

TRANSCENDING MUTUAL DETERRENCE IN THE U.S.-RUSSIAN RELATIONSHIP



BELFER CENTER
for Science and International Affairs



**INSTITUTE FOR U.S. AND
CANADIAN STUDIES**

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“Grizzly and Bald Eagle”
Cover photo by Kennan Ward.
Alaska, United States, 2006

Design and Layout by Andrew Facini

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About Transcending Mutual Deterrence in the U.S.-Russian Relationship

“**Transcending Mutual Deterrence in the U.S.-Russian Relationship**” is a collaborative project of Harvard University’s Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and Institute for U.S. and Canadian Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

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I. Introduction

Even as this paper was being written and edited, U.S.-Russian relations have warmed and chilled. Today, as we are about to go to press, marks a particularly chilly period in recent history, with the cancellation of a planned Moscow Summit in September 2013. To some, this cold spell might signal an inapt moment to consider issues related to transcending mutual deterrence. Such a view would overlook the aims of the paper, which attempts to assess the central and enduring interests of the United States and Russia, the extent to which they coincide or conflict, and whether or not in light of these interests mutual deterrence should remain a fundamental feature of the relationship. The analysis and recommendations offered below are based on a long-term view. The inevitable and transitory changes in the U.S.-Russian relationship cannot gainsay them. Indeed, at moments of temporary frustration or elation it is most important to think strategically about central and enduring national interests and how best to secure them.

II. U.S.-Russian Nuclear Deterrence Today

II.1. The Persistence of Deterrence

Russia and the United States ceased being mortal enemies with the end of the Soviet Union in December, 1991. Yet a relationship based on the constant threat of mutual nuclear annihilation persists. The U.S. 2010 *Nuclear Posture Review Report* declares that “Russia’s nuclear force will remain a significant factor in determining how much and how fast we are prepared to reduce U.S. [nuclear] forces.”¹ Russian President Vladimir Putin’s 2012 pre-election statement made clear that he views a strong Russian nuclear force as necessary primarily to deter the United States.² It is not immediately clear why both countries continue to fixate on the other side’s nuclear forces. The historical causes of war—and hence a perceived need to deter it—have generally fallen into three broad categories: territorial disputes; competition for resources; and, conflicting ideologies (including religion). Each of these causes of conflict is absent in the contemporary U.S.-Russian relationship.

Russia and the United States have no common land border and no territorial claims on each other. Although U.S. allies Japan and Estonia have territorial disputes with Russia, neither is likely to result in conflict. While Russia and Georgia’s 2008 conflict further soured relations between Washington and Moscow, it is unimaginable that nuclear deterrence between the United States and Russia would be proportionate to the stakes involved (as great as they might be for the people of the region).³

¹ U.S. Department of Defense, “Nuclear Posture Review Report,” April 2010, p.30. Available at <http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20nuclear%20posture%20review%20report.pdf>.

² “Strong Russian Nuclear Force Deters Conflict, Putin Says,” *Global Security Newswire*, February 27, 2012.

³ Tatyana Parkhalina “Rossiya-NATO cherez god posle Lissabona: nadezhdy i razocharovaniya (NATO and Russia one year after Lisbon: hopes and disappointments),” *European Security*, No. 26 (42), 2012.

The interests of the two countries in natural resources are also largely noncompetitive. In general terms, Russia is a seller and the United States is a buyer of natural resources. Any Russian contribution to world energy markets, for example, leads to lower prices, so the United States should favor Moscow's resource development. Yet mistrust over natural resources remains. In 2007, President Putin commented that a U.S. desire for Russia's natural resources necessitated nuclear modernization. It is inconceivable that war with Russia could yield cheaper access to natural resources than simply buying them. Moreover, the strategic and economic value of Russia's natural gas—its most abundant natural resource—has recently abated since the United States discovered how to exploit vast deposits of shale gas, which may soon turn the United States into a natural gas exporter, like Russia.⁴

Conflict over ideology once dominated the U.S.-Soviet relationship. Today, much has changed. Soviet Communism no longer drives Russian policy. While Russia and the United States often disagree on matters of foreign policy, the depth and consequence of those disagreements is far less profound than during the Cold War. Neither Russia nor the United States is dominated by an ideology seeking the destruction of the other. To be sure, Russia and the United States occupy differing regions in indices of economic or political freedom, but such differences are not an inherent cause for a deterrence-dominated relationship.⁵

Moreover, there are broad areas of common U.S.-Russian interest and agreement. Both countries have an interest in expanded trade, and worked together to bring about Russia's entry into the World Trade Organization. The United States and Russia have worked well together to enhance nuclear security and prevent nuclear terrorism. Both countries favor a stable outcome in Afghanistan that will leave a government in Kabul willing and able to suppress al-Qaeda and the Taliban, and have cooperated to achieve that end. The two countries have cooperated extensively in the exploration of space, to both nations' benefit; indeed, the United States is now dependent on Russia for lifting astronauts into space. Moscow and Washington both seek to reduce international drug trafficking.

Yet mutual deterrence persists today because the scar tissue of the Cold War—suspicion and mistrust—remains unhealed, the institutional momentum of the nuclear weapons establishments on both sides is substantial, and the bilateral relationship is complicated by inertia and risk aversion with respect to new doctrines and concepts for security.⁶

The continuation of a relationship based in part on both countries maintaining a nuclear threat to destroy the other is paradoxical in today's world. The immediate cause of the creation of these nuclear forces no longer obtains. Yet the framework of mutual deterrence continues to dominate the U.S.-Russian relationship.⁷

⁴ Charles Ebinger, Kevin Massy, and Govinda Avasarala, *Liquid Markets: Assessing the Case for U.S. Exports of Liquefied Natural Gas*, (Washington: Brookings Institution, May 2012), p. 1.

⁵ Admittedly, a single conflict may result from all of these causes; for example, some conflicts characterized as ethnic disputes have been fueled by competition over ideology, resources, and territory.

⁶ Sergei Rogov, "Perezagruzka v otnosheniyakh mezhdru Rossiyei i SSHA prodolzhayetsya (The reset in relations between Russia and the United States continues)," *Nezavisimoye Voynnoye Obozrenie*, September 25, 2009.

⁷ Pavel Zolotarev, "Vozmozhnyi oblik 'novykh ramok' strategicheskikh otnosheniy Rossii i SSHA (Possible appearance of 'the new framework' of strategic relations between Russia and the United States)," Report No. 1 Representation office of the Center for Defense Information in Russia, Moscow 2002.

Deepening this paradoxical situation, the conventional military balance between the two countries is much more stable than it was during the Cold War. The forces of the Warsaw Pact and NATO were once positioned, trained, and equipped to conduct large-scale warfare against one another on short notice; this is no longer the case. Neither NATO nor Russia now has the ability to project power and hold territory on the European continent over time in the face of determined opposition.

The United States, with 75 percent of NATO's defense spending,⁸ recently ended 69 years of basing main battle tanks in Europe, removing its last armored formations in March 2013.⁹ While U.S. forces positioned elsewhere could theoretically be returned to Europe, Washington has shown little inclination to do so, NATO allies have evinced no interest in supporting such a move, and the Pentagon has instead announced a "pivot toward Asia." Britain plans to reduce its army by 20 percent, to a level of 80,000 uniformed personnel,¹⁰ which is not much larger than the Moscow police force. The Royal Navy has 28 admirals, but only 22 major vessels.¹¹ Berlin plans to cut German defense spending by 25 percent over the next four years.¹² French President François Hollande has promised to shift from defense to civilian priorities. Last year, *Le Monde* ran a front page headline claiming "France no longer has the military means to match its political ambitions," and a French admiral faced rebuke for warning that the country's only aircraft carrier would be out of service for all of 2012 if it did not curtail operations in Libya and steam home for maintenance.¹³ While Turkey and Greece own large numbers of tanks, these are mostly obsolescent, with a majority dating from the 1960s—and their existence is surely driven primarily by missions other than an assault on Russia or its allies. NATO is not an alliance poised or prepared to conduct a major ground assault in Europe.

Similarly, Russia's ability to project power to the West is much diminished since the height of the Cold War. The Group of Soviet Forces in Germany once comprised 24 divisions, with over 4,000 tanks. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the International Institute of Strategic Studies estimate Russia's defense budget to be in the region of \$60 billion, about 3.5 percent of GDP, and a small fraction of the U.S. defense budget.¹⁴ While Russia maintains a military presence in some of the former Soviet states, not all of them are capable of force projection. Some are tasked with maintaining and operating ballistic-missile early-warning radars, and others lack airlift capabilities.

⁸ Judy Dempsey, "NATO's Noble Words Go for Naught," *The International Herald Tribune*, November 8, 2011. Also available at: www.nytimes.com/2011/11/08/world/europe/08iht-letter08.html.

⁹ John Vandiver, "U.S. Army's Last Tanks Depart from Germany," *Stars and Stripes*, April 4, 2013.

¹⁰ James Blitz, "British Army Gears Up for Painful Challenge," *Financial Times*, July 6, 2012. As of July 7, 2012 available at: <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/9f374a72-c77b-11e1-85fc-00144feab49a.html#axzz1zsUIw5xx>

¹¹ Neil Tweedie and Thomas Harding, "Diamond Jubilee: The Queen No Longer Rules the Waves," *The Telegraph*, June 1, 2012. As of July 7, 2012 available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/the_queens_diamond_jubilee/9305678/Diamond-Jubilee-The-Queen-no-longer-rules-the-waves.html.

¹² F. Stephen Larrabee and Peter A. Wilson, "NATO's Shrinking Resources," *The International Herald Tribune*, May 16, 2012. As of July 7, 2012 available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/17/opinion/natos-shrinking-resources.html>.

¹³ Eleanor Beardsley, "Is the French Military Stretched Too Thin?" NPR, August 2, 2011. As of July 7, 2012, available at: <http://www.npr.org/2011/08/02/138892701/some-worry-french-military-stretched-too-thin>

¹⁴ Jim Nichol, "Russian Military Reform and Defense Policy," (Washington: Congressional Research Service, August 24, 2011), p. 30.

Russia achieved its aims relatively quickly in the August 2008 war with Georgia, but that conflict also exposed weaknesses which were debated openly in Moscow, including obsolescent weapons and materiel, failures in command and control structures and coordination between services, and breakdowns in intelligence.¹⁵ All of these would have been far more serious against a more capable opponent than the Georgian military. The failure to suppress Georgia's modest air defenses—resulting in the downing of a Tu-22M3 bomber—and the inability to integrate air and land combat operations would have been a major problem had Russian forces faced a more equal opponent.

Thus, while Russia has the capability to project power against weak neighbors, it does not pose a serious conventional threat to NATO, just as NATO today does not pose a serious conventional threat to Russia.¹⁶

III. Why Deterrence Persists

So what causes the persistence of deterrence? As to be expected in the complex relations between major states, the roots are likely both historical and multifaceted.

III.1. Differences on Regional and International Issues

First, there remain real differences in perspective and interests between the United States and Russia. These differences have mainly to do with regions near Russia, and with whether and how the international community should meet challenges posed by events in states such as Libya, Syria, and Iran. Moscow has asserted, and Washington has rejected, a claim of a privileged Russian sphere of influence on regional issues.¹⁷ Russia's goal of surrounding itself with friendly, partly dominated states would appear to conflict with U.S. policies promoting democracy, sovereignty, and independence in those states. Russia sees "encirclement," and the United States is haunted by the "ghost of Yalta," seeing a creeping reestablishment of a Russian empire.¹⁸

These disagreements began soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with a wide range of issues in the relationships between Russia and its former Soviet neighbors. Russia undertook what it saw as peacekeeping operations in conflict zones in the former Soviet Union, acting either by itself or through the mechanism of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).¹⁹ The United States saw some of Moscow's actions as efforts to dominate its sovereign neighbors,

¹⁵ Roger N. McDermott, "Russia's Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgian War," *Parameters*, Spring 2009, p. 67, and Simon Saradzhyan, "Conflict Exposes Obsolete Hardware," *The Moscow Times*, 17 August 2008.

¹⁶ Yuri Fyodorov, "Eta gonka ne dlya nas (This race is not for us)," *Ogonek*, No. 30, 2011.

¹⁷ Andrew Kramer, "Russia Claims Its Sphere of Influence in the World," *New York Times*, September 1, 2008, p. A6. Helena Cooper and Nicholas Kulish, "U.S. Rejects 'Sphere of Influence' for Russia," *New York Times*, February 2, 2009 p. A7.

¹⁸ Samuel Charap and Mikhail Troitskiy, "U.S.-Russia Relations in Post-Soviet Eurasia: Transcending the Zero-Sum Game," (Cambridge, Mass.: Working Group on the Future of U.S.-Russia Relations, 2011), pp. 13-14.

¹⁹ Yuri Morozov, "Voyenno-politicheskiye aspekty natsionalnykh interesov SSHA v Arktike i vyzovy regionalnoy stabilnosti (Political and military aspects of U.S. national interests in the Arctic and challenges to regional stability)," *Rossiia i Amerika v XXI veke*, No 3, 2010.

which Washington would neither condone nor legitimize. Rather, the United States supported the principles of democracy and self-determination.

Russia viewed U.S. policy as an effort to encourage anti-Russian forces (and promote “color revolutions” against pro-Russian governments) on Russia’s borders. Until today, Russian analysts argue that Moscow has stronger interests in the peaceful development of the neighboring states and their territorial integrity than any other country does, and that the economic development of these states requires stronger integration with Russia, the largest economy in the region. Therefore, most Russian experts and politicians believe the refusal by the United States to recognize privileged rights of Russia to preserve its influence in the former Soviet Union is unjustified and contrary to both Russian interests and the long-term interests of Russia’s neighbors.

Yet these conflicts are not insoluble. While acknowledging that differences over regional issues represent a “landmine” that could “detonate,” a recent U.S.-Russian study of the particulars rejects the assumption that differing interests are “fundamental and therefore irreconcilable.” Rather, the authors conclude that “the severity of this issue in the bilateral relationship cannot be accounted for by immutable factors inherent to either the two countries or the international system.”²⁰

It should also be noted that both countries share an overarching interest in maintaining overall stability in post-Soviet space, and in ensuring that none of the nations in this neighborhood become failed states, with their potential for humanitarian catastrophes, refugee flows, and terrorism.

More importantly, differences over policies regarding Eurasia, while real and often significant, do not affect national survival for either the United States or Russia, and hence are of an entirely different character than the differences that drove the Cold War and led to the state of mutual nuclear deterrence.

The second set of recurring differences between the United States and Russia has to do with the appropriate international response to human rights and nonproliferation concerns raised by crises in states. The United States has seen Russia as attempting to slow, prevent, or water down international action to address these crises; Russia has seen the United States as seeking to use its power to sanction or overthrow foreign governments and extend its influence, often at the expense of Russian allies and friends. These issues are of substantial consequence. For example, whether or not Iran achieves a nuclear weapons capability will have a deep effect on U.S., Russian, and international security. But it is impossible to imagine these issues rising to a level that would call U.S. and Russian nuclear forces into play.

Many Russian experts, however, see a broader international clash with the United States that justifies a continued reliance on nuclear deterrence. They believe that without the check provided by Russia’s nuclear forces, the United States would exploit its military and economic power to dominate world affairs and achieve a hegemony that would undermine Russia’s interests. Some analysts have even expressed concern that a U.S.-led military intervention of the kind seen in Iraq or Libya could pose a threat to Russia itself. This belief in a broader international clash is based on a theoretical premise, but also emerges in response to certain U.S. actions and policies

²⁰ Charap and Troitskiy, “U.S.-Russia Relations in Post-Soviet Eurasia.”

since 1991.

The Russian theoretical premise is that the United States is the sole superpower that dominates the international scene economically and militarily, and that U.S. policy is largely driven by an effort to maintain this position. That hegemonic goal, these analysts argue, can be achieved only through securing and expanding the zone of influence, limiting the development of other countries that are potential rivals, and promoting regime change in countries with policies of America.

Russians cite U.S. policies as evidence for this view. For instance, the United States began the process of NATO enlargement to the East after the withdrawal of Russian troops from Eastern Europe and the initiation of the Partnership for Peace (PfP). Contrary to Moscow's understanding of an oral commitment not to expand NATO's borders towards Russia, the alliance accepted not only all the countries of Eastern Europe, but also some of the states that used to be republics in USSR. Ukraine and Georgia had been actively engaged in this process prior to August 2008, although prospects for their accession to NATO remain unclear. Some in Russia believe the United States acted as a winner of the Cold War, hastily grabbing the space that had become free of Soviet influence, displacing Russia even though the latter chose a path of democratic development. More recently some Russian analysts see the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the overthrow of the Qaddafi government in Libya as further evidence of a U.S. effort to bolster its power and influence throughout the world.

Although these Russian concerns are sincere, they need to be put in perspective. Former U.S. Senator Bill Bradley has recounted what he believes to be the origins of the misunderstanding between U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.²¹ After speaking with some of those involved, he argues that Baker committed not to move NATO's forces to eastern Germany, if reunification were permitted, but said nothing about other states.²² Gorbachev himself acknowledged that in May 1990, when he agreed to a unified Germany joining NATO, no one contemplated the issue of other former Soviet Bloc states. According to Gorbachev, "merely the notion that NATO might expand to include the countries in this alliance sounded completely absurd at the time."²³ When the deal was reached, neither the Soviet Union nor the Warsaw Pact had yet dissolved. The United States, in forming its policy toward Russia, must take into account Moscow's perspective on NATO enlargement. At the same time, Moscow must acknowledge that NATO is vastly different in character and capabilities than it was in 1990, and that enlargement poses no serious military threat to Russian territory.

While these issues are important, and will not disappear tomorrow, the scale of the differences between the United States and Russia certainly do not rise to the importance of Cold War divisions. Overall, there is no doubt that the security threats Russia and the United States face – only a few of which arise from the policies of the other – will require both countries to maintain

²¹ Bill Bradley, "A Diplomatic Mystery," *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2009.

²² According to Russian accounts of the negotiations on unification of Germany, then West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl did tell Gorbachev that NATO should not expand. "NATO must not expand the sphere of its activity," Kohl told Gorbachev on February 10, 1990. "From M.S. Gorbachev's one-on-one conversation with H. Kohl on February 10, 1999" in "Sbornik Dokumentov: 1986-1991. Mikhail Gorbachev i germanskiy vopros (Collection of documents: 1986-1991. Mikhail Gorbachev and the German Question)," *Ves Mir*, Russia, 2006, page 339.

²³ Uwe Klusmann, Mattias Schepp, and Klaus Wiegrefe, "NATO's Eastward Expansion: Did the West Break Its Promise to Moscow?" *Der Spiegel*, November 26, 2009.

capable conventional military forces for many years to come. But there is little realistic prospect that either country's conventional forces could pose a serious threat to the territory of the other. Deterrence of any U.S. threat to Russia's interests, or any Russian threat to U.S. interests, does not need to be nuclear.

III.2. Risk Aversion and Institutional Momentum

A second broad set of reasons for the persistence of deterrence is risk aversion and institutional momentum. According to the logic of risk aversion, deterrence kept the peace through dark days of the Cold War. Given the enormity of the stakes, and uncertainties in how the U.S.-Russian relationship will evolve (who in 1986 would have predicted where relations would be in 1991?) adherence to the status quo can seem rational and prudent. Moreover, risk aversion is reinforced by the professional instincts and operating habits of military planners, who are paid to prepare for the worst. For decades, Americans and Russians have eyed each other warily from missile silos, submarine decks, and ballistic missile early warning radar control rooms. Russia and the United States both maintain awesome nuclear weapons capabilities, even after very substantial reductions in both states' arsenals. It is not illogical to focus national security policy on one's strongest potential adversary.

Moreover, the institutions established to build and maintain the nuclear arsenals of the Cold War carry a substantial momentum of their own. In both the United States and Russia, there are large laboratories, factories, and military units involving tens or hundreds of thousands of people and billions or tens of billions of dollars every year devoted to building, operating, and maintaining nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them. These organizations have their own interests and preferences, their own standard operating procedures, and provide a large portion of the expertise on which nuclear policy decisions are based. Like a supertanker, it takes time to change their course.

At the same time, it is crucial to understand the large risks of failing to change. Humans and the systems they create are, by their nature, fallible. To maintain a posture expressly poised to launch thousands of nuclear weapons at one another, potentially ending hundreds of millions of lives, when there is no underlying conflict to justify it, is a risk that is profoundly disproportionate to the issues at stake.

IV. Fostering Evolution beyond Deterrence

The current U.S.-Russian relationship of mutual nuclear deterrence is path-dependent. Were it not for the very significant scars of the Cold War, it is unlikely that either country would choose the relationship that now exists.²⁴ Those scars cannot be wished away. Still, it is possible to recognize that the current deterrent relationship is disproportionate to the differences that remain between the two countries, and to imagine ways to move toward a different strategic relationship and a different strategic posture.

The simple fact of the ability to inflict massive damage on another country is not sufficient to require mutual deterrence. The United States and France have the ability to destroy each other with nuclear weapons, but neither worries much about that fact, or bases its defense planning on it. While they are allies, with many shared values and objectives, they do not always agree, and some of the differences have been sharp. Nonetheless, the use or even brandishing of nuclear weapons between the two countries would be unthinkable because such action would be entirely disproportionate to the stakes of any disagreements. What actions might push the U.S.-Russian relationship toward such a state?

Interestingly, some of the most powerful means to change perceptions of the nature of the relationship lie outside the strategic realm. Better political and economic cooperation, as well as greater transparency in military plans and doctrine, are necessary to move beyond a relationship built on mutual nuclear deterrence. At the same time, the two sides should contemplate how best to move to more stable nuclear postures. Increased non-strategic cooperation and decreased nuclear threats can each contribute to each other in a cycle of tension reduction, just as ideological hostility and burgeoning nuclear arsenals combined to increase tension during the Cold War. We begin with recommendations focused on political, economic, and intelligence cooperation, and then turn to recommendations regarding nuclear postures and missile defenses.

IV.1. Expanded Cooperation beyond Nuclear Sphere

IV.1.A. Better Political Coordination

The United States and Russia should expand their efforts to understand each other's political perspectives, to work together where their interests coincide, and to find ways to bridge differences where their interests conflict.

In particular, mechanisms for regular high-level meetings, overseeing a broad range of joint

²⁴ An interesting thought experiment would be to imagine the U.S.-Russian relationship had Soviet Communism not prevailed in the Russian Revolution. It is very likely that there would be little clash of interests, and certainly less conflict. The United States is a maritime power; Russia is a continental power. As noted earlier, the United States is mostly a buyer of natural resources, while Russia is mostly a seller. Neither state has core security interests in the other's border regions.

cooperation, can drive bureaucracies to produce deliverables on particular schedules and build personal relationships and habits of cooperation among senior officials. (A notable example of success under such a system was joint work to improve the physical security of Russian nuclear weapons and material, which entailed personal accountability, metrics, and deadlines.) The U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission established by Presidents Obama and Medvedev should be continued, and the two sides should consider returning to the 1990s practice of twice-yearly meetings of the U.S. Vice President and the Russian Prime Minister to oversee the work of such a commission and drive each group within it to produce real cooperative results.

IV.1.B. Better Economic Integration

The United States and Russia should expand their mutual trade and economic cooperation.

Russians well remember examples of the effect such cooperation can have. Incompatible ideology in the 1930's did not prevent economic cooperation between the United States and Soviet Russia. It was in part thanks to this cooperation that the Soviet Union was able to carry out the policy of industrialization. The Dnieper Hydroelectric Station in Ukraine, the Lenin Automobile Plant in Moscow, the Gorky Automobile Plant in modern Nizhni Novgorod, the Stalingrad Tractor Factory and other tractor factories, and the Magnitogorsk Metallurgical Combine were all built with U.S. support. At the beginning of World War II, the United States passed the Lend-Lease Act in March 1941 that by November opened the flow of aid to the Soviet Union. The law was formally titled "An Act to Further Promote the Defense of the United States" and it enabled the United States government to defend its interests through helping an ideological rival to advance the common goal of defeating Nazi Germany.

Today, by contrast, trade between the United States and Russia is minuscule. That trade represented only about a third of 1 percent of U.S. exports and a little over 1 percent of U.S. imports in 2011. As of that year Russia was the world's seventh-largest economy, but it was America's 37th largest export market.²⁵ (See the Appendix for a statistical overview of the bilateral relationship.) The percentages grow on the Russian side because of its smaller economy, but not enough to make the United States a significant trading partner.

Ask an American if they own a Korean (Samsung), German (Volkswagen), French (Bic), or even Finnish (Nokia) product, and the answer will probably be "yes." Few Americans can name a Russian product they own, or have even heard of. While Russians are more familiar with U.S. products, they do not buy many; the trade deficit runs four to one in favor of Russian exports. The United States accounted for less than four percent of Russia's foreign trade in 2011.²⁶ Put simply, the United States and Russia do not have much stake in each other's economic success.

What can be done to foster more economic cooperation? Barriers to trade on both sides need to be lifted. As a result of both Russian and U.S. efforts, in mid-2012 Russia became the newest member of the World Trade Organization. But in lifting the Cold-War-era Jackson-Vanik

²⁵ Remarks by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns, cited in "Strengthening Economic Ties with Russia," Voice of America, October 8, 2011.

²⁶ Russia's imports and exports in January-December 2011, Federal Customs Service, February 6, 2011. Available at http://www.customs.ru/index2.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15581&Itemid=1981

restrictions, the U.S. Congress approved the Magnitsky Act, intended to penalize Russian officials who the United States believes have participated in human rights violations. Russia has reacted angrily. The Russian parliament passed a law that not only penalizes U.S. officials, but also bans adoptions of Russian orphans by American citizens. If these and other obstacles can be overcome, U.S. economists have estimated that exports of American merchandise and services to Russia could double.²⁷

Improving human rights is a laudable goal, and the United States should speak out for doing so whenever possible. Increased trade and interaction, however, can also be a means to press for better human rights. Moreover, Russia will need to recognize that absent a commitment to protect private property and rule of law, Western investment will remain stunted, and prospects for moving beyond a hydrocarbon economy dim. Removal of trade restrictions by the United States, and increased respect for rule of law by Russia are the only viable means for increased economic interaction, and would also likely lead to improvements in the human rights situation.

Economic integration does not preclude the possibility of conflict (as World War I clearly demonstrated), but it tends to balance the considerations, and put into perspective inevitable differences that arise. Currently, between the United States and Russia, the economic side of the scale is virtually empty, magnifying the importance of the differences that exist between the two nations in other realms.

In the era of globalization, the role of economic relations has changed. Common interests in a healthy and growing world economy supersede differences in economic systems. Transnational corporations in the manufacturing and financial sectors have linked most of the countries in the world with economic ties. Any military conflict disrupts these links and causes significant economic damage. In fact, maintaining the stability of the world economy has become a constraining factor in military conflicts. Economic ties between Russia and the European Union are also evolving in a positive direction. That economic foundation makes a military conflict between NATO and Russia virtually unthinkable.

If the United States were to invest in Russia's efforts to diversify its economy away from oil and gas, answering Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's call for economic modernization alliances with Western countries, then American businesses could participate in the following areas that the Russian government believes to be most promising for development: nanotechnology, pharmaceuticals, nuclear power, biotechnology, and energy conservation. All of these sectors would benefit from cooperation with the United States. Sales of American equipment and technologies to Russian companies operating in these sectors could total in the billions of dollars. In the area of nuclear power in particular, expanded U.S.-Russian cooperation could offer opportunities for substantial profits for both countries, while strengthening safety, security, and nonproliferation goals.²⁸

²⁷ U.S. merchandise exports to Russia could double, following Russia's accession to WTO from \$9 billion from in 2008 to \$19 billion. U.S. service exports are likely to increase at least as fast as merchandise trade. Gary Clyde Hufbauer, "The Impact of Russia PNTR and WTO Accession on the United States," presentation at conference "The Russian Economy and US-Russia Relations" at Peterson Institute on April 15, 2011.

²⁸ Matthew Bunn et al., *Promoting Safe, Secure, and Peaceful Growth of Nuclear Energy: Next Steps for Russia and the United States* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School,

IV.1.C. Intelligence Cooperation on Joint Challenges

One area that could significantly improve the overall relationship between the United States and Russia is expanded and deepened intelligence cooperation. The U.S. and Russian intelligence services have spent decades working against each other. But the United States and Russia have common interests in coping with many of our countries' greatest security challenges, from nuclear proliferation to terrorism to the drug trade to failing states. The information available to U.S. intelligence services and Russian intelligence services, if combined at critical points, could make a major difference in addressing these issues. As we write, for example, both the United States and Russia have a critical interest in the control of Syria's chemical weapons, and preventing radical jihadists from seizing control of major portions of Syrian territory – both topics where intelligence collection and operations could make a major difference – despite their differences over how the international community should respond to the Syrian crisis.

IV.2. Changes in Nuclear Postures and Defenses

IV.2.A. Greater Transparency

As an early and low-risk step, the United States and Russia should make their nuclear forces and stockpiles more transparent to each other. Greater transparency in both current deployments and nuclear planning would help to build mutual trust and move both sides closer to a new kind of relationship.

While New START advanced bilateral arms control, there are limits to the transparency required under the treaty. Moscow and Washington should disclose more data in the next round of nuclear arms control, including exchanges of data on non-strategic nuclear weapons.

The United States and Russia should finally establish the Joint Data Exchange Center (JDEC), which the U.S. and Russian presidents agreed to set up more than a decade ago.²⁹ Even if the center's functions were limited to what was originally agreed, focused on exchanging notifications of launches and arms control data, it would still make a very formidable contribution to building trust between the United States and Russia. Further development of the Joint Data Exchange Center – including real-time exchange of early warning information from each country's sensors – would be a major step toward ending misunderstandings in this sphere. In this regard, it is worth mentioning President Putin's 2007 proposals to open data exchange centers in Moscow and Brussels.³⁰ The fact that the original U.S.-Russian agreement provided for participation of

and Russian Research Center "Kurchatov Institute," October, 2010); <http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/20476/>.

²⁹ Pavel Zolotarev, "Protivoraketnaya oborona: istoriya i perspektivy (Missile defense: history and prospects)," *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 3, May-June 2008.

³⁰ Victor Yesin, "Action and Counteraction," *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 1 January-March 2009.

other countries' representatives in the work of the center was also extremely important. Implementation of that provision would be a step towards transformation of the bilateral negotiations on reductions of nuclear weapons into multilateral negotiations. Posting liaison officers to each other's strategic commands could also prove beneficial, as could joint exercises.

Despite an admirable record of disclosure to each other under arms control agreement declarations, there is still much about Russian and U.S. nuclear weaponry that remains needlessly secret. While past presidential-level agreements have called for an exchange of data on how many nuclear weapons each side possesses, such an exchange has never been accomplished (though the United States recently declassified information on the number of nuclear weapons in its stockpile). Similarly, despite agreements to buy 500 metric tons of highly enriched uranium from Russia and another agreement to each dispose of 34 metric tons of weapons grade plutonium, the United States and Russia have not exchanged declarations of their total fissile material stocks. (The United States declares these figures publicly, and just updated a report of its plutonium stocks.) Nor has either country ever verified the dismantlement of a single nuclear warhead by the other, although both countries have likely disposed of thousands of such weapons. The United States and Russia should work together to build a structure of transparency in nuclear weapon and fissile material stockpiles that helps build bilateral and international confidence and removes secrecy obstacles to joint cooperation to minimize, secure, and consolidate stocks.

The 1992 umbrella agreement on Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) expired and was replaced by an agreement providing for a more limited scope of activities within Russia, but allowing for broader joint cooperation with third countries. Russian and the United States should work together to ensure that that important improvements to nuclear security in both countries over the past two decades are sustained through effective maintenance and modernization, robust funding, and strong regulatory oversight. Moreover, drawing on their CTR experience, the two countries can facilitate improvements in nuclear security in other countries. This would both enable important work and build confidence between the United States and Russia.

The United States and Russia could also discuss their long-range deployment plans for strategic systems. This could help minimize suspicions that one or the other nation was attempting to "steal a march" in the strategic realm.

IV.2.B. Adjusting Doctrine and Training

Currently, both the United States and Russia have declared that missiles are not targeted on each other day-to-day. That is a change from Cold War practice, representing the changed nature of the relationship. Still, targets can be provided to the missiles in minutes, and doctrine and training continue to emphasize the two countries as potential adversaries. The two sides should regularly discuss their nuclear doctrines and plans. Any provision of a proposed doctrine or plan that the other side finds especially alarming should be open for discussion, clarification, and possible modification.

The two countries' militaries continue to train for a war against each other. For example, Russia routinely sends long-range bombers on training missions aimed at the United States, and repeat-

edly simulated use of nuclear weapons in a war with NATO. The United States has conducted similar missions in the past. These are powerful signals between the two militaries that they still consider each other to be adversaries and are training for the possibility that one day they may again be enemies. Both the United States and Russia should consider in their internal cost-benefit analysis of such training missions whether the experience gained is worth the friction created in the relationship—and perhaps the two militaries should discuss their thinking with one another. Moreover, civilian leaders should evaluate whether such exercises are consistent with respective national interests and policies.

More cooperative training missions should be undertaken. The U.S. and Russian militaries already carry out training exercises together, simulating counterterrorism and other scenarios in which the two militaries might need to work together. Ideally, the United States and Russia should get to the point at which such joint exercises are a more important part of any service member's training than any remaining exercises focused on the possibility of war between Russia and the United States, which would reflect the underlying relationship between the two states.

In particular, we recommend that the sides conduct joint exercises designed to prevent and respond to possible attacks by cyber-terrorist networks against nuclear command and control or early warning systems, intended to trigger nuclear conflict. The content of such exercises can be worked out by the personnel participating in the Joint Data Exchange Center.

These changes can have an effect at the human level. If soldiers, sailors, and airmen are taught by their training that Russia and the United States are enemies, it will inevitably affect their operational and policy judgments. Greater military-to-military dialogue and combined professional training and education can help to overcome bellicosity that persists in the absence of strategic logic.

IV.2.C. Missile Defense Cooperation

Currently, Moscow and Washington seem mired in disagreement over missile defenses—a disagreement that is undermining political relations and cooperation on other matters. Russia sees U.S. missile defense plans as a threat to its deterrent,³¹ and is demanding legally-binding guarantees that its missile defenses in Europe will not have the capability to target Russian nuclear forces. The United States sees its planned missile defenses as no threat to Russia's deterrent, and has offered cooperation on missile defense, but so far ruled out either sharing missile defense technology or control of the defenses. There are, however, real opportunities for more genuinely cooperative approaches to missile defense that could improve, rather than undermine, U.S.-Russian strategic cooperation. Moreover, a shift in mindset away from insistence that the sides must be granted an unfettered ability to target each other with nuclear weapons would open new zones of possible agreement.

³¹ For Russian strategists' mainstream assessment of the impact of ballistic missile defenses on strategic stability see Andrei Kokoshin, "Problemy obespecheniya strategicheskoy stabilnosti: Teoreticheskiye i prikladnyye voprosy (Problems of strategic stability: Theoretical and applied issues)," 2nd edition, Moscow, Russia, 2011, ISBN 978-5-354-01378-4.

Russia sees the missile threat from proliferating nations as limited to a small number of short and intermediate range systems. Moscow, therefore, questions the need for deployment of strategic defenses against ballistic missiles. The United States is concerned that North Korea has proven its ability to detonate a nuclear explosion and continues to expand the range and numbers of its ballistic missiles—including a recent space launch. Moreover, Iran is undertaking extensive ballistic missile work, including with North Korean cooperation.

While missile defenses will very likely remain under each state's sovereign control, the United States and Russia should reach a common understanding on cooperation to counter the real missile threats from proliferating states, based on the principles of (a) complementary operability of U.S. and Russian missile defenses to repel limited attacks by proliferating countries and (b) sharing of early warning and tracking information available to each country.

The interests of both countries would be advanced by cooperation in the following projects:

- Threat assessment. Measures to reduce the risk of use of nuclear missiles should be implemented along with the establishment of the previously mentioned data exchange center that would fuse data provided by missile warning systems. The two governments should consider steps to plan for how threats will be characterized to avoid misunderstandings or miscalculations.
- Complementary operability of national missile defense systems. It is unlikely that Russia and the United States would agree to create a joint missile defense. Such a system cannot have a “dual-key.” The level of trust between Moscow and Washington is insufficient to entrust the other side with defense against a missile attack. At the same time, we can ensure compatibility of national missile defense systems, as this would multiply the capabilities of each of the two missile defense systems. For example, on certain trajectories it may be that if NATO systems failed to intercept a missile, Russian systems could provide another opportunity, or the reverse.
- Division of responsibility. The interaction of the two missile defense systems should probably provide for division of zones of responsibilities in order to avoid “holes” in the missile defense, on the one hand, and unnecessary duplication on the other. Russia should be responsible for the missile defense of its territory, and the United States and its allies should be responsible for their defense.
- Integration. Real time interaction between assets designed to detect missiles and determine their trajectories would have the greatest effect on the bilateral cooperation. This interaction would require fusion of relevant information from the U.S. and Russian radars and sensors located at different bases. Obviously, interceptor missiles and other weapons would remain under national control. It would be necessary to promptly inform each other about use of these assets.

To implement these proposals, the sides need to institutionalize the cooperation between Russia and the U.S. and NATO on European missile defense through the conclusion of an appropriate agreement.

To get to an agreement, the following roadmap could be followed.

First, the sides could prepare a joint statement outlining the principles of cooperation on the basis of complementary Russian and U.S. missile defenses in defending against limited attacks from proliferating countries.

A U.S.-Russian political statement on missile defense could make the architecture and capabilities of the deployed missile defense dependent on real and emerging missile threats. It could also include commitments to coordinate responses to the emergence of the missile threat and to cooperate in repelling a missile attack on any of the parties. It would be important to make the political declaration open for accession by other states that might one day pursue elements of missile defense.

The declaration could also include a commitment by both sides to adjust the pace of the deployment of missile defense systems in Europe in accordance with the appearance of missile threats from third countries.³²

In addition to this cooperation, which will help to build trust, Russia should abandon its insistence that Moscow must have the ability to inflict nuclear attacks on American targets, unfettered even by limited defenses. Such a posture is more consistent with the existential competition of the Cold War than with the much-improved relationship that exists today.

IV.2.D. Changing Nuclear Postures: Reducing Dangers of Instability, Inadvertence, and False Alarm

Finally, the United States and Russia should review their nuclear postures, to reduce further the already exceedingly small probability that their arsenals might be used against one another, perhaps through human error. U.S. and Russian nuclear postures should reflect the realities of a changed political and security relationship and should promote further improvements in that relationship, ameliorating tensions and perceptions driven by the existence of thousands of nuclear weapons ready for immediate launch.

The possibility of an accidental or inadvertent launch of nuclear forces, including one based on false warning information is extremely small. Both countries have built into their strategic systems multiple, redundant controls to prevent such an occurrence. Both nations have announced that they have de-targeted missiles day-to-day. Nonetheless, there have been incidents on both sides involving mistakes or misunderstandings, which, if not corrected, could have led to dire consequences. Further action should be contemplated not because the odds of such mistakes are high, but rather because the consequences driven to their full extent would be so large. Fundamentally, it would be worthwhile for political leaders to have hours or days, rather than minutes, to make nuclear decisions that could mean life or death for millions.

³² Sergei Rogov and others, “Ten years without an agreement on missile defense. The missile defense issue in Russian-American relations,” *Spetskniga*, 2012. ISBN 978-5-91891-205-8, Russian Council on International Affairs and the Institute of US and Canadian Studies.

Earlier work has recommended further significant reductions in strategic forces, placing half of remaining weapons in storage, and ensuring that even those missiles that are still deployed could not be used for hours or days.³³ The goal is laudable—to increase decision time for leaders to improve strategic stability and prevent mistakes.

Unfortunately, if not undertaken carefully, these actions could themselves undermine strategic stability. For example, if de-alerting nuclear weapons were accomplished by removing warheads and storing them in one consolidated site, that site might make an inviting target for a disarming first strike. Hence, measures to increase decision time should be carefully designed so that they do not increase first-strike vulnerabilities or create motivations for potentially unstable races to re-alert in a moment of crisis.

These stability problems are complex and important, though stability may not be as difficult to achieve in the political environment we have described; despite their disagreements, the United States and Russia no longer have any real need to maintain a relationship based on the threat of nuclear annihilation. The solution will depend on specific operational capabilities, doctrines, and plans. Hence, military as well as political leaders must both be involved in developing and agreeing on new approaches.

The U.S. and Russian presidents should direct their military experts to develop approaches that would give each side confidence that the other side's weapons were in a posture that promotes stability, maximizes decision time, and reduces the possibility of errors, without undermining survivability or creating perverse consequences. These experts should be tasked to develop approaches that would address the criticisms of de-alerted postures that have been raised, avoiding incentives to strike de-alerted forces or to race to re-alert in the event of a crisis.³⁴

Politically, if achieved, such steps would make nuclear weapons much less relevant to the day-to-day conduct of international affairs – it would put them, in effect, in a closet, where they belong, among the things that will probably never be needed but are kept just in case.

IV.3. Expanding Circle of Stability

The United States and Russia are not alone in the world. As permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, both the United States and Russia have global responsibilities. Both countries place a high priority on the security of their allies. Other countries beyond the United States and Russia also possess nuclear weapons. Ultimately, the goal must be to build a global system that provides security for all, while relying less on nuclear weapons and posing fewer nuclear dangers.

³³ Blair, Bruce *et al.* “Smaller and Safer, A New Plan for Nuclear Postures,” *Foreign Affairs (USA)*, Vol. 89, No. 5, September/October 2010.

³⁴ For one attempt to design and assess such postures, see Blair *et al.*, “Smaller and Safer,” with its technical appendix, “One Hundred Nuclear Wars: Stable Deterrence Between the United States and Russia at Reduced Levels Nuclear Force Levels Off Alert in the Presence of Limited Missile Defenses,” http://www.globalzero.org/files/FA_appendix.pdf.

Many of the steps we have proposed above – expanded cooperation across many fronts, increased transparency, and more – should be pursued with many other countries as well, particularly the other nuclear weapon states under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This expansion of the circle of stability should be pursued in a careful, measured process, with each step adding to global security, and building the foundations for further action.

V. Conclusion

While much has changed in the nature of strategic interests and military capabilities since the end of the Cold War, the U.S.-Russian relationship remains rooted in mutual nuclear deterrence. As some of the present authors have written: “the United States and Russia remain ready to inflict apocalyptic devastation in a nuclear exchange that would cause millions of casualties and wreak unfathomable environmental ruin.”

This need not be the case. While important differences exist between the two countries regarding values, interests, and policies, these differences are disproportionate to the threat of nuclear war. Some powerful means for addressing this paradox are outside the direct realm of nuclear weapons. But shifting the U.S. and Russian nuclear postures in the direction of smaller size and greater safety can also contribute to the shift away from a reliance on threats of mutual destruction. Ultimately, to go further will require the participation of other countries. Nonetheless, the United States and Russia can set as a goal a relationship that transcends nuclear deterrence and begin to take steps to create it.

VI. Appendix: Russia and United States from Each Other's Perspective as of 2012

Category	Russia from the perspective of U.S. interests	USA from the perspective of Russian interests.
Deployed strategic nuclear weapons	No. 2 (1,537)	No. 1 (1,800).
Oil production	No. 1 (10,229 thousand barrels per day)	No. 3 (10,142 thousand barrels per day)
Natural gas production	No. 2 (22,990 billion cubic feet)	No. 1 (26,836 billion cubic feet)
GDP (dollar exchange rate)	No. 9 (\$1,857,770 million)	No. 1 (\$15,094,000 million)
GDP (PPP)	No. 6 (\$2,812,383 million, just behind Germany)	No. 1 (\$15,075 billion)
Global exports	No. 9 (\$520,900 million)	No. 2 (\$1,497,000 million)
Global imports	No. 17 (\$322,500 million)	No. 1 (\$2,236,000 million)
Bilateral trade	No. 20 on the list of U.S.' trading partners	No. 8 on the list of Russia's trading partners
Population	No. 9 (143 million)	No. 3 (314 million)
Total area	No. 1 (17,098,242 sq. km.)	No. 3 (9,826,675 sq. km.)
Life expectancy	No. 164 (66.46 years)	No. 51 (78.49 years)

