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## GETTING RUSSIA'S NUCLEAR STRATEGY MOSTLY RIGHT

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26.02.2018

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The Hill, 25 Feb 2018

Many critics have challenged the assumptions of the recent Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) concerning Russia. Allegedly the NPR got Russian doctrine wrong and is therefore needlessly provocative in its call for modifications to U.S. nuclear forces.

A closer look at the facts and, even more importantly, at Moscows behavior suggests otherwise. To be sure it is arguable that Russias nuclear strategy is not escalate or deescalate, i.e. using nuclear weapons first in a war that is going badly in order to force NATO or the U.S. to come to the table because those enemies will fear nuclear war more than Russia does.

If we look at Russias activities it becomes clear that the strategy is much broader, namely it is a strategy to demonstrate nuclear capability ostentatiously throughout all the stage of any crisis to control the escalation processes during that crisis. Should war ensue, escalating to deescalate is part of that process. But, in fact the broader strategy is one of escalation control to inhibit any Western response to attempted Russian faits accomplis.

Second, while it is true that rhetorically Russia prioritizes non-nuclear means of deterrence, its procurements and deployments prioritize nuclear weapons by a huge margin. This is true for the current 2013 to 2020 procurement plan and the impending 2018 to 2027 plan that was just announced.

At present, Russia is running over 20 production lines for short, medium, and long-range nuclear weapons that are to be tailored to any kind of contingency ranging from low-yield to high yield weapons. Pentagon sources report that by 2026 given current trends Moscow can expect to have up to 8000 warheads tailored for these varying contingencies. These current programs comprise both modernization of existing capabilities and new ones such as hypersonic missiles and countervalue weapons that will target civilians rather than military targets such as the Status-6 nuclear torpedo.

Third, Moscow has also deployed nuclear-capable Iskander missiles to Kaliningrad, its outpost on the Baltic Sea, virtually ensuring that any scenario in the Baltic will go nuclear very quickly and that Russia will fire first. Its analysts have also explored preemptive nuclear strikes as well. It has deployed nuclear-capable weapons to Crimea as well and regularly not only exercises nuclear weapons with conventional ones; it also regularly makes overt nuclear threats to NATO members.

Fourth, Russia has violated every arms control treaty of the past generation, whether it is the Conventional Arms in Europe (CFE) Treaty, or the INF treaty. Moreover, its current production rates should take it over the limits set up in the New START treaty of 2011 some time this year. There is also reason to believe that Moscow is playing games with this treaty. Its most recently reported figures indicate compliance by the treaty deadline of February 2018, stating Moscow deployed 26 new heavily armed MIRVs (multiple independent reentry vehicles) while their overall number declined by 26. And the prominent Russian military commentator Viktor Litovkin reported in late 2017 Moscow had over 1800 deployed warheads, at least 239 more than the declared number.

The New Start Treaty does not contain attribution rules, without which it is impossible to verify warhead numbers for the treaty, so Moscow has ample room to play games with regard to its observance of the treaty.

Finally, Russias military doctrine does state that nuclear weapons will only be used when the existence of the state is in jeopardy.

Since the Russian government regularly trumpets that its security is in jeopardy from Western policies, it is impossible to know what this really means □ and under what conditions it will launch nuclear weapons. Thus the doctrine is merely a data point, not hard evidence. Certainly it must be weighed against the procurement and deployment and exercise facts on the ground.

At the same time there is evidence from the Russian press that in fact industry is driving production, not driven by government demand — a situation that replicates Soviet times.

For these reasons, if not more, the NPR is a relatively restrained document not some call to nuclear Armageddon, it is consistent with past bipartisan policies and provides a mature response to Russian and Chinese nuclear developments. For independent Russian analysts, China has many more nuclear weapons than our analysts believe to be the case. That fact should also indicate caution in challenging the NPRs assessment of current trends.

Those who wish to believe that we should undertake unilateral disarmament or restraint from nuclear powers may have the moral satisfaction that comes from proclaiming the virtues of renunciation of power. Unfortunately for the U.S. which is the foundation stone of any hope of global order, such renunciation is a luxury it and its allies cannot afford.

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