its priority. Addressing the agency's top brass in 2005, then-President Putin identified its “goal of foremost importance” as denying terrorists access to WMD. In line with Putin's vision, the SVR's then-director, Sergei Lebedev, proclaimed in one of his interviews that the service's priorities are “fighting international terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”<sup>78</sup> A deputy director of the SVR, Vladimir Zavershinsky, has also cited proliferation of WMD when listing major threats to Russia as seen by his service.<sup>79</sup>

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77 “For four decades, relations among the major nuclear powers have been shaped by their common vulnerability, a condition known as mutual assured destruction. But with the U.S. arsenal growing rapidly while Russia's decays and China's stays small, the era of MAD is ending—and the era of U.S. nuclear primacy has begun.” Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, “The Rise of U.S. Nuclear Primacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2006.

78 Andrei Baranov, “Director sluzhby vneshnei razvedki Rossiii Sergei Lebedev: s prezidentom obschayus na yazyke professionalov” (Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service of Russia Sergei Lebedev: I Communicate with the President in the Language of Professionals), *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, December 20, 2006.

79 RIA-Novosti, “Interview s pervym zamdirektora SVR Vladimirom Zavershinskim” (Interview with First Deputy Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service of Russia Vladimir Zavershinsky), December 20, 2005.

The *Federal Security Service (FSB)*, which is the main successor to the KGB, and the *National Counter-Terrorism Committee (NCC)* have also identified proliferation as a major threat to Russia. In June 2007, Russia's then-chief of national security warned that terrorists continue to strive for acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and WMD technologies in Russia and ordered an evaluation of security at critical infrastructure facilities. "The National Counter-Terrorism Committee is receiving information, including information supplied by our foreign partners, on terrorists striving to gain access to weapons of mass destruction and technologies for the production" of such weapons, said Nikolai Patrushev, then the NCC chairman and the director of the FSB.

However, while highlighting the overall threat of proliferation, the national security establishment leaders, like most Russian government officials, do not share their U.S. counterparts' assessment of the scale and acuteness of this threat in the cases of North Korea and Iran. In the 2006 interview cited above, Lebedev, the chief of foreign intelligence at the time, said: "I can state with conviction that Iran has no nuclear weapon and poses no threat whatsoever to Russia. Neither do we have convincing evidence that the Iranians are developing a military nuclear program."<sup>80</sup> He also said that it would take North Korea "a lot of time and enormous financial expenses" to "develop nuclear ammunition devices ready for combat use." One year earlier, when asked if North Korea had a nuclear bomb, Lebedev had asserted in the Russian press that the SVR had no such information. Factoring in his agency's position is all the more important given that alumni of Russia's security and intelligence services occupy many of the country's senior government posts, including those of the prime minister, deputy prime minister, deputy defense minister and others.

Overall, however, this community's influence in shaping policy is not decisive if the president displays strong political will to impose his own strategic vision, as was the case with the 2020 National Security Strategy that introduced Russia's commitment to Zero. The first draft of the strategy had been completed by late December 2008, with the process spearheaded by the president's advisory Security Council; but Medvedev repeatedly postponed signing to demand new revisions as members of the council proposed changes, which sometimes completely contradicted each other, according to the council's secretary, Patrushev. An official at the Security Council acknowledged that the council's staff introduced revisions to comply with Medvedev's more liberal vision.<sup>81</sup>

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80 Andrei Baranov, "Director sluzhby vneshnei razvedki Rossiii Sergei Lebedev: s prezidentom obschayus na yazyke professionalov" (Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service of Russia Sergei Lebedev: I Communicate with the President in the Language of Professionals), *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, December 20, 2006.

81 Kommersant, "The President Has Endorsed the 2020 National Security Strategy of Russia," May 14, 2009.

**5. The Federal Parliament**, officially called the Federal Assembly, is dominated by the pro-Kremlin United Russia party and generally follows the president's and prime minister's lines on major policy issues. Given this, and because Russia is a presidential republic, the role of the national legislature in shaping defense and foreign policy is less than that played by the U.S. Congress, for example. Nevertheless, it is important to note that a number of parliamentary heavyweights who participate in shaping Russia's defense, security and foreign policies generally concur with the Russian military's position on issues of arms control and nuclear disarmament.

In assessing the prospects for U.S.-Russian arms control dialogue, *State Duma Deputy Andrei Kokoshin* has noted the calls for Zero by the Four Horsemen and the U.S. president. Late last year, he pointed out that some officials in the Obama administration favor "total elimination of nuclear United States we should be fully taking this into account."<sup>82</sup> If the Russian leadership decides to embark on the road toward complete nuclear disarmament, then it should factor in not only the recognized nuclear powers, but also the nuclear capabilities of new players, such as India and Pakistan, according to Kokoshin, who served as a deputy defense minister and secretary of the Security Council before becoming a senior Duma deputy. Doing so would be especially important if negotiations center on formidable reductions of strategic arms, which would involve actual elimination of the downsized weaponry, Kokoshin said.<sup>83</sup>

Kokoshin also believes that the deeper the cuts to the U.S.-Russian nuclear arsenal, the more serious consideration should be given to preserving strategic stability, as defined by arms control specialists during the Cold War; in particular, he has highlighted the way in which U.S. missile defense, if allowed to expand, could undermine one of the key conditions of strategic stability—namely, the absence of any incentive for either side to use nuclear weapons first.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, the deeper the cuts go, the more vulnerable the remaining nuclear forces become to a disarming first

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82 BBC translation of Interfax-AVN, "MP contemplates future of US-Russian nuclear arms reduction regime," November 27, 2008.

83 "Kokoshin: Issues of Limitation and Reduction of Strategic Arms Should Be Resolved on the Basis of Equal Security of the Parties," *Interfax*, February 10, 2009.

84 In a joint paper with fellow arms control influential Andrei Kortunov, Kokoshin had identified three conditions of strategic stability: "(1) The political and military-strategic situation provides no stimuli for either side to use nuclear weapons first. Retaliatory actions by the side attacked rule out rational exploitation of a first strike. (2) Neither side has the ability to deal a disarming first strike. Any version of attack leaves the attacked side some potential for dealing unacceptable and comparable damage to the aggressor. (3) There are no conditions for an unsanctioned and accidental use of nuclear weapons, which, in turn, presupposes that the sides have a reliable and survivable system of command and communication for warning of rocket attacks." Obviously, a global U.S. missile defense undermines the first of these three conditions. Kokoshin, Andrei A. & A. V. Kortunov, "Stabil'nost' i izmeneniia v mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniakh" (Stability and Change in International Relations), S.Sh.A.: Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiya, 1987, as cited in Robert Axelrod, "The Concept of Stability in the Context of Conventional War in Europe," *Journal of Peace Research*, August 1990.



strike that could leave them incapable of retaliating, especially if the attacking side also has a well-developed missile defense.<sup>85</sup>

Like the Russian top brass, Kokoshin also believes that the issue of strategic arms control should be bundled together with the balance of conventional forces. “Of course, we will also have to keep in mind the parameters of strategic stability in the sphere of conventional forces and conventional arms in our approach towards limitations on reductions in strategic offensive arms,” he said. “Unfortunately, we are no longer a superpower today and we do not have the Warsaw Pact organization any more, while the United States and its allies have a colossal superiority in this sphere,” Kokoshin said. “We cannot help factoring this in when considering parameters of the ratio of forces in the sphere of strategic offensive arms, in the sphere of missile defense and in the sphere of tactical and operational tactical nuclear weapons,” Kokoshin said.<sup>86</sup>

Like Kokoshin, *Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the State Duma’s committee on international affairs*, believes that the U.S. and Russia should not be alone in pursuing nuclear arms cuts. Nuclear disarmament “should not be the subject of only U.S.-Russian agreements... We must pursue parallel, simultaneous and concerted agreements on the nuclear potential of all nuclear powers, including ... those that are not parties to the NPT,” he said in February 2009.<sup>87</sup>

Some of Russia’s parliamentary influentials have been more enthusiastic in supporting the idea of nuclear disarmament. *Mikhail Margelov, chairman of the Federation Council’s international affairs committee*, has even joined Global Zero, an international initiative launched in Paris in 2008 by more than 100 political, military, business, faith and civic leaders from different countries. On the movement’s official web site, Margelov is quoted as saying:

Let us stay sober in our judgments. The way to full and comprehensive elimination of nuclear weapons is hard and long. The fighters for the nuclear disarmament will have to laboriously untangle the complicated web of governmental and business interests. Yet the hardships should by no means force us to abandon the noble goal of delivering the world from the nuclear threat.<sup>88</sup>

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85 For instance, with Russia’s assured retaliation below 100 arriving retaliatory weapons, a national missile defense of only 100 interceptors would seriously undermine this deterrent, according to Stephen Cimbala and James Scouras, “*A New Nuclear Century: Strategic Stability And Arms Control*,” (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002.)

86 “Kokoshin: Issues of Limitation and Reduction of Strategic Arms Should Be Resolved on the Basis of Equal Security of the Parties,” *Interfax*, February 10, 2009.

87 Regnum, “*Ofitsialnogo predlozhenia ot SShA o sokraschenii yadernogo vooruzhenia Rossia ne poluchala*” (Russia Has Not Received an Official Response from the U.S. on Nuclear Arms Reduction), February 4, 2009.

88 Global Zero, Official web site. Undated.

Global Zero issued a report on the eve of the Obama-Medvedev July 2009 summit in Moscow to urge the U.S. and Russia to implement a four-step plan to achieve that goal by 2030, although acknowledging that Iran could be a “show stopper.”<sup>89</sup>

**6. Industry.** Some industry leaders involved in developing and producing nuclear weapons and their launch systems are opposed to the elimination of nuclear arms, which would leave many of them unemployed. When asked, on the sidelines of a conference on the role of nuclear weapons in the 21st century in Snezhinsk, Russia, whether nuclear weapons could be eliminated or put under UN control, two top managers from the Russian nuclear weapons industry answered in the negative. “Neither one nor the other,” said *Yuri Barmakov*, director of the *All-Russian Research Institute of Automatics*. “One cannot disinvent nuclear weapons, and therefore a complete elimination of nuclear weapons would be dangerous,” said *Yevgeny Avrorin*, head of the *Zababakhin Russian Federal Nuclear Center – All-Russian Research Institute of Technical Physics*, which designed a number of nuclear bombs in Soviet times.<sup>90</sup> And while Avrorin believes that only an existential threat to Russia would justify a Russian nuclear strike, Barmakov has a broader vision of the utility of nuclear weapons, asserting that they could legitimately be used in the event of a threat to Russia’s territorial integrity.<sup>91</sup> One can assume that the designers and makers of Russia’s SLBM’s and ICBM’s in Moscow, Miassy, Votkinsk and other locations would not welcome the idea of complete nuclear disarmament either.

But while the weapons sectors of the nuclear industry could be assumed to oppose drastic cuts and elimination of these arms, such measures might be welcomed by those parts of the civilian nuclear industry that have benefited from government programs to dispose of nuclear weapons and weapons materials, such as the U.S.-Russia Highly Enriched Uranium Purchase Agreement. This agreement, which gives Russia access to the U.S. nuclear fuel market, had generated some \$3.5 billion in revenue for Russia by 2003<sup>92</sup> and the Russian companies involved in such programs would, of course, welcome a START follow-up treaty if it provides for the reduced warheads to be destroyed rather than stored.

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89 The plan provided for the following four steps:

1. U.S. and Russia cut their strategic arsenals to 1,000 warheads
2. U.S. and Russia cut their strategic arsenals to 500, all other nuclear weapons countries would have to agree to freeze and then reduce their warhead totals.
3. From 2019 to 2023, a “global zero accord” would be negotiated to include a schedule for the phased, verified reduction of all nuclear arsenals to zero total warheads.
4. From 2024 to 2030, the reductions would be completed and a verification system would remain in place.

“Group Offers Plan to Eliminate Nukes by 2030,” *Associated Press*, June 29, 2009.

90 Aleksander Yemelyanenko, “*Pyat voprosov dlya pyaterki*” (Five Questions for the Five), *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, July 15, 2005.

91 *Ibid.*

92 Matthew Bunn, “Reducing Excess Stockpiles, U.S.-Russian HEU Purchase Agreement,” web site of the Nuclear Threat Initiative. Last updated on March 5, 2003.

**7. Expert Community, Civil Society and General Public.** Experts' opinions on the role of nuclear weapons and the possibility of cutting or eliminating them diverge. A number of former senior commanders are entrenched in the ideology of mutual assured destruction and are opposed to deep reductions, to say nothing of the elimination of nuclear weapons altogether. In fact, as one Russian expert told the authors of a September 2008 paper on Zero while they were conducting their interviews, it was "not a good career move to talk about nuclear disarmament in Russia."<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, a number of Russia's leading arms control experts have publicly called for nuclear disarmament and outlined "road maps" towards it. Among these are *Vladimir Dvorkin*, former head of the Defense Ministry's 4th Central Scientific Research Institute, which plays a leading role in crafting Russia's nuclear weapons strategy, and *Alexei Arbatov*, a former deputy chairman of the State Duma's defense committee. When commenting on the Four Horsemen's call for Zero, Arbatov noted that "if such prominent [leaders] as Kissinger, Nunn and Shultz (and they are no doves) are calling for a nuclear-free world, then it means there has emerged a real chance that the international community will make meaningful progress in strengthening the international security system. Of course, we are not talking about the very near future, but a nuclear-free world several decades from now would not be a utopia."<sup>94</sup>

In his presentation at an international conference on nuclear disarmament ("Achieving the Vision of a World Free of Nuclear Weapons") in Oslo in 2008, Arbatov again argued that the elimination of nuclear weapons is possible. He highlighted risks posed by the guiding principles in Russian and U.S. nuclear weapons policies, such as nuclear deterrence and policies on the use of nuclear weapons, including first-use policy, launch on warning and use in response to non-nuclear attacks. He argued that these policies either are already having a negative impact on national security—for instance, by helping to maintain a hostile stand-off that could end in an accident triggering an exchange of nuclear strikes—or will have such a negative impact in the longer run.

In his presentation Arbatov also outlined the following steps towards reducing and ultimately eliminating these arsenals:

- The five official nuclear weapons powers pledge no first use and abandon the pledge of nuclear retaliation against biological or chemical warfare attacks.
- Nuclear deterrence is downgraded even in its finite, second-strike version with Russia

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93 George Perkovich and James M. Acton, "Abolishing Nuclear Weapons," (Adelphi Paper Routledge for The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, United Kingdom, September 2008.)

94 Roman Dobrokhotov, "Disarming Arguments. U.S. and Russia Are Seriously Discussing the Idea of Universal Renunciation of Nuclear Arms," *Novye Izvestia*, February 13, 2008.

and the U.S. getting rid of the so-called launch-on-warning strategic concepts and plans, implementing a meaningful and verifiable reduction in level of alerts.<sup>95</sup>

“Going still further in reducing the role of nuclear weapons,” Arbatov said, would require:<sup>96</sup>

- Agreement by Russia and the U.S. on verification and warhead-counting procedures in implementing SORT.
- Compromise on the planned U.S. ballistic missile defense in Eastern Europe.
- Ratification of CTBT by the U.S. and China to bring this treaty into force.
- Revival of the deadlocked negotiations on FMCT.
- Negotiations by Russia and the U.S. to cut strategic arsenals to 1,000-1,200 warheads by 2017.
- Negotiations by Russia and the U.S. on tactical nuclear weapons to have them locked away only in centralized storage facilities on national territory.
- Expansion of objectives and technologies for joint U.S.-Russian reaction to missile threats, establishing a joint center for data exchange on missile and space rocket launches, involving other missile-concerned states.
- Negotiations on a Code of Conduct in outer space to be followed by negotiations on the prohibition of space weapons.
- Multilateral consultations involving Russia, the U.S., the U.K., France and China in nuclear arms reductions and limitations.<sup>97</sup>

When discussing the nuclear security relationship with China, Arbatov is one of several Russian policy shapers who note Russian nuclear weapons’ role of equalizing for the imbalance in conventional forces of China’s and Russia’s military assets in the Far East. Russian officials generally stay silent on the potential threat of China in order not to anger this powerful neighbor. However, they cannot help noting that China is already challenging Russia’s dominance in oil- and gas-rich Central Asia. And in the future, fast-growing China could come to pose a security threat to Russia’s resource-rich regions of Siberia and the Far East, especially given the growing disparity in population density and continuing labor migration across the border. “After the end of the Cold War, disbanding of the Warsaw Pact and disintegration of the Soviet Union, the situation changed cardinally. Moscow lost its superiority in conventional forces over NATO, China and the far eastern alliance led by the U.S. It was now Russia that saw its tactical nuclear weapons as the ‘nuclear equalizer’ for the pending lag behind the West and China in conventional forces,” according to Arbatov.<sup>98</sup>

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95 Alexei Arbatov, “Reducing the Role of Nuclear Weapons,” presentation delivered at International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament “Achieving the Vision of a World Free of Nuclear Weapons,” Oslo, Norway, February 26-27, 2008.

96 *Ibid.*

97 *Ibid.*

98 Alexei Arbatov, preface to A.S. Dyakov, Y.V. Myasnikov, T.T. Kadyshchev, “*Nestrategicheskoye yadernoye oruzhie problemy kontrolya i sokrashcheniya*,” (Non-strategic Nuclear Weapons: Problems of Control and Reduction), Center for Arms Control, Energy and Ecology at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, 2004.

Among Russian experts, Arbatov is not alone in his belief that a world free of nuclear weapons is possible. He and several more leading Russian arms control policy-shapers, including former ministers, sit on the board of an international organization founded and financed by Russian entities and individuals to facilitate progress towards a nuclear free world. The aforementioned *Luxembourg Forum on Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe*, created in 2007, has endorsed the vision outlined by the Four Horsemen in their op-eds.<sup>99</sup>

The forum's supervisory board includes former foreign minister and secretary of the Security Council Igor Ivanov, the Defense Ministry's former top expert on strategic arms Vladimir Dvorkin and former deputy prime minister of the Soviet government Nikolai Laverov. The organization is sufficiently high-profile that its 2007 conference drew a welcoming note from then-President Putin. The forum organized a joint seminar with the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs in June 2008 in Rome. Its participants "unanimously approved and supported" the Four Horsemen's call for a world free of nuclear weapons, according to a report on the event posted on the forum's official web site.<sup>100</sup> "There are two alternative scenarios: either a transition to a world free of nuclear weapons or a catastrophic disintegration of the entire nonproliferation regime," the report says. "The time during which we will still be able to choose between the two alternative scenarios is measured in years rather than decades." The measures proposed by the Luxembourg Forum for achieving progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons echo those voiced by the Four Horsemen and mainstream experts in the West. They include:

- Ratification of the CPT by the U.S., India, China, Pakistan and other countries.
- Joint analysis by the U.S. and Russia of missile threats, and of cooperation on missile defense if it can effectively neutralize these threats.
- Extension of START-1 verification procedures, negotiations on reduction of tactical nuclear weapons.
- Ban on fissile material production.
- Pressure on Iran to comply with UNSC resolutions and a number of standard measures to deny terrorists access to weapons grade materials.

Perhaps, the highest-profile public figure among the proponents of eliminating nuclear weapons

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99 The Luxembourg Forum on Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe was founded in 2007. Its president is Vyacheslav Kantor, who is also the president of the Russian Jewish Congress and a leading Russian businessman.

100 Final Document, Seminar of the Luxembourg Forum on Results and Prospects of the Work of Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Luxembourg Forum on Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe Rome, Italy, June 12, 2008.

is *Mikhail Gorbachev*, who continuously held serious discussions with his U.S. counterpart Ronald Reagan on the possibility of Zero. In a 2007 op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, Gorbachev said: “We must put the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons back on the agenda, not in a distant future but as soon as possible. It links the moral imperative—the rejection of such weapons from an ethical standpoint—with the imperative of assuring security. It is becoming clearer that nuclear weapons are no longer a means of achieving security; in fact, with every passing year they make our security more precarious.”<sup>101</sup> In the op-ed Gorbachev called for the following actions:

- A dialogue should be launched within the framework of the NPT, involving both nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear weapons states, to cover the full range of issues related to the elimination of those weapons.
- The members of the nuclear club should formally reiterate their commitment to reducing and ultimately eliminating nuclear weapons.
- The members of the nuclear club should without delay take two crucial steps:
  - Ratify the CTBT;
  - Make changes in their military doctrines, removing nuclear weapons from Cold War-era high alert status.
- The states that have nuclear-power programs should pledge to terminate all elements of those programs that could have military applications.<sup>102</sup>

Two years after that op-ed, Gorbachev appears to have become less optimistic in his assessment of the likelihood of Zero, adding several preconditions similar to those cited by the conservative wing of Russia’s defense and security policy community. In several statements made in April 2009, he said the U.S. military’s conventional superiority could prove to be an “insurmountable obstacle” on the way towards nuclear disarmament.

Gorbachev said he had doubts that “it could be considered realistic that ultimately one country might remain with a number of conventional weapons nearly surpassing the arsenals of all other countries together, that is, that this country might have absolute military dominance in the world.”<sup>103</sup> He also said: “I would like to be sincere: Such a situation would be an insurmountable obstacle to ridding the world of nuclear weapons.” Other conditions Gorbachev formulated in April 2009 are:

- Demilitarization of global politics.
- Reduction of nuclear budgets.

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101 Mikhail Gorbachev, “The Nuclear Threat,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 31, 2007.

102 *Ibid.*

103 “Gorbachev: The prospect of a new arms race seems realistic now but Russia and the U.S. could make progress in nuclear disarmament,” *Interfax*, April 23, 2009.

- Termination of the development of new types of weapons.
- “Prevention of the militarization of outer space.”<sup>104</sup>

Without these steps, “all the talk about a nuclear-free world will remain empty,” he said.<sup>105</sup>

For good or ill, Gorbachev’s influence on public opinion is rather limited, given his low popularity among Russians, many of whom blame him for the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

In contrast, the country’s *Russian Orthodox Church*, which claims a membership of 80 million,<sup>106</sup> appears to be supportive of the existence of the Russian nuclear arsenal and its deterrence role in spite of the end of the Cold War. The Russian Orthodox Church has conferred blessings on Russia’s nuclear forces and held prayer services on a recent anniversary of the Defense Ministry’s 12<sup>th</sup> Main Directorate.<sup>107</sup> By contrast, the Catholic Church, which deemed nuclear weapons immoral but used to tolerate their existence as a deterrent, has advocated nuclear disarmament since the end of the Cold War.<sup>108</sup>

Nevertheless, a recent in-depth sociological study of Russians’ attitudes towards nuclear weapons indicates that the vision of a nuclear-weapons free world has the support of many Russians. A different study of public opinion, conducted jointly in the U.S. and Russia in 2007, revealed that the majority of Russians and Americans would support a comprehensive international agreement to eliminate all nuclear weapons, assuming that there is a well-established system for verifying compliance. The study showed that:

- 63 percent of Russians and 73 percent of Americans would favor “all countries agreeing to eliminate all of their nuclear weapons” when asked to assume that “there is a well-

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104 “Gorbachev: The prospect of a new arms race seems realistic now but Russia and the U.S. could make progress in nuclear disarmament,” *Interfax*, April 23, 2009.

105 *Ibid.*

106 “The rise of Russian Muslims worries Orthodox Church,” *Times of London*, August 5, 2005.

107 “In a ceremony at Christ the Savior Cathedral in September 2007, priests chanted prayers in honor of the Defense Ministry’s 12th Main Directorate, which is responsible for the storage and maintenance of the country’s nuclear arsenal. Bishop Amvrosy of Bronnitsy led the prayer service before saying to the officers: ‘I congratulate you on this memorable anniversary and I raise prayers to God and to the venerable Serafim of Sarov that the nuclear weapons created by you and entrusted to you will always be in God’s hands, and will only be weapons of deterrence and retaliation.’ Alex Osipovich, “Church Offers Atomic Blessing,” *The Moscow Times*, September 5, 2007.

108 In 2005, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Vatican’s ambassador to the United Nations said the continued possession of nuclear weapons could not be justified in the post-Cold War world. When the Holy See expressed its limited acceptance of nuclear deterrence during the Cold War, it was with the clearly stated condition that deterrence was only a step on the way towards progressive nuclear disarmament. The Holy See has never countenanced nuclear deterrence as a permanent measure, nor does it today when it is evident that nuclear deterrence drives the development of ever newer nuclear arms, thus preventing genuine nuclear disarmament.” Statement by Archbishop Celestino Migliore, permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, delivered to the 7th Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), New York, United States, May 4, 2005, cited in Pax Christi USA, “A New Moment for Nuclear Disarmament,” National Catholic Peace Movement, United States, October 2008.



established international system for verifying that countries are complying.”<sup>109</sup>

- 67 percent of Russians and 69 percent of Americans said they favored the goal of eventually eliminating nuclear weapons, while only 15 percent of Russians and 28 percent of Americans said they opposed this.
- 66 percent of the Russian respondents and 79 percent of the American respondents believed that their respective countries should work more with the other nuclear powers toward eliminating nuclear weapons.<sup>110</sup>
- The majority of respondents in Russia also supported almost all of the kinds of steps that were identified as urgently needed to reduce current risks and lay the groundwork for elimination of nuclear arms in Gorbachev’s 2007 op-ed.<sup>111</sup>

The findings of this extensive study are corroborated by an earlier nationwide opinion poll conducted by the state-run All-Russian Center for Public Opinion Studies (VTsIOM).<sup>112</sup> VTsIOM’s November 2006 poll showed that:

- 56 percent of Russians did not believe there was a threat of nuclear strike against Russia, with 43 percent of respondents identifying such a threat as “rather improbable” and 13 percent as “totally improbable.”
- Only 9 percent believed that a nuclear strike against Russia was “absolutely probable.”

But not all polls in Russia show great enthusiasm for the abolition of nuclear arms. For instance, of those surveyed by VTsIOM in an August 2005 poll:

- Only 3 percent believed that Russia should eliminate nuclear weapons altogether.<sup>113</sup> However, 39 percent said they believed Russia’s nuclear arsenal should be downsized, as long as it continues to guarantee national security.<sup>114</sup>

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109 Nation-wide opinion polls conducted by Knowledge Networks, Menlo Park, California, U.S and Levada Center, Moscow, Russia, in U.S. and Russia respectively in September 2007. Steven Kull and John Steinbruner with Nancy Gallagher, Clay Ramsay and Evan Lewis, “Americans and Russians on Nuclear Weapons and the Future of Disarmament,” joint study of WorldPublicOpinion.org and Center for International and Security Studies, University of Maryland, November 9, 2007.

110 *Ibid.*

111 *Ibid.*

112 All-Russian Center for Public Opinion Studies, “*Dolzha li Rossiya boyatsya koreiskoi atomnoi bomby?*” (Should Russia Be Afraid of [North] Korean Atomic Bomb?) November 3, 2006.

113 *Ibid.*

114 All-Russian Center for Public Opinion Studies, “*Atomnaya Bomba – vazhnyi atribut velikoi derzhavy, no daleko ne edinstvenny*” (Atomic Bomb – Important Attribute of a Great Power, but Not the Only One), August 5, 2005.

## V. RUSSIA'S CONSOLIDATED POSITION ON ROLES OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND CONDITIONS FOR ZERO

If summarized, the roles of nuclear weapons, as assigned by the aforementioned strategic documents and seen by key stake holders, are to:

### *In peacetime:*

- Ensure prevention of forceful pressure and aggression against Russia or its allies.
- Deter aggressions of any scale and type against Russia and its allies.
- Deter future threats, including non-military threats.
- Equalize for weakness of Russia's conventional forces vis-à-vis NATO and China/buy time to improve these forces; substitute for advanced long-range non-nuclear precision strike systems.
- Deter U.S. global missile defense/ensure capability of destroying elements of this defense in Europe.
- Serve as a symbol of Russia's global power status.

### *In wartime:*

- Respond to large-scale aggression carried out with use of conventional weapons if it poses a critical threat to national security.
- De-escalate aggression, coercing the enemy to end military operations either by threatening use of nuclear weapons or by using them.
- Defeat aggressor in a large-scale war in any scenario, including one in which the enemy massively uses WMD.
- Stop an overwhelming aggression of conventional forces, maintaining combat stability, disrupting command of the aggression, eliminating the threat of defeat and changing balance of forces to de-escalate aggression by using nuclear weapons.
- Ensure cessation of military operations under conditions that are acceptable for Russia.
- Localize armed conflicts.

The positions held by key Russian stakeholders on reducing and eliminating nuclear arms suggest that the lowest common denominator among them—an insistence on parity—would make Zero impossible, despite public endorsements of the idea from both the president and the prime minister. Demands for achieving and codifying quantitative and qualitative parity in conventional forces are unattainable. Russia would not have to break any new ground in arms control when negotiating a treaty with China to introduce a traditional numerical balance of forces or quotas;

however, it would be much more difficult for Russia to formulate the conditions of a treaty with the U.S. to ensure parity in conventional forces: U.S. conventional superiority is not so much quantitative as qualitative and, therefore, harder to regulate and verify in conventional treaties, as George Perkovich and James M. Acton note in their in-depth paper on Zero.<sup>115</sup> As important, it is rather difficult to imagine the U.S. agreeing to abandon its conventional superiority even if conditions for doing so could be codified in an international treaty.

That said, there is some hope that Russia might forgo conventional parity as an absolutely non-negotiable prerequisite for Zero. Though Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov has floated this condition, it has not been mentioned in public statements by President Medvedev or Prime Minister Putin or Foreign Minister Lavrov. It is not improbable that Russia would settle for codified constraints on conventional forces in a treaty, such as the new pan-European Security Treaty proposed by Medvedev, as a compromise between Russia and the U.S. and its NATO allies.

If we were to exclude this most radical demand for parity and to decouple disarmament from an undefined idea of international stability, and instead to give priority to what the president, prime minister, foreign minister and other lead decision-makers in this sphere have to say, then we can conclude that the following consecutive or simultaneous external conditions would have to be met for Russia to embark on the road towards a world free of nuclear weapons:

- Verifiable and irreversible implementation of the existing nuclear arms control and nonproliferation treaties by all countries; internationalization of the INF; replacement of START by a new legally binding treaty with robust verification procedures that would introduce irreversible cuts in arsenals below SORT levels.
- Introduction and implementation of new arms control treaties and agreements that would:
  - prevent U.S. missile defense from neutralizing Russia's nuclear arsenal (ideally for Russia, by developing cooperative multilateral ballistic missile defense and early warning systems, or by putting deployment constraints on the missile shield);
  - put constraints on the enhancement of conventional forces (including guarantees that no strategic delivery systems, such as ballistic missiles or long-range bombers, are converted to carry conventional warheads);
  - prevent weaponization of space.
- Resolution of major conflicts, including "frozen" ones (in a manner that would factor in Russia's interest in a "friendly neighborhood").
- Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and resolution of proliferation problems

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115 George Perkovich and James M. Acton, "Abolishing Nuclear Weapons;" (Adelphi Paper Routledge for The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, United Kingdom, September 2008.)

posed by Iran and North Korea.

- Introduction and implementation of international treaties that would require all nuclear powers, including unofficial ones, to first reveal their nuclear inventories in a verifiable way and then to pursue reduction and eventual elimination of their nuclear arsenals and their delivery systems, also in a verifiable way.
- Guarantees that, upon official elimination of nuclear arms, no country or sub-state actor would be able to develop/acquire such weapons in the future. This would require: very robust, if not intrusive monitoring within the framework of the NPT; bringing the CTBT into effect; strengthening IAEA safeguards; completing a global inventory of nuclear material in civilian use, and reducing and securing these stocks; negotiating a verifiable FMCT; building a new proliferation-resistant framework for civil nuclear cooperation, including an international fuel bank and expanding efforts to decrease illicit demand and supply for nuclear materials; and of course, creating credible and very strong “sticks” to punish those who attempt to stash away or acquire or develop nuclear weapons.

## VI. WHY RUSSIA SHOULD PURSUE ZERO

Russia's president, prime minister and foreign minister have expressed support for the idea of the universal elimination of nuclear weapons. However, there is also significant opposition to this idea and even proponents of Zero are skeptical that it will ever be achieved.

While readily formulating conditions for a world free of nuclear weapons, Russian leaders might find it more difficult to imagine how they could do without so vital a tool in defense, security, foreign and even domestic policy. And while the role of nuclear weapons as an image booster could be dispensed with, it would be difficult to convince the Kremlin that there could be an adequate substitute for their decades-old deterrence function. After all, these weapons have played a central role in averting a major conflict among great powers in the past sixty years. More recently, in Putin's opinion, Russian nuclear weapons have deterred other nations from "finishing off" a weak Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. They may prove equally valuable in deterring threats that emerge as a result of unforeseen events in the future. As chief of the General Staff Makarov observed: "As for the nuclear forces, there may emerge new threats that only the threat of their [nuclear weapons'] use would prevent."<sup>116</sup>

One disincentive not only for Russia but also for the U.S. on the road to global Zero is that deep reductions of strategic nuclear arsenals on both sides would undermine the traditional Cold War concept of strategic stability, which is based on the principle of mutual assured destruction. As cuts go deeper, Russian commanders may calculate that their nation's strategic nuclear arsenal – more than half of it deployed on land-based delivery vehicles, which are more vulnerable to first strike – is becoming incapable of retaliating after a disarming U.S. strike, especially if the U.S. expands its missile defense programs. This would undermine the so-called crisis stability component of strategic stability, which a number of the aforementioned Russian strategic documents and top policy makers invariably cite when addressing both the issue of nuclear disarmament and global Zero in particular.<sup>117</sup>

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116 RIA Novosti, "Genshtab VS RF po-prezhnemy rassmatrivaet yadernoe oruzhie osnovnym sderzhivayuschim faktorom" (General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation Continues to See The Main Deterrence Factor in Nuclear Weapons), February 9, 2009. A similar argument has been made by proponents of nuclear weapons in the U.S., Great Britain and other nuclear weapons states. John Deutch wrote when making the case for why the U.S. should keep nuclear weapons: "There is no guarantee that geopolitical circumstances will not change dramatically" in what would require "greater reliance on ... nuclear forces." John Deutch, "A Nuclear Posture for Today," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2005.

117 Igor Sergeev, Russia's defense minister in 1997-2001 and presidential aide on strategic stability in 2001-2006, wrote that "in the narrower sense of this word (the military aspect of it), strategic stability is like a situation in which strategic groupings of armed forces and military relations among states (and coalitions) are characterized by approximately equal military potential and relative stability of the military-political and strategic environment, as well as by the absence of attempts by either side to change the mutual balance of forces and achieve supremacy over the opposite side in the foreseeable future."

Another disincentive not only for Russia, the U.S. and other nuclear weapons states, but also for the entire international community, is that nuclear arms cannot be uninvented and state actors may preserve the capacity to covertly acquire nuclear weapons, making Zero an unstable number.

Given all these disincentives, Russian leaders may be giving public endorsements to Zero in order to achieve immediate gains that would have to precede very deep cuts in nuclear arsenals – such as a reduction of U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear weapons to affordable levels, constraints on U.S. missile defense and prevention of a further erosion of the nonproliferation regime. While supporting the idea of abolishing nuclear arms, Russian leaders are also having their diplomats put forward conditions that seem fair but are unattainable – such as parity in conventional forces – and that would eventually stall the disarmament process. Such a strategy allows Russian leaders to avoid being criticized as the sole major obstacle to a world free of nuclear weapons at a time when their counterparts in the U.S., Great Britain and China are publicly endorsing Zero as a long-term noble goal, albeit, possibly, with their own shorter-term, realpolitik objectives on their minds.<sup>118</sup> That Russia may present new conditions for Zero is evidenced by its record of toughening its position on the control and reduction of tactical nuclear weapons, and bundling it with others, soon after Moscow senses that Washington's interest in that particular issue has grown. This is the case with the START follow-up treaty, which the Kremlin now wants to link

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Strategic stability includes two components, according to Sergeyev:

- One is the “ability to deter a global or a regional war through maintenance of a strategic nuclear balance that is the ability of strategic nuclear forces to inflict unacceptable damage on aggressor.”
- The second is maintenance of such a grouping of strategic nuclear forces that would demonstrate “the futility of attempts to achieve unilateral decisive advantages” or to engage in an arms race.

Factors that could undermine strategic stability include deployment of national missile defense, large-scale combat activities with use of conventional forces, which could cause damage to combat, command and control assets of strategic nuclear forces, and technological breakthroughs that would allow a dramatic increase in one side's “counter-force” potential, according to Sergeyev. Igor Sergeyev, “*Bez pervogo udara*” (Without the First Strike), *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, November 13, 2001.

Yuri Baluevsky, chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, 2004-2008: “Strategic stability implied a certain state in Soviet-American relations when the two parties had enough nuclear capabilities to destroy each other several times over – and the rest of the world at the same time. The nuclear arms race resulted in the parity of the strategic offensive arsenals of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A., or, in other words, a nuclear stalemate. Seeking to surpass the opponent in the number and quality of their nuclear warheads and missile weapons, each side was, at the same time, afraid of provoking the opponent into pre-emptive actions.” Yuri Baluevsky, “Strategic Stability in a Globalized World,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, December 2003.

Also see Kokoshin, Andrei A. & A. V. Kortunov, “Stabil'nost' i izmeneniia v mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniakh” (Stability and Change in International Relations), S.Sh.A.: Ekonomika, Politika, Ideologiya, 1987, as cited in Robert Axelrod, “The Concept of Stability in the Context of Conventional War in Europe,” *Journal of Peace Research*, August 1990.

118 Some of the actions by the Russian delegation at the third PrepCom meeting for the 2010 NPT Review Conference could be interpreted as evidence that Russia is trying to make the elimination of nuclear weapons contingent on conditions that are so vague that Moscow could claim they have not been met in order to avoid further cuts, according to in-depth analysis of deliberations at this event by U.S. arms control expert Rebecca Johnson. These conditions, which the Russian delegation tried to include in the text of the conference agenda, included “international stability and the principle of undiminished security for all.” Russia and France also played a prominent role in diluting and distorting the disarmament recommendations put forward in one of the initial drafts of the agenda for the 2010 NPT Review Conference discussed at the third PrepCom in May 2009, according to this analysis. Rebecca Johnson, “Enhanced Prospects for 2010: An Analysis of the Third PrepCom and the Outlook for the 2010 NPT Review Conference,” *Arms Control Association*, June 2009.

to constraints on U.S. missile defense. During the years of the Bush administration, the Kremlin repeatedly called for replacing START with a legally binding treaty that would: contain START's verification procedures; would not just reduce the number of warheads but would introduce caps on all types of delivery systems and eliminate rather than store warheads; and would restrict deployment of nuclear-armed ICBM's to national territories. However, realizing that these points may be unattainable, given Bush's aversion to treaties, Russian diplomats focused on trying to win commitment from the U.S. that either START be extended or that its replacement be legally binding and contain similar verification procedures. But soon after the Obama administration expressed interest in negotiating a replacement of START, Russian officials, including Medvedev didn't only re-state the aforementioned conditions, but also said Moscow would not agree to cuts of strategic arms unless constraints on U.S. missile defense were negotiated as well.<sup>119</sup> One sign of how disruptive such a hardening of positions and differences on specific agreements can be is that neither Obama nor Medvedev mentioned the elimination of nuclear weapons in either the documents they signed or the statements made during their July 2009 summit in Moscow—just three months after committing their nations to pursue global Zero.<sup>120</sup> And the Joint Understanding for the START Follow-on Treaty, which they signed during their July 6, 2009, summit, bodes ill for those who have been encouraged by the two leaders' earlier statements and had hoped for speedy progress towards deep cuts in nuclear arsenals.<sup>121</sup>

However, regardless of whether Russian leaders are sincere in their support for total elimination of nuclear weapons, or they want to slow down the process by presenting new demands upon achieving shorter-term goals, they should still feel compelled to, at least, start working towards Zero: Weighing the long-term benefits of eliminating nuclear weapons against the long-term costs of keeping them shows that the costs keep growing as the proliferation of WMD continues. Russia and other official nuclear powers cannot hope to continue holding on to their arsenals in spite of their official NPT commitments to eliminate them, while also trying to convince others to honor their commitments to refrain from acquiring nuclear weapons. If anything this failure to pursue

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119 Dmitry Medvedev, "Declaration by President of Russia," Amsterdam, Netherlands, June 20, 2009.

120 Obama did refer to his April 2009 Prague speech at the joint press conference with Medvedev on July 6, 2009. "Press Conference by President Obama and President Medvedev of Russia," Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, July 6, 2009.

121 The joint understanding says that both sides will reduce their strategic warheads to a range of 1,500-1,675, and their strategic delivery vehicles to a range of 500-1,100. The upper limit on warheads is only 25 warheads less than the lower limit set by the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), also known as the Moscow Treaty. This makes the pledge that the two presidents made during their April 1, 2009, summit to negotiate reductions in strategic warheads below SORT levels look somewhat ridiculous. As for the number of delivery vehicles, it reaffirms what both sides have already done de facto: Russia had 814 strategic delivery systems deployed, with 3,909 warheads attributed to them; the U.S. had 1,198 delivery systems deployed, with 5,576 warheads attributed to them. The July 6, 2009 Joint Understanding says nothing about eliminating the warheads, which would have to be removed from delivery vehicles, although Russia has been insisting on this. The Joint Understanding for the START Follow-on Treaty, Office of the Press Secretary, the White House, July 6, 2009.



reduction of nuclear arsenals gives proliferators, such as North Korea, and their clients an excuse to try justify their actions. Sooner or later, the spread of technologies will allow more and more countries—and, potentially, non-state actors—to develop nuclear weapons, spurring countries that have the technological capacity, but have abstained from developing such weapons, to follow suit. The emergence of new nuclear powers will ultimately end the era of relatively stable and predictable dyad systems of mutual nuclear deterrence and usher in an era of much more complex and unpredictable multilateral deterrence configurations, eroding strategic stability and increasing risks of a nuclear conflict, as Andrei Kokoshin rightly notes in his recent paper on the subject.<sup>122</sup> Russian leaders themselves recognize the danger of proliferation. In a recent statement, Medvedev referred “to the problem of proliferation and the emergence of new players, countries that are dreaming of creating their own nuclear weapons.” “This is a very dangerous issue,” he said.<sup>123</sup>

And while new nuclear states might be expected to act rationally or predictably and not to use such weapons against Russia, whose nuclear forces remain capable of retaliating against any other country, non-state actors will not be so easily deterred. These actors, such as terrorist groups, often have no return address, and some of them have had leaders with an apocalyptic agenda, or at least a willingness to die—but not before inflicting catastrophic casualties and damage. If such actors lay their hands on nuclear weapons, whether by staging a coup in a country that has nuclear weapons but no adequate safeguards, or simply by stealing them, Russia might be among the first to come under attack. Russian leaders are fully aware of the fact that their country has been targeted by international and indigenous terrorist groups, willing to sacrifice their members and inflict massive damage to achieve their aims, as they did in Dubrovka and Beslan, where they also overcame the moral threshold between conventional and catastrophic terrorism. Chechnya-based terrorist groups are known to have sought nuclear weapons in terrorist attacks against Russia.<sup>124</sup> Al Qaeda, which has close ties with groups operating in Chechnya and other parts of Russia’s troubled North Caucasus, continues to seek such weapons and, if it succeeds, can share some of them for the fight against Russian “infidels.” Nuclear weapons, which Russian and other countries’ leaders prize as a deterrent against other states, will not work to prevent a nuclear attack by a group that is hard to pin down geographically and/or whose members are willing to die for their causes, as the suicide bombers and hostage takers in Russia’s North Caucasus have been.

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122 Andrei Kokoshin, “Nuclear Conflict in the Twenty-First Century,” (Belfer Center for Science and International Relations, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, April 2007)

123 Joint News Conference Following Russian-German Intergovernmental Consultations, Dmitry Medvedev and German chancellor Angela Merkel, official web site of the Russian President, Munich, Germany, July 16, 2009.

124 For a detailed analysis of Chechen separatists’ nuclear ambitions, see Simon Saradzhyan, “Russia: Grasping Reality of Nuclear Terror,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 2006.

Russian leaders themselves recognize the danger of nuclear terrorism. Medvedev said: “We live in a very dangerous and complicated world when the number of nuclear countries is increasing, when there is a high threat of nuclear terrorism.”<sup>125</sup> Nikolai Patrushev, then-chairman of the National Counter-Terrorism Committee and then-director of the FSB, said: “Continuing aspirations of terrorists to acquire radioactive materials and gain access to nuclear technologies are becoming one of the gravest threats.” He also said: “The National Counter-Terrorism Committee is receiving information, including information supplied by our foreign partners, on terrorists striving to gain access to weapons of mass destruction and technologies for production” of such weapons.<sup>126</sup>

The negative impact of such events as nuclear terrorism and the exponential growth in the number of nuclear weapons states, which one could foresee happening if no action is taken to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear arms, may outweigh whatever “unforeseen future events” the proponents of nuclear weapons want to hedge against.

Sociological studies on the public perception of nuclear threats and Zero show that the Russian leadership would have a solid constituency supporting deep cuts and subsequent elimination of nuclear arms if they were to frame it as a process that would help to reduce the threat of nuclear terrorism, in addition to offering the traditional benefits derived from past U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control deals. For example, opinion polls show that Russians believe that terrorist groups are more likely to stage a nuclear attack against Russia than is any nation state. A 2006 VTsIOM poll, which allowed multiple answers, demonstrated that of those Russians who believe a nuclear strike to be probable: some 47 percent thought the threat of such a strike was posed by Chechnya-based terrorists, while 27 percent named Al Qaeda as the likeliest perpetrator and another 23 percent named other terrorist groups. In comparison, 27 percent thought the threat of such a WMD attack against Russia was emanating from the United States, while another 12 percent named China, 11 percent North Korea and 10 percent Iran.<sup>127</sup>

Russian leaders should also be able to overcome opposition to Zero in the national defense and security establishment, in spite of a possible initial decline in their popularity.<sup>128</sup> Opponents from among

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125 “FT interview: Dmitry Medvedev,” *Financial Times*, March 24, 2008.

126 ITAR-TASS, “V NAK postupayet informatsiya o stremlenii terroristov poluchit dostup k OМУ” (NCC is Receiving Information on Terrorists Striving to Gain Access to WMD), June 5, 2007.

127 Six percent named Pakistan and 5 percent named Israel. All-Russian Center for Public Opinion Studies, “Dolzhna li Rossiya boyatsya koreiskoi atomnoi bomby?” (Should Russia Be Afraid of [North] Korean Atomic Bomb?) November 3, 2006.

128 “Elected leaders who chose to develop more robust measures to reduce risks from legacy arsenals, new nuclear states and potential proliferators could readily evoke broad public approval despite the resistance they might encounter in their security

the top brass can be convinced to soften their stance on Zero (though not to abandon it altogether), if Zero is pursued on the conditions outlined above—especially if the Kremlin finally manages to carry out a transformation of Russia’s obsolete, weakened conventional forces into a modern and robust war machine that would act as an effective deterrent in the absence of nuclear MAD.

In addition to proliferation of WMD and the threat of nuclear terrorism, another risk posed by nuclear weapons is that they encourage competing powers to seek the break-up of Russia, according to Putin. At one point he implied that foreign powers have assisted terrorists inside Russia in hopes of effecting its disintegration and disappearance as a nuclear power. In the wake of the horrendous terrorist attack in Beslan on September 4, 2004, Putin, still president, said: “Some would like to tear ‘a nice juicy piece’ from us. Others help them. They help, reasoning that Russia still remains one of the world’s major nuclear powers, and as such still represents a threat to them.”<sup>129</sup> In the author’s opinion this assertion is rather questionable as any rational leader of a major power would oppose the break-up of a nuclear power if only to avoid the ensuing disorder that could allow terrorists to get hold of nuclear weapons and use them to blackmail and/or attack not just Moscow but also other world capitals.

The Russian leadership should realize that even the utility of nuclear weapons as a deterrent against the existing threats is limited. For instance, hostile nations know that no nuclear arms are likely to be used against them as long as they do not launch massive WMD or conventional attacks on nuclear powers or their key allies. And most rogue regimes know that attacking the U.S., Russia, China, Britain or France would be a very risky endeavor anyhow, given the conventional capabilities of these countries and their allies. It is these conventional capabilities that rogue states factor in when considering most of their policy options, while nuclear weapons’ capability to deter anything short of aggression against the nuclear-weapons states is rather limited. One recent (though imperfect) illustration of this limitation is the five-day war in Georgia in August 2008. Russia’s previous national security concept, which was in force at that time, allowed the Russian military, for instance, to “deter aggressions of any scale against it and its allies, including with the use of nuclear weapons.” Yet such a proclaimed utility did not deter Georgia, which in Russia’s view is a rogue state, from either attacking South Ossetia, which Moscow supports, or from subsequently fighting Russian troops in the separatist province.<sup>130</sup> This example is far from perfect since

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bureaucracies,” as U.S. security experts John Steinbruner and Nancy Gallagher argue in their 2008 article analyzing the 2007 joint study of public opinion on nuclear weapons in the U.S. and Russia, which shows the majority of Russians and Americans supporting disarmament and the elimination of nuclear arms. John Steinbruner and Nancy Gallagher, “If You Lead, They Will Follow: Public Opinion and Repairing the U.S.-Russian Strategic Relationship,” *Arms Control Today*, January/February 2008.

129 Vladimir Putin, “Address by President Vladimir Putin,” official web site of the Russian president, September 4, 2004.

130 Similarly, U.S. and Israeli nuclear weapons won’t deter Iran from launching military action and terrorist attacks with use of non-conventional weapons to respond to attacks by Israel and/or the U.S. on its nuclear facilities and other *Schwerpunkte*.

Georgian forces did not attack Russia itself and were far from escalating the war to such a level that it could threaten Russia's territorial integrity. Moreover, it is perhaps Russia's nuclear forces that helped keep Georgia's allies from intervening on Tbilisi's behalf. Nevertheless, the conflict has once more underscored the limits of nuclear weapons' capability in deterring a non-nuclear nation in the absence of a robust conventional force capable of rapid reaction.<sup>131</sup> Even incremental reduction of these tactical weapons (TNW's) would allow Russia to divert some of the funds now spent on TNW's to build such a conventional force. Reduction of TNW's would also help to ease the military stand-off between Russia and NATO. The presence of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and Russia's own tactical nuclear arsenal "materially solidify" this stand-off as these arsenals are clearly designed for use against each other, according to Arbatov.<sup>132</sup>

Likewise, nuclear weapons would not be very effective in deterring or ending those types of conflict that I believe Russia is much more likely to have to deal with than a hypothetical war with NATO. These include an armed conflict with a conventional power, intrusion by insurgents or low-intensity conflict with such insurgents on Russia's own territory. Some of the perceived war-time benefits of tactical nuclear weapons are not easily gained either. One cannot reasonably hope that use of a tactical nuclear weapon would necessarily localize an armed conflict with NATO or de-escalate one were it ever to take place, which is rather improbable. The use of TNW's against a nuclear weapons state or alliance is more likely to escalate the conflict.

As for the role of nuclear weapons in preventing a conflict among current nuclear weapons states, the probability of such a conflict would not necessarily increase even with nuclear arms gone. The powers and nations now under nuclear umbrellas will not enter a world free of nuclear weapons unless they have developed effective conventional deterrents and put an elaborate system of international arms control and security in place. These measures should help not only to deter former nuclear powers from attacking each other in the absence of nuclear MAD, but also to prevent threats that could be posed by opportunistic rogue nations, as well as by the "unforeseen future events" referred to by proponents of nuclear weapons.

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Moreover, this may lead to a de-escalation that would end with use of nuclear weapons against Tehran, breaking the nuclear taboo in the region and worldwide, according to James A. Russell's recent study. James A. Russell, "Strategic Stability Reconsidered: Prospects for Escalation and Nuclear War in the Middle East," Security Studies Center, Institut Français des Relations Internationales, Spring 2009.

131 For a detailed analysis of how the weakness of Russian's conventional forces was displayed during the August 2008 war with Georgia, see Simon Saradzhyan, "Conflict Exposes Obsolete Hardware," *The Moscow Times*, August 15, 2008.

132 Alexei Arbatov, preface to A.S. Dyakov, Y.V. Myasnikov, T.T. Kadyshchev, "*Nestrategicheskoye yadernoye oruzhie problemy kontrolya i sokrashchenia* (Non-strategic Nuclear Weapons: Problems of Control and Reduction), Center for Arms Control, Energy and Ecology at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, 2004.

The elimination of nuclear weapons would also free Russia and other nuclear weapons states from fulfilling their threat to use nuclear weapons in response to a WMD attack in borderline situations, such as a WMD attack launched by a terrorist group from the territory of a state but without the state's authorization. Currently, such a scenario could deteriorate into a lose-lose situation: The use of nuclear weapons against a state from which an unsanctioned WMD attack has been launched by terrorist groups would usher in an era in which the use of nuclear weapons becomes permissible, while refraining from the use of such weapons undermines the credibility of nuclear deterrence.

The aforementioned instability of Zero can also be minimized. As Perkovich and Acton point out in their paper, CFCs can no more be “uninvented” than nuclear weapons, yet they have been prohibited with great benefit for the ozone layer, while other means have been found to perform their functions.<sup>133</sup> One could argue that this reasoning is not quite applicable in the Zero debate. After all, a critical mass of nations saw a clear benefit, if not a win-win solution, in banning CFCs, since it was easy to calculate that the hole in the ozone layer would have a negative impact on all. In comparison, the case of nuclear weapons resembles more of a “prisoner's dilemma”: The benefit of universal nuclear disarmament would be felt only in the longer-term, and would be contingent on trust and cooperation among parties, while secretly maintaining or reinventing nuclear weapons and presenting the rest of the world with a *fait accompli* could be quite tempting as a more immediate, go-it-alone benefit. One solution proposed for dealing with this issue has been placing a small number of nuclear arms in UN custody to deter such breakouts by opportunistic nations, while other experts see robust and even intrusive inspections coupled with swift interdiction as a solution. A combination of the two could minimize such breakouts.

The Russian leadership will find an enthusiastic response in the international community if it decides to take genuine steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

As stated earlier, in contrast to the Bush administration's skeptical view of nuclear disarmament, President Obama is a strong and vocal advocate for eliminating nuclear weapons. When still on the campaign trail in July 2008, then-Senator Obama proclaimed he would seek “a world with no nuclear weapons” as president. Upon his victory and inauguration, he reaffirmed this ambitious objective. Obama outlined his vision of the road to Zero in a seminal speech in Prague on April 5, 2009. There he said that Zero should be preceded by:

- Reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in nuclear powers' national security strategies.
- Negotiation of a legally binding and verifiable follow-up on START.

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133 George Perkovich and James M. Acton, “Abolishing Nuclear Weapons,” (Adelphi Paper Routledge for The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, United Kingdom, September 2008.)

- Inclusion of all other nuclear powers in further cuts.
- Ratification of the CTBT.
- Securing all vulnerable nuclear material around the world within four years.
- Introduction and implementation of a verifiable FMCT.
- Empowering the IAEA to strengthen international inspections.
- Punishment of countries violating the NPT or trying to leave it without cause.
- Building a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation, including an international fuel bank.
- Transformation of the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism into durable international institutions.

Official nuclear powers other than Russia and the U.S. have likewise expressed support for Zero. In 2007, *Great Britain's* then-Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett voiced support for the Four Horsemen's vision. In December 2008, French President Nicolas Sarkozy threw his support behind the goal of general nuclear disarmament.<sup>134</sup> British Prime Minister Gordon Brown also said in March that the United Kingdom is ready to work towards "a world that is free from nuclear weapons."<sup>135</sup> And Britain's Foreign Secretary David Miliband said in February 2009 he wants major world powers to begin new talks aimed at ridding the world of nuclear weapons. He said he hopes that the U.S., Russia, China, Britain and France can begin talks aimed at the eventual elimination of all nuclear arsenals. Miliband proposed a five-nation conference later this year to discuss how to work toward the goal.<sup>136</sup>

*China* has also welcomed the idea of eliminating nuclear weapons. Cheng Jingye, who heads the disarmament department of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, urged nuclear-armed states to commit themselves "unequivocally to complete prohibition and thorough destruction" of atomic weapons.<sup>137</sup> At the third session of the PrepCom for the 2010 NPT review conference in May 2009, Cheng said that "complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons for the establishment of a world free of nuclear weapons" was not only the "shared aspiration of the international community, but also the goal that China has advocated and worked for over the years." He affirmed that "China believes that nuclear disarmament should be a fair and reasonable process of gradual reductions towards a downward balance," urging nuclear-armed states to negotiate and finalize an "international legal instrument at an early date."<sup>138</sup>

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134 Gwynne Dyer, "Global Zero," *Korea Times*, December 18, 2008.

135 *Ibid.*

136 "Britain Seeks New Talks on Nuclear Disarmament," *Associated Press*, February 5, 2009.

137 "China calls for nuclear disarmament," *Morning Star Online*, May 5, 2009.

138 *Ibid.*

*India* has also come out in support of the elimination of nuclear weapons. In June 2008, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated: “The pursuit of this goal will enhance not only our security but the security of all other countries. These objectives cannot be achieved through partial methods and approaches. The only effective form of nuclear disarmament and elimination of nuclear weapons is global disarmament.”<sup>139</sup>

Policy influentials in *Pakistan* have also supported Zero. Rtd. Gen. Jehangir Karamat, a former chairman of Pakistan’s Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the following of Obama and Medvedev’s April 2009 pledge to pursue zero: “The Obama-Medvedev declaration is a very real and tangible step towards reduction of nuclear weapons and transcends regional and other concerns. Pakistan should, and I am sure will, be supportive of this initiative.”<sup>140</sup>

A number of leading world powers that have no nuclear weapons have also come out in favor of global Zero.

*Japan* has expressed its support for nuclear disarmament. The country’s Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone said on April 27, 2009, that “realizing a world free of nuclear weapons is Japan’s long-cherished hope” and that his country is prepared to host a 2010 Nuclear Disarmament Conference in advance of the NPT Review Conference. The government of Japan has also launched the International Commission on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament together with the government of Australia.

*Germany* also supports the elimination of nuclear weapons. At a meeting with Putin in Moscow in May 2009, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said: “The goal of global zero is not a game for utopians, but will be taken up by the doyens of U.S. foreign policy as well as by German and Polish politicians.” Steinmeier had earlier said that the idea of scrapping nuclear arms altogether, rather than limiting their proliferation, was a real prospect.<sup>141</sup> Also, four prominent German statesmen—former chancellor Helmut Schmidt, ex-president Richard von Weizsäcker, ex-minister Egon Bahr and former minister of foreign affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher—published an answer to the Four Horsemen’s appeal in January 2009, in which they supported Zero.<sup>142</sup>

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139 Factsheet, Governments for Global Zero, undated, web site of Global Zero.

140 Global Zero press release, April 6, 2009, web site of Global Zero.

141 David Nowak, “Putin: Russia Might Abandon Nukes if Others Do,” *Associated Press*, June 10, 2009.

142 Helmut Schmidt, Richard von Weizsäcker, Egon Bahr and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, “Toward a Nuclear-Free World: A German View,” *International Herald Tribune*, January 9, 2009.



Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre and Dutch Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen have also pledged their nations' support for Zero.<sup>143</sup>

The “reset” U.S.-Russian relationship can lead not only to deep cuts in the U.S.-Russian arsenals—enabling France, Britain and other official nuclear powers to eventually follow suit—but can also eventually help overcome disagreements between these countries on assessments of and responses to proliferation challenges, such as Iran's nuclear program. Moreover, Russia's co-leadership in pursuing a world without nuclear weapons could make it easier to secure consent for Zero from those *developing countries* that harbor suspicions about U.S. intentions vis-à-vis Zero, such as India and Pakistan. In general, there would be fewer suspicions in the developing world of Russia's intentions vis-à-vis Zero than of America's, according to R. Rajaraman, a nuclear arms expert at India's Jawaharlal Nehru University.<sup>144</sup>

In the meantime, the significant shift in the U.S. position on nuclear disarmament has helped to end the impasse in forming an agenda for the 2010 NPT Review Conference. At the third session of the PrepCom for this conference, the NPT signatories reached their first agreement on the treaty in years: They resolved that the 2010 conference would include a review of disarmament commitments made by the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia in 1995 and 2000 and a discussion of “nuclear-weapons-free-zones.” The NPT delegates managed to agree on the agenda because Obama revoked the Bush administration's objections to an examination of nuclear powers' disarmament by the NPT 2010 review committee.<sup>145</sup>

As important, support for the elimination of nuclear weapons from international *non-state actors* has also been growing, including efforts made by the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, the International Commission on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament and the Nuclear Threat Initiative, as well as the aforementioned Four Horsemen initiative, followed by similar calls by the four German statesmen,<sup>146</sup> and then four Polish statesmen,<sup>147</sup> and the Global Zero initiative and the Luxemburg Forum.

The current wave of nuclear abolitionists is the fourth in history and it stands a chance of suc-

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143 Factsheet, Governments for Global Zero, undated, web site of Global Zero.

144 R. Rajaraman, presentation “Towards Zero Nuclear Weapons - A Third World Perspective,” delivered to Belfer Center for Science and International Relations, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, April 9, 2009.

145 “Nuclear talks get first breakthrough in 10 years,” *Reuters*, May 6, 2009.

146 Helmut Schmidt, Richard von Weizsäcker, Egon Bahr and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, “Toward a Nuclear-Free World: A German View,” *International Herald Tribune*, January 9, 2009.

147 Aleksander Kwasniewski, Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Lech Walesa, “The Unthinkable Becomes Thinkable: Towards the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, April 3, 2009, cited on the official web site of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

ceeding where the others failed because it is fundamentally different, according to U.S. scholar Michael Krepon.<sup>148</sup> This wave emanates from the center outward, from federal governments, not from protesters trying to convince policy makers, and it comes at a time when all major global players are alarmed by the rise of the specter of nuclear terrorism and the potential disintegration of the nonproliferation regime, he argues. It is also powered by subtle, slow-motion events rather than sharp shocks, like the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (which triggered the first wave), according to Krepon. These crucial differences indicate that the fourth wave, should Russia and other nuclear weapons states choose to ride it, may eventually push the world towards the abolition of nuclear weapons rather than petering out like the previous three.

The upcoming NPT review conference in 2010 offers a momentous opportunity to keep this wave strong. With a number of nations continuing to seek nuclear weapons, this is crunch time: In the absence of meaningful action by nuclear powers to disarm, the nonproliferation regime will start falling apart. Whether or not the conference itself proves to be the moment of reckoning, it remains a highly appropriate forum for announcing a joint, serious effort to reduce and then eliminate nuclear arms before the nonproliferation regime does collapse, edging the world closer to a nuclear catastrophe at the hands of nation states or terrorist groups.<sup>149</sup> It is essential for the U.S. and Russia to agree to new formidable cuts in strategic arsenals ahead of this conference and for other nuclear weapons states to commit unequivocally at the conference to join these cuts. Otherwise, the former Cold War adversaries would be able to make a convincing argument in favor of Zero only up to the point when they start trying to answer the question raised by a number of other nations wondering why, more than 17 years after the end of the Cold War, Moscow and Washington still have thousands of nuclear weapons. Russian leaders should also collect what Foreign Minister Lavrov has rightly described as the “peace dividend” of the end of the Cold War, arguing that the current economic crisis should prompt Moscow and Washington to reduce their nuclear arsenals in order to cut defense expenditures.

Mindful of the growing threat of nuclear terrorism and other threats posed by a world of nuclear weapons, leaders of the U.S., Russia and other responsible nuclear powers should use next year’s NPT review conference to put a decisive end to the selective implementation of NPT commitments and to engage the international community in abolishing nuclear arms. As Prime Minister Putin himself said while still president in October 2003: “We will do everything in our power to

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148 The first wave came immediately after the use of atomic weapons to end World War II, the second wave rolled in during the first Reagan Administration and the third wave quickly rose and fell after the end of the Cold War. Michael Krepon, “Ban the Bomb. Really,” *American Interest*, January/February 2008.

149 Some third-world countries may find the threat of nuclear terrorism to be an unconvincing argument, however, because for them the fear of nuclear terrorism doesn’t outweigh the benefits of possessing or acquiring nuclear weapons, according to R. Rajaraman, a nuclear arms expert at India’s Jawaharlal Nehru University. R. Rajaraman, presentation “Towards Zero Nuclear Weapons - A Third World Perspective,” delivered to Belfer Center for Science and International Relations, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, April 9, 2009.

ensure that every country observes the Nonproliferation Treaty. But the same rules should apply to everyone. There cannot be a selective approach.”<sup>150</sup>

A nuclear-free world may prove unattainable in the foreseeable future. However, if Russia, the U.S. and other responsible nations take even some of the initial steps required to progress towards global Zero, the world will become significantly safer—not only for these nations, but for the entire international community. As Putin observed in May 2009, echoing the Four Horsemen’s reference to Zero as “the top of a very tall mountain”:<sup>151</sup> “Disarmament is a long and complicated process—but there is a saying: ‘A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.’ This step must be taken.”<sup>152</sup>

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150 Vladimir Putin, “Interview to Al Jazeera Television Channel,” official web site of the Russian President, October 16, 2003.

151 “In some respects, the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons is like the top of a very tall mountain. From the vantage point of our troubled world today, we can’t even see the top of the mountain, and it is tempting and easy to say we can’t get there from here. But the risks from continuing to go down the mountain or standing pat are too real to ignore. We must chart a course to higher ground where the mountaintop becomes more visible.” George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger and Sam Nunn, “Toward a Nuclear-Free World,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 15, 2008.

152 Vladimir Putin’s interview to Kyodo Tsushin, Japan, the NHK Japan Broadcasting Corporation, Japan, and the Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Japan, official web site of the prime minister of Russia, May 10, 2009.









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*Russia's Support for Zero: Tactical Move or Long-Term Commitment?*,

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