

Nuclear Missions in the Post-Post Cold War System

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New interest in nuclear weapons since late 1990s:

Proposals to make nuclear weapons more usable:

- Russia: 1996 (Viktor Mikhailov and Aleksandr Chernyshov, *NATO's Expansion and Russia's Security*)
- US: 2000 (Stephen Younger, *Nuclear Weapons in the Twenty-First Century*)

Official endorsement – 2000-2001:

- Russia: 2000 (National Security Concept, Military Doctrine)
- US: 2002 (Nuclear Posture Review)
- France: 2001 (statements by Chirac)

1998: India, Pakistan

North Korea.

Iran?

Will the trend continue, decline, or grow?

Post-Cold War period is over, a new international system is emerging

- 2000 elections in the US and Russia: the first post-post-Cold War administrations
- International terrorism, especially in the US and Russia
- Wars in Kosovo (1999) and Iraq (2003)
- North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT, questions about the Iranian nuclear program

Features of the New International System

- End of bipolarity has made the system less manageable. States have greater freedom in foreign and defense policy. Old alliances and groups (e.g., NAM) have weakened.
- Shape of the emerging system not yet known. Currently seems unipolar, but US does not have power to fully control events. New potential leaders are emerging – China, India trailing closely behind.

Options:

- unipolar
- concert of powers
- “classic” multipolarity
- long transitional period (high degree of unpredictability)

Features of the New International System

- International law and international regimes (though mostly shaped by the US) are less relevant even for the US: do not constrain other states, do not punish. For others – do not protect from the US. *Expectations no longer converge.*
- New threats have emerged, more on the way. Sources, scale, and nature of future threats are difficult to predict.

Defining characteristic of the post-post-Cold War system – low predictability. Consequence – shift from threat-based to capabilities-based planning. This includes nuclear weapons.

Enhanced reliance on nuclear weapons:

- New missions and/or
- Nuclear weapons associated with more plausible scenarios

Combination of Variables that Enhances the Role of Nuclear Weapons

- Perception of acute external threat.
- Perception that alternative security tools (international law, international organizations, alliances, conventional armed forces) are inadequate
- Perception that nuclear weapons can yield tangible benefits while negative consequences are limited and/or controllable.

“Perception of Acute External Threat”

For the US:

- international terrorism – a two-generation war,
- regional powers capable of denying US influence (including by acquiring WMD), supporting its enemies, denying US access to natural resources.

For Russia:

- outside support for secessionist movements, domestic opposition, hostile neighbors.

Began with Chechnya (fear of Kosovo scenario).

Putin in the fall of 2004: unnamed countries wanting to “tear juicy morsels” from Russia.

Vladislav Surkov: “secret war” against Russia waged by “those in the United States, Europe, and the Orient, who still view Russia as an enemy.”



“Perception of Acute External Threat”

Common problem for all states – uncertainty about the systems’ shape, unpredictable threats. Uncertainty enhances attractiveness of nuclear weapons as the ultimate protection:

- for nuclear states (in addition to meeting existing threats) – guarding against changes of other NWS behavior (for US and Russia – concern about resumption of major conflict with the other party)
- for US allies and other developed states – as a security guarantee in case of doubts in a US “umbrella” (Japan vs. China)
- for potential foes of the US and other developed states – as a security guarantee vs. more powerful adversaries or as a guarantee of unimpeded expansion (Iraq in the 1980s)

“Absence of Alternative Security Instruments”

Alliances:

For the US – traditional allies do not provide tangible support, sometimes resist (except Japan), ad-hoc coalitions provide political support, but too weak to share burden (New Europe vs. Old Europe).

Russia – allies need to be bought or cajoled, no prospect of sharing burden.

International law:

US – no support from the UN, need to work outside UN structures. International law restricts instead of helping.

Russia – UN and international law cannot shield from force or threat of force from stronger powers/coalitions; the shock of Kosovo.

Conventional forces:

US – stretched, might not take out certain types of targets (bunkers, deployed WMD, etc.)

Russia – too weak vis-à-vis states of concern (US, NATO), too small for several local wars, outdated.

“Nuclear Weapons Can Yield Tangible Benefits”

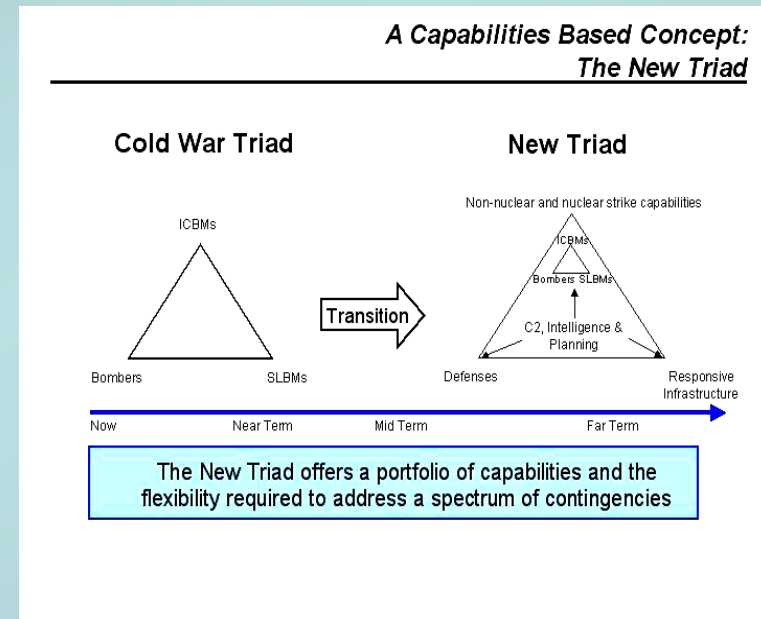
Known or predictable threats require local and regional level military solutions (scale of wars in Kosovo, Afghanistan, or Iraq-2003). Within the context of such wars limited nuclear use could support specific tasks, including: destroy certain targets, destroy deployed WMD, deter through threat of limited strikes or deescalate by employing limited strikes.

Key to role of nuclear weapons in post-post-Cold War system – limited use (limited by targets, by number, and possibly by yield).

“Nuclear Weapons Can Yield Tangible Benefits”

US: Nuclear Posture Review - integration of nuclear weapons into strike weapons. Examples of missions (from abandoned Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations):

- enemy has WMD and ready to use it;
- Enemy WMD located in deeply buried hardened bunkers;
- Enemy conventional forces exceed US forces in the theater



Russia: deterrence of limited conventional attack through threat of limited counterforce nuclear strike inflicting “predetermined” damage (commensurate to the level of benefits expected by enemy) – deescalation of a Kosovo-style scenario.

Restrictions on Limited Use During Cold War

-- escalation to a full-scale strategic conflict was almost guaranteed because stakes were perceived as very high (survival of political, economic, and social system).

-- limited nuclear use against third countries (Korea, Vietnam) could legitimize limited nuclear use by the other side against one's own clients.

During Cold War limited nuclear use was primarily assigned to short- or intermediate-range weapons, was feasible only in the context of WWII in support of large-scale operations.

Limited Use in Post-Post-Cold War System

- risk of large-scale nuclear war (“World War III”) is negligible,
- stakes in any feasible conflict among nuclear powers are limited,
- escalation from limited to large-scale war is unlikely.

As a result, limited nuclear use has become theoretically feasible for the first time – both among NWS and by NWS against non-nuclear third parties.

Nuclear Missions in Post-Post-Cold War System

1. Strategic deterrence – a “just in case” mission, stabilizer of great power relations (primarily US-Russia, also US-China to a lesser extent).

2. Limited nuclear use in the context of limited, primarily conventional conflicts against specific select targets.
 - 1a. (For conflicts between NWS) Credible strategic deterrence remains a foundation for successful limited use because it rules out escalation.

Implications for Postures

Current missions do not require large arsenals

⇒ Arsenals are and will be reduced. Optimization, not disarmament.

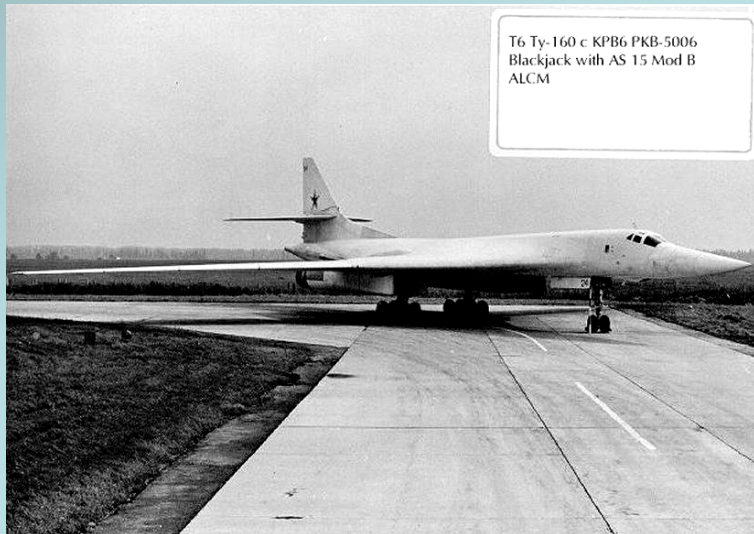
Among NWS, reduced level of threat reduces interest in traditional arms control agreements.

⇒ Parties trade restrictions on the other side for own flexibility, overlook uploading capability (Russia), forego verification (US) – premises of the 2002 Moscow Treaty.

Implications for Postures

- Delivery vehicles with intercontinental range allow maximum flexibility.
- Since requirements of strategic deterrence are limited, strategic delivery vehicles can be assigned to limited use missions.

Long-range aircraft (strategic and medium range) seem to fit missions best



- Short-range systems (tactical) no longer seem very relevant or needed.
- Low-yield weapons mandatory for the US, desirable for Russia.

Other Examples – France and China

France:

- In response to large-scale terrorist acts or direct threat (missile strikes). In January 2006 added cutting off vital supplies (oil).
- Against “political, economic, and military power centers.”
- Long-range assets, minimal collateral damage.

China (?)

Russian deescalation strategy seems optimal for conflict over Taiwan.

Conclusions

Enhanced role of nuclear weapons primarily results from:

- properties of the emerging international system or at least from the uncertainty of the transitional period;
- low risk of escalation to global nuclear war;
- limited utility –whether real or perceived – of conventional forces for certain types of missions;
- multiplicity of threats and challenges, resulting overextension (insufficiency) of conventional forces.

Conclusions

Reliance on nuclear weapons cannot be willed away.

Reliance on nuclear weapons cannot be reduced by a political decision.

Reliance on nuclear weapons cannot be reduced by changing administrator(s).

To reduce the role of nuclear weapons, address the underlying causes:

- reduce the level/nature of threats or
- develop alternative security instruments.

Conclusions

Existing Partial Alternatives:

New regimes:

- Moderate success with PSI;
- Limits on proliferation of nuclear fuel cycle technologies. Too late to address existing problems, but could stem the next round of proliferation.
- Expanded inspection regime (Additional Protocol).

Most effective – inspection regime in Iraq in the 1990s, but degree of intrusiveness cannot be easily replicated in fully sovereign countries

Conventional weapons:

high-yield conventional warheads, conventional Tridents (could create problems with nuclear states).

Informal cooperation among developed states (NWS, G-8): difficult to achieve without major change of policies (opportunity already missed?)

Conclusions

Much will depend on the shape of the new international system:

- least reliance on nuclear weapons: US dominance or concert of powers
- traditional role of nuclear weapons (strategic deterrence) - bipolar world (US-China?)
- greatest reliance on nuclear weapons: multipolarity or long transitional period