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Mission Impossible: Pursuing arms control with Putin's Russia

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Mission Impossible: Pursuing arms control with Putin's Russia

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Europe unequivocally needs and would benefit from conventional as well as nuclear arms control. But first it needs peace. Europe is at war not because any European country or the U.S. has attacked anyone, but exclusively because Russia has declared war on the West. The 2014 invasion of Ukraine is merely the hottest flashpoint of that war.

Russia's long war on the West

Russia perceived itself to be at war with the West a decade before when its first effort to subvert and undermine Ukraine's independence failed as a consequence of the "Orange revolution" of 2004-05. On January 18, 2005 Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov told the Academy of Military Sciences, the official institutional locus of systematic thinking about the nature of contemporary war:

*"Let us face it, there is a war against Russia under way, and it has been going on for quite a few years. No one declared war on us. There is not one country that would be in a state of war with Russia. But there are people and organizations in various countries, who take part in hostilities against the Russian Federation."*²

1 This Policy Brief is based on the author's Presentation to the Conference Making Conventional Arms Control Fit for the 21st Century, Berlin, Humboldt Carre, September 6, 2017

2 M.A. Gareyev, *Srazheniya na Voenno-Istoricheskom Fronte*, Moscow: ISAN Press, 2010, p. 729 cited in MG I.N. Vorob'ev (RET) and Col. V.A. Kisel'ev (Ret), "Strategies of Destruction and Attrition," Moscow, *Military Thought*, in English, NO. 1, 2014,

More recently, Dmitri Trenin, Director of the Moscow office of the Carnegie Endowment, observed that, for some time now, "the Kremlin has been de facto operating in a war mode."³

Even more to the point is that war and militarization as part of a strategy of imperial reassertion are inherent in Putin's overall project. Indeed, numerous foreign and domestic commentators have observed that for some time Russia has cast itself as a "besieged fortress", charging Washington with imperialism, launching an arms race, interfering in the domestic policies of CIS states including Russia, expanding NATO, unilateralism, disregard for international law when it comes to using force, and resorting to military threats against Russian interests.⁴ This wide-ranging threat perception embraces Russia's domestic politics as well and justifies domestic immobilism under the need to mobilize the state resources. Regime spokesmen, e.g. Vladislav Surkov, the father of the sovereign democracy concept, openly stated that Russia must take national control of all the key sectors of the economy lest they be threatened by hostile foreign economic forces and so called "offshore aristocrats."⁵ This threat perception links both

January 1-2014-March 31, 2014, accessed, June 2, 2014

3 Trenin quoted in Ivo H. Daalder, "Responding to Russia's Resurgence Not Quiet on the Eastern Front," <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2017-10-16/responding-russias-resurgence>

4 "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security, February 10, 2007"; Poslanie; Open Source Committee, OSC Analysis, "Russian Commentators Debate 'Besieged Fortress' Rhetoric", FBIS SOV, June 22, 2007

5 Philip Hanson, "The Turn to Statism in Russian Economic Policy, *The International Spectator*, XLII, NO. 1, March, 2007, pp. 54-55

internal and external threats in a seamless whole (as did Leninism) and represents the perception that Western democracy as such is a threat to Russia. Therefore U.S. and Western military power, even if it is not actually a threat, is a priori perceived as such. And this threat assessment and the suggested remedies to this perception of threat are clearly militarized ones.

This war against the West therefore did not begin as a result of President Obama's sending of an unwelcome envoy in 2012 or because of the opposition to Putin's return to the presidency in 2011-12 convinced him of the existence of a U.S.-based threat to his regime as is now being alleged⁶ Putin's return greatly accelerated the current estrangement from the West, perhaps due to his belief that the West was orchestrating efforts to undermine the Russian government. But these beliefs are essentially inherent in a system run by graduates of the KGB and a security and defense sector that is uncontrolled by any democratic or civilian means. Thus worst-case threat scenarios are in the saddle in Moscow and enjoy official sanction leading to arms racing, militarization, and war. In 2007, Putin told a press conference of G-8 reporters that Russia and the West were returning to the Cold War and added:

"Of course we will return to those times. And it is clear that if part of the United States' nuclear capability is situated in Europe and that our military experts consider that they represent a potential threat then we will have to take appropriate retaliatory steps. What steps? Of course we must have new targets in Europe. And determining precisely which means will be used to destroy the installations that our experts believe represent a potential threat for the Russian Federation is a matter of technology. Ballistic or cruise missiles or a completely new system. I repeat that it is a matter of

*technology."*⁷

In other words if the armed forces says something is a threat it is a threat - regardless of an objective determination of the merits of the case. Obviously under conditions of autocracy this is an invitation to the militarization of security policy and a posture based on the presupposition of conflict. As Pavel Felgenhauer, a leading defense correspondent, reports,

*"Russia has a Prussian-style all-powerful General Staff that controls all the different armed services and is more or less independent of outside political constraints. Russian military intelligence – GRU, as big in size as the former KGB and spread over all continents – is an integral part of the General Staff. Through GRU, the General Staff controls the supply of vital information to all other decision-makers in all matters concerning defense procurement, threat assessment, and so on. High-ranking former GRU officers have told me that in Soviet times the General Staff used the GRU to grossly, deliberately, and constantly mislead the Kremlin about the magnitude and gravity of the military threat posed by the West in order to help inflate military expenditure. There are serious indications that at present the same foul practice is continuing."*⁸

Likewise, Alexei Arbatov argued already in 2011 that Russian military priorities do not correspond to the country's foreign policy and even suggested that the contradictions manifesting themselves in defense policy were intensified by the military reform modernization efforts. Arbatov (rightly

7 "Putin Interviewed by Journalists from G8 countries – text", www.kremlin.ru, June 4, 2007 Retrieved from Nexis-Lexis; Moscow, Agentstvo Voyennykh Novostey Internet Version, in English, May 16, 2007, Open Source Committee, Foreign Broadcast Information Service Central Eurasia (Henceforth FBIS SOV), May 16, 2007

8 Pavel Felgenhauer, "Russia's Imperial General Staff," Perspective, XVI, NO. 1, October-November, 2005, www.bu.ed./iscip/vol16/felgenhauer

6 Dan Boylan and Guy Taylor, "Putin's Rage Triggered By Obama's Moves, www.washingtontimes.com, October 19, 2017

in this author's view) attributed this failing to the "weakness and purely formal character of the political monitoring of military policy in the country's reform. Rational methods of evaluating the proposals of interested departments and corporation are absent. The mechanisms for the development of doctrinal, budgetary, programmatic, and military-tactical decisions are out of alignment."⁹

Thus this war began with the failure to restore the empire in Ukraine in 2004 and the coinciding domestic drive to establish an autocracy freed of any legal or institutional constraints if not earlier. Unless we grasp the nexus between empire and autocracy in Russia we will fail to grasp the basis of Russian security and defense policy.

War and coercion as instruments of Russian policy

War and empire are inherent in Putin's project because Moscow neither accepts the sovereignty nor respects the territorial integrity of any of the former Warsaw Pact states or of former Soviet republics.¹⁰ Russian spokesmen from Putin down have repeatedly made no secret of their belief that there is no such thing as an independent

Ukraine, Ukrainian people, or culture.¹¹ Moreover, Moscow openly prefers war in its borderlands to stability and peace if provided by the U.S. or the West. Russia even opposed a US counter-narcotics initiative in Central Asia lest that it lead to enhanced US presence there.¹² That principle applies a fortiori to Ukraine, Belarus and Eastern Europe more generally. And the recent Russian-orchestrated coup attempt in Montenegro, on top of events in Ukraine, confirms that outlook.¹³

Moscow's espousal of a reincarnated Brezhnev doctrine of diminished sovereignty for its neighbors even applies to non-aligned countries like Finland and Sweden who are regularly threatened by overflights, nuclear threats, submarine incursions and warnings of what may happen if they exercise their sovereign right to join NATO. And if this was not enough, we see energy threats, incitement of ethno-religious animosities on a daily scale and a wide-ranging information war in the U.S. and Europe striking at the heart of the integrity of Western electoral systems and political constitutions in countries like the U.S., France, Germany, the Netherlands, etc. In other words, this war takes the form of the sophisticated and unceasing deployment by Moscow of all the means of power, diplomacy, information, military power, and economics.

9 Quoted in McDermott, "Strategic Confusion:"

10 Stephen Blank, "Russia and the Black Sea's Frozen Conflicts In Strategic Perspective," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, XIX, No., 3, Summer, 2008, pp. 23-54; Idem., "The Values Stephen Blank, Stephen Blank, "Russia and the Black Sea's Frozen Conflicts In Strategic Perspective," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, XIX, No., 3, Summer, 2008, pp. 23-54; Idem., "The Values Gap Between Moscow and the West: the Sovereignty Issue," *Acque et Terre*, No. 6, 2007, pp. 9-14 (Italian), 90-95 (English); James Sherr, *Hard Diplomacy and Soft Coercion: Russia's Influence Abroad*: London: Chatham House, 2013, pp. 61-62; Susan Stewart, "The EU, Russia and Less Common Neighborhood," SWP Comments, *Stiftung Wissenschaft Und Politik*, January, 2014, pp.2-3

11 Vladimir Socor, "Moscow Makes Furious But Empty Threats to Georgia and Ukraine," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, April 14, 2008; "Ugroza Kremlya," www.kommersant.com, April 7, 2008, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty Newslines*, April 8, 2008; "Putin Hints At Splitting Up Ukraine," *Moscow Times*, April 8, 2008; "Putin Threatens Unity of Ukraine, Georgia," *Unian*, April 7, 2008, www.unian.netambassador

12 "Russia Opposes New U.S. Counternarcotics Initiative In Central Asia," <https://penzanews.ru/en/analysis/51389-2012>, March 8, 2012

13 Andrew Higgins, "Finger Pointed at Russians in Alleged Coup Plot in Montenegro," <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/26/world/europe/finger-pointed-at-russians-in-alleged-coup-plot-in-montenegro.html>, November 26, 2016

While the only hot war in Europe now is Ukraine in the last decade we have also seen an unremitting military buildup that is emulating the Soviet one in its size and comprehensiveness in both conventional and nuclear weapons. As summarized by a 2015 report of the National Institute for Public Policy,

*"Since the late 1990s, Russia has developed and deployed: two new types of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), including a new road-mobile missile and a silo-based variant (Topol-M Variant 2 and Yars); a new type of sea-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), the Bulava-30, and two upgraded versions of an existing SLBM (Sineva and Liner); a new class of ballistic missile submarine (Borey); modernized heavy bombers, including the Tu-160 (Blackjack) and Tu-95 (Bear); and a new long-range strategic cruise missile (Raduga). Russia is also developing additional strategic nuclear weapons systems, including: a new road-mobile ICBM (Rubezh) and a new rail-mobile ICBM (Barguzin); a new heavy ICBM (Sarmat) with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs); a new "fifth generation" missile submarine to carry ballistic and cruise missiles; and a new stealthy heavy bomber to carry cruise missiles and reportedly hypersonic missiles."*¹⁴

Furthermore, given current procurement plans and the counting rules under the New START Treaty of 2011 Russia could actually increase its nuclear weapons and still be in compliance with that treaty, although Russian cheating here would not be unlikely given Moscow's past record.¹⁵ And

14 National Institute For Public Policy, Foreign Nuclear Developments: a Gathering Storm, Fairfax, VA. National Institute For Public Policy, 2015, pp. 2-9

15 Mark D. Schneider, "Russian Nuclear Weapons Policy and Programs, the European Security Crisis, and the Threat to NATO," James R. Howe, "Future Russian Strategic Nuclear and Non-Nuclear Forces: 2022," Both Forthcoming in Stephen J. Blank, Ed., The

in any case its nuclear modernization programs encompass all three legs of its triad of air, sea, and land-based nuclear weapons as well as short-range, intermediate range, and long-range nuclear weapons. Not surprisingly, this buildup has brought the economy to its breaking point.¹⁶ But it nevertheless continues because the war party is firmly in the saddle in Moscow.

Russian approach to arms control and disarmament

These points apply with particular force to the question of launching a new arms control initiative whether it is conventional or nuclear. Just as Moscow has broken all the treaties it signed with Ukraine recognizing the integrity of its borders and sovereignty, the Tashkent Treaty of 1992, the Budapest accords of 1994, the Russo Ukrainian Treaties of 1997 and 2010 it has broken all the arms control treaties pertaining to Europe. These include the 1987 INF treaty and the CFE treaty where it unilaterally suspended its observation (an action not recognized in international law). By exercising more than 13,000 people at a time without notification as it did in the recent Zapad exercise of 2017 and 2013, it has also broken the Vienna Document commitments on exercises.

It is hardly surprising that Moscow and Russian analysts welcomed the proposal initiated by former Foreign Minister and current German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier to resume discussions concerning a conventional arms control treaty through the OSCE.¹⁷ But it is clear

Russian Military In Contemporary Perspective, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2018

16 Ben Aris, "Moscow Blog: Russia's Economy Would Be Growing a Lot Faster Today If It Hadn't Spent So Much Money On Rearming," www. Intellinews.com, October 9, 2017

17 Ivan Timofeev, "The Euro-Atlantic Security Formula: The Implications of NATO-Russia Relations To the Baltic Sea Region," Andris Spruds and Maris Andzans, Eds., Security in the Baltic Sea Region: Realities and Prospects, Riga: The Riga Conference

from what Moscow has said that it essentially wants unilateral Western disarmament as well as recognition of its right to an empire free from Western influence in both Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. It wants the U.S. to renounce its missile defenses; its advanced high-tech conventional precision-strike capability particularly for "global strike" in Europe and to neutralize NATO and the EU as effective promoters and providers of European security and unity.

We should understand that before the invasion of Ukraine Moscow already enjoyed a visible conventional superiority in the theater around the Baltic and Ukraine.¹⁸ And Moscow continues to implement a far-reaching array of conventional modernization projects in these areas that evoke particular concern in NATO.¹⁹ So its demands that NATO stop enlarging and moving its capabilities to Russia would leave a conventional imbalance at the heart of Europe with Russian superiority, what are essentially NATO allies with "perforated" defenses, and a reliance upon Moscow's fidelity away from arms control treaties as the real guarantee of security. And we have already seen how much value Moscow attaches to guarantees of its neighbors' sovereignty and integrity.

Since Russia clearly, much more than NATO, assumes the real possibility of a war with NATO it apparently has developed what Brad Roberts calls a theory of victory that presumes a regional war where Russia hopes to achieve rapidly its operational political goals while using nuclear weapons to inhibit NATO from a response and control escalatory processes throughout the crisis. This theory of victory also evidently

Papers, Latvian Institute of International Affairs, 2017, pp. 171-173

18 Statesmen's Forum: Norway's Minister of National Defense, Ine Eriksen Sørreide, <https://www.csis.org/events/statesmens-forum-norways-minister-national-defense-ine-eriksen-s%C3%B8reide>, January 9, 2014;

19 Sergei Sukhanin, "Russia Introduces EW Spetsnaz To Western Military District," Eurasia Daily Monitor, November 7, 2017, www.jamestown.org

comprises both high-tech precision (and cyber) strikes as well as sub-strategic nuclear strikes against European targets and potentially strategic strikes against more distant European targets and the US itself.²⁰

Therefore entering now into a conventional arms control negotiation, whose main justification seems to be the German Left's unwillingness to spend the money needed to match Russian regional capabilities despite NATO's clear superiority, means enshrining Russian conventional superiority and its theory of victory that not only presumes nuclear threats, but also clearly contemplates nuclear first use even amidst conventional strikes.²¹ Accordingly the overall readiness of the Russian Armed Forces and its nuclear forces are reaching a higher level and are also much nearer to the possible battlefield without any thresholds. Not only does this mean Russia can even act proactively with nuclear weapons if it so chooses. As assessed by a Finnish expert, "Russian nuclear weapons can be assessed as a possible additional element in a battlefield where only so-called conventional weapons are perceived to be used."²² But it is this constant threat of using nuclear weapons to win a war – and Russia's nuclear buildup is so large

20 Brad Roberts, *The Case For U.S. Nuclear Weapons In the 21st Century*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016, pp. 132-134

21 Ibid.: Ulrich Kuhn, "With Zapad Over, Is It Time for Conventional Arms Control in Europe?" *War On the Rocks*, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/09/with-zapad-over-is-it-time-for-conventional-arms-control-in-europe/>, September 27, 2017

22 Lt. Col Pertti Forsstrom (Finland), "Russian Military Interests In the Baltic Region In the Light Of the Crimean Operation and the Development of Russian Threat Perceptions In the Military Sphere," Paper Presented to the Conference, "The Russian Military in Comparative Perspective," Washington, D.C., May 9-10, Forthcoming in Stephen J. Blank, Ed., *The Russian Military In Contemporary Perspective*, Carlisle Barracks ,PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2018

that it makes no sense unless military planners believe that nuclear use or the threat thereof will allow Russia to win a war, even a nuclear war – also mandates the corresponding buildup of conventional assets that we now see occurring. In other words, conventional and nuclear scenarios no longer appear to have the proverbial firebreak between them that we saw during the Cold War. Or, Finnish LTC Pertti Forsstrom argues further:

“In this way the content of the concept of traditional strategic deterrence is broadened to cover both Russian nuclear and conventional assets. On the other hand, the abolishment of the restrictions for the use of nuclear weapons means that the dividing line between waging war with conventional or with nuclear weapons is vanishing. When the principle of surprise is connected to this idea, it seems that Russia wants to indicate that non-strategic nuclear weapons could be regarded as “normal” assets on a conventional battlefield. This is the basis upon which Russia regulates the level of deterrence for example in the Kaliningrad exclave. By introducing the concept of pre-emptive strike to its military means, Russia is trying to enhance its non-nuclear deterrence even further.”²³

These considerations may explain Russia’s receptivity to the Steinmeier proposal. Such talks would arrest NATO’s conventional buildup that will, in time, negate Russia’s ability to achieve a quick victory using nuclear threats or even strikes. It fractures NATO unity and revives the possibility for the eternally dreamt of German-Russian rapprochement that invariably is at expense of Russia’s East European neighbors. This process also gives Russia conventional superiority and political carte blanche in its neighborhood to rearrange de facto if not de jure the political constitution of the former Soviet republics and Warsaw Pact members who are now independent. And at the same time it would reduce the heavy burden of armaments on the Russian economy while Moscow will be free to

do as it pleases if it finds strategic trends turning against it because it will confirm to Moscow that Europe if not NATO is too decrepit to stand up for its own interests.

Conclusions

Any arms control treaty to be effective and credible must be based on the parties’ mutual interest, enhance the parties’ security, and be verifiable. Moreover as the tragic experience of the Versailles treaty (also an arms control treaty), indicates, absent adequate enforcement a treaty will repeatedly and quickly be violated until it falls away, leading to war.²⁴ Russia’s behavior shows that it neither accepts the concept of mutual interest, nor will accept genuine verification, or enforcement of the treaty when it cheats as it habitually appears to do. Indeed, most observers, including Putin, agree that there is no real threat to Russia but that NATO is still far behind the curve of meeting the defense challenge of Russia²⁵ Indeed, that was the case in 2014 when Norwegian Defense Minister Soreide told American audiences that Russia enjoyed a local superiority in the theater.²⁶

Given this set of facts, plus Moscow’s subsequent invasion of Ukraine and enormous increase of

24 Barton Whaley, *Covert German Rearmament, 1919-1939: Deception and Misperception*, Lanham, Md. University Publications of America, 1984

25 “Meeting of the Valdai International Club,” October 19, 2017, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55882>; Kathleen Curtoys “The US and NATO’s Ability To Deter Russia is AT Risk, Commander Says,” www.armytimes.com, October 10, 2017; Matthias Gebauer, Konstantin von Hammerstein, Peter Mueller, Christoph Schult, “NATO Grapples With Serious Organizational Shortcomings,” www.spiegel.de, October 21, 2017

26 Statesmen’s Forum: Norway’s Minister of National Defense, Ine Eriksen Soreide, <https://www.csis.org/events/statesmens-forum-norways-minister-national-defense-ine-eriksen-s%C3%B8reide>, January 9, 2014;

23 Ibid.

threats directed against NATO members, the burden of proof regarding a new CFE or other arms control treaty rests with those who believe that the bear has somehow become a dove or else hope that, to paraphrase Churchill, the bear will pause to devour others before he turns his attention to them. Likewise, suggestions of new talks for preventing incidents at sea or in the air do not appear promising because we already have such guarantees in place. The problem is not that these agreements do not work but rather that Russia in so many cases has deliberately flouted them, e.g. by flying in congested civilian air zones with transponders off and overtly threatening both European NATO members like Norway, Denmark and the UK and neutrals like Sweden and Finland. Similarly new talks on strategic stability only make sense if the two sides are able to see strategic stability in the same light which is not presently the case.²⁷

Despite Moscow's professed interest in new arms control treaties, its armaments plan is not the program of a state seeking disarmament. Furthermore Moscow has long sought and is continuing to test weapons whose explicit purpose is to evade U.S. missile defenses which it continues to regard, in defiance of all science and innumerable American and Western briefings, as a major threat to its second-strike capability. In September 2017 Moscow tested both the road-mobile and silo-based versions of the RS-24 Yars solid-fuel ICBM in conjunction with the Zapad-2017 exercises, using "experimental warheads."²⁸ In addition, Russia has recently announced that it will soon test a new generation of ICBMs that 'can beat US defense systems' and hold the US and Europe at risk. The new Sarmat, or Satan-2, RS-28 ICBM can allegedly destroy an area the size of Texas or France, evade missile defenses and do so using hypersonic MIRVs (Multiple Independent Reentry Vehicles) that are now permitted under the New START treaty. The hypersonic missiles that allegedly can be fitted to

27 Roberts, pp.121-128

28 Dave Majumdar, "Russia's Just Tested Its New ICBM Armed With "Experimental Warheads", www.nationalinterest.org, September 23, 2017

this system are currently in development under the title Project 4202, a label that evidently refers to the hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV) the Yu-71.²⁹ Russian sources claim an 11,000Km range and up to 15 warheads for this weapon, a yield of up to 760 kilotons and the building of launch silos that could withstand seven nuclear strikes.³⁰

In addition, in October 2017 Putin took the unusual step of publicly announcing his personal participation in a nuclear exercise using all three elements of Russia's nuclear triad and some of the newest models of Russian air, land and sea-launched nuclear weapons.³¹ Putin also highlighted Russia's ongoing militarization by announcing that to date over 2500 military exercises had occurred in 2017.³² Moreover, given current procurement plans and the counting rules under the New START Treaty Russia could actually increase its nuclear weapons and still be in compliance with that treaty.³³ Finally, all conventional plans and exercises have an accompanying nuclear component, so nuclear options are integrated into operational plans and rehearsed beforehand. Submarine-based nuclear strikes from the Arctic accompanied the recent Zapad 2017 exercises as did much less heralded nuclear exercises in Novosibirsk involving some of the newest nuclear

29 Franz-Stefan Gady, "Russia To Test Deadliest Nuke Twice Before Year's End," www.thediplomat.com, October 25, 2017

30 Ibid; Jon Sharman, "Russia to Test New Generation Of Intercontinental Missile That Can Beat US Defense Systems," www.independent.co.uk, October 24, 2017

31 "Vladimir Putin Took Part In Strategic Nuclear Forces' Training," <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55929>, October 27, 2017; Franz-Stefan Gady, "Russia Test Fires 4 Intercontinental-Range Ballistic Missiles," www.thediplomat.com, October 27, 2017

32 "Presentation Of Officers Appointed To Senior Command Posts," <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55923>, October 27, 2017

33 Ibidem

weapons in Moscow's arsenal.³⁴ And this followed a pattern of coinciding nuclear and conventional exercises for Zapad 2009 and 2013.³⁵

The burden of proof on the sincerity of dedication to arms control rests not with the West but with Russia. Only when Russia realizes that the West is not at war with it and that it is embarked upon a dangerous and futile quest for victory in that war will we see a real return to engagement. Putin's regime clings to this belief in war that has now become its *raison d'être* and domestic justification for staying in power, so on what basis can we expect to see serious progress on arms control in Russia? Moscow will have to provide an answer to this question, Europe or Washington cannot provide it for the Kremlin.

34 Michael Kofman, "Zapad 2017: Beyond the Hype, Important Lessons for the US and NATO," <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/zapad-2017-beyond-the-hype-important-lessons-for-the-us-and-nato/>, October 27, 2017; <https://www.diplomaatia.ee/en/article/zapad-2017-what-did-these-military-exercises-reveal/>; Roger McDermott, "Zapad 2017 and the Initial Period Of War," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, September 20, 2017, www.jamestown.org; Pavel K. Baev, "Military and Nuclearization," *The Key Features Of the Russian Arctic*, https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2017/11/01/militarization_and_nuclearization_the_key_features_of_the_russian_arctic_112562.html, November 1, 2017; <https://forwardobserver.com/2017/10/recent-russian-nuclear-forces-exercises-larger-than-first-believed/>; Lukas Andriukaitis, #Military Matters: Russia's Big Guns On the Move: Analyzing Russia's Strategic Missile Forces In Novosibirsk Oblast," www.medium.com, October 24, 2017

35 Stephen Blank, "What Do the Zapad-2013 Exercises Reveal?" Liudas Zdanavicius and Matthew Cezkaj Eds., *Russia's 2013 Zapad Military Exercise: Lessons For Baltic Regional Security*, Washington, D.C.: Jamestown Foundation, 2015, pp. 8-13