

Reducing and Regulating NSNW in Europe: The Russian Dimension and Options for Action

Dr. Nikolai Sokov
Senior Research Associate
James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies,
Monterey Institute of International Studies

May 2010



Tochka-U short-range (120 km) missile

Russia stays aloof of the NATO debate on NSNW



- Statements on/mentions of NSNW are few
- All boil down to a single point: dialogue can begin only after U.S. NSNW are withdraws from Europe.



WHY?



NSNW in nuclear strategy

Mid-1990s: proposals about enhanced reliance on NSNW in response to NATO enlargement.
Soon abandoned.

Military Doctrine (2000-2003): nuclear use in response to U.S. and NATO conventional superiority. Role assigned to *long-range (strategic and medium-range air-based) assets*

2010 Military Doctrine: Tighter criterion for employment of nuclear weapons

- 2000: “in situations critical for national security”
- 2010: when “the very existence of [Russia] is under threat.”

Bottom line: Short-range nuclear assets apparently do not have a role.



Politics of NSNW

“No more unilateral or asymmetric concessions”

No more “concessions to common sense” *perestroika*-style. This means, for NSNW:

- *Russia must not give up advantages, or trust promises. Good-will gestures will be pocketed by the West. Only capability matters and only legally binding agreements are acceptable;*
- *Western insistence that Russia reduces its NSNW or accepts transparency are attempts to deny Russia one of its few advantages;*
- *If American NSNW capability cannot be logically explained, it must be intended against Russia.*



Politics of NSNW

Inertia

The longer a position is maintained, the more difficult to change it.



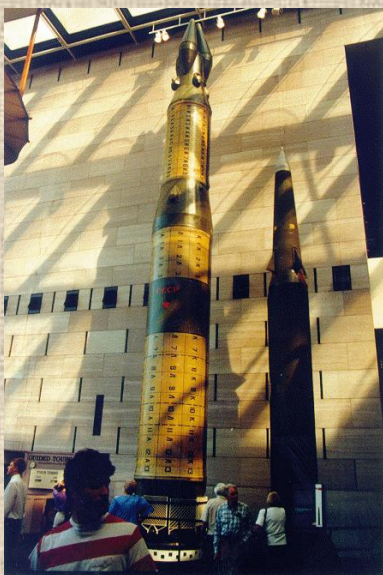
Change of “stale” position possible in two situations:

- *New leadership (like the ascension of Gorbachev) – not likely in the foreseeable future;*
- *Change of external circumstances.*

Politics of NSNW

Capabilities-based planning

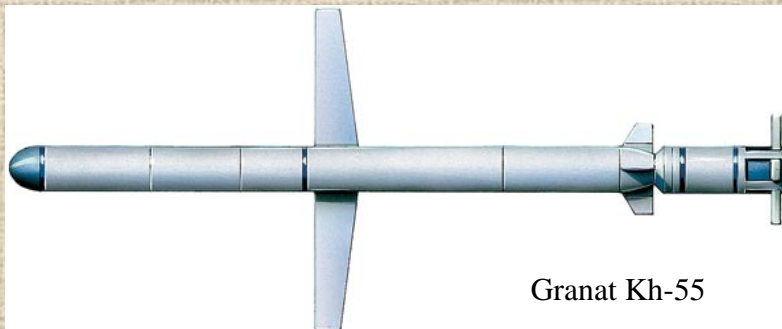
- Preserve any existing capability to guard against uncertainty and new threats that might emerge in the future
- “Others have ‘em” – same justification as for withdrawal from INF in 2005-07: other countries have and/or develop intermediate-range missiles



Politics of NSNW

Parochial group politics

- Russian Navy interested in keeping NSNW option available in case it needs to face U.S. Navy
- Everyone else is less interested or not interested at all
- No one has a motive to invest resources into changing Russian position; consequently broad psychological variables (“no unilateral concessions”) and Navy’s interest obtain.



Granat Kh-55



Project 885



Project 971

Politics of NSNW

Arms control challenges

Agreements on NSNW must address warhead stockpiles. Involves new categories of facilities: warhead storage sites, production and dismantlement plants.

Developing new position will take time and effort.

Overcoming opposition or at least skepticism (RosAtom, 12th GUMO, FSB, etc.) will require investment of political resources.



Bottom Line (2)

- Russian position appears very stable because it represents a balance of interested parties. No apparent incentive to change it.
- There seems to be no fallback position – unclear what Russia might do if U.S. NSNW are actually withdrawn.
- NATO refusal to withdraw U.S. NSNW from Europe plays into the current alignment of groups in Russia. Allows it to avoid hard choices.



Four options on the table:

- Unilateral withdrawal of U.S. NSNW from Europe to jump-start negotiations
- “Tallinn option” – current state of affairs in NATO
- Include NSNW into the next START – U.S. NPR goal
- NSNW-CFE package



(1) Unilateral withdrawal of U.S. NSNW from Europe

Russian preference (and condition).

Possible scenario for NATO:

U.S. statement – unilateral or on behalf of NATO:

- Unilateral withdrawal
- Basic information about total NSNW stocks (including in the U.S.)
- Invitation to Russia to do the same and possibly move NSNW storage sites deeper into Russia.

Challenges:

Difficult (if not impossible) to obtain NATO consensus

Outcome difficult to predict because Russia apparently does not have a position on what can/should be done following U.S. withdrawal.



(2) “Tallinn option”

Informal common denominator for NATO.

Notional contents:

- None or very modest (probably asymmetric) reductions.
- Limited transparency of NSNW arsenals
- Russian NSNW moved away from NATO.

Challenges:

Russia will likely refuse and insist on traditional condition: withdrawal of all U.S. NSNW from Europe.

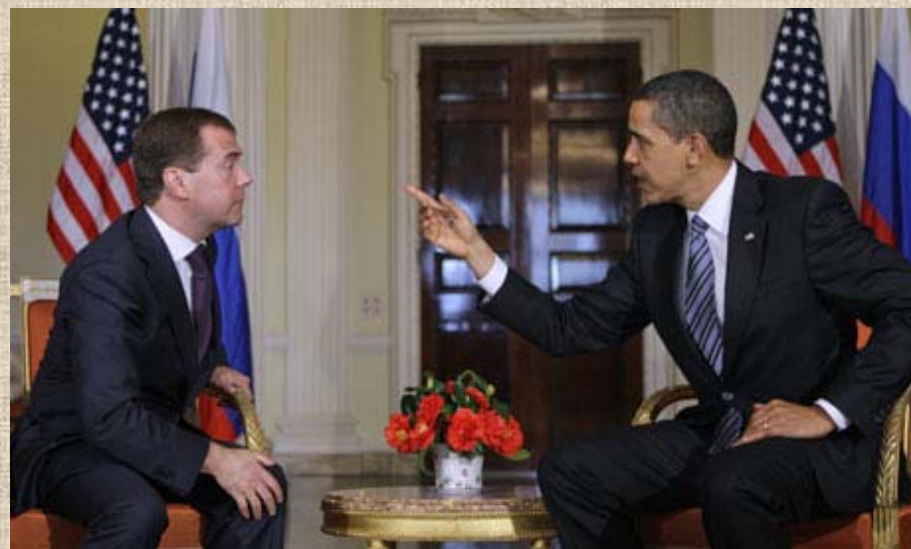
Russia will likely reject asymmetric reductions.



(3) Include NSNW into next START

Possible key elements:

- Next START will address warhead stockpiles (both strategic and NSNW) instead of delivery vehicles
- Transparency, verification and reductions will include both classes of nuclear weapons.
- Negotiations will take time and effort (but New START provides enough time for negotiations).



(3) Include NSNW into next START

Challenges:

- Establishing aggregate limit will be difficult because Russia will want rough equality in strategic warheads and (smaller?) superiority in NSNW (can be solved through unequal limits on non-deployed warheads?)
- At least Russia (possibly U.S., too) will want to preserve some SLCM warheads – possible revision of PNIs.
- Russia will still insist on complete withdrawal of U.S. NSNW from Europe.
- Verification of stockpiles will be a challenge, controversial in both states, especially for Russia.



(4) NSNW-CFE deal

Advantages:

Exchange of concerns: NATO's concern over Russian NSNW to Russia's on NATO's conventional forces.

Challenge:

Russian expectations for CFE will be difficult to swallow:

- Bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia
- Moldova
- flank limitations, etc.

Maybe makes sense to explore Medvedev's new format.



Issue is deadlocked: continued presence of U.S. NSNW in Europe is a Pareto optimal solution: least issues/losses for all parties.

Need to differentiate between NATO as nuclear alliance and U.S. NSNW in Europe: the former can be maintained through NPG, for example



Including NSNW into next START talks seems to make most sense, but is imperfect and will be difficult and time-consuming.

Advisable to begin discussion as early as possible at Track II and Track 1^{1/2} level to explore possible solutions and lay down political foundation.