

# SECURITY INSIGHTS



## Strategic Parity or Why “American” Arms Control Is Not Interested In Russia

By Maxim Starchak

### Introduction

The recent 15th anniversary of Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference reminded us that Russia’s negative attitude toward NATO/U.S. policy in Europe, primarily the Alliance expansion and deployment of U.S. global missile defense elements in Europe, has persisted for years.

The annexation of Crimea in 2014 has triggered a new round of conflict in relations between the sides. In response to NATO’s increased military presence in Eastern Europe, Russia has reinforced the Russian armed forces in the Crimea, the Arctic, Kaliningrad, and on the border with Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Russia has arranged manifest military exercises, and has developed and keeps developing advanced (especially nuclear) weapons.<sup>2</sup> All of this was meant to put pressure on the West. In his speech at a Foreign Ministry meeting in November 2021, Russian President Vladimir Putin noted that Russia’s recent warnings are still being felt and causing a certain effect: “Some tension has nevertheless arisen there,” Putin said. However, this was not enough, and he demanded that the Foreign Ministry provide Russia with significant long-term security guarantees.<sup>3</sup>

On December 17, 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation published draft treaties on security guarantees with the United States<sup>4</sup> and NATO.<sup>5</sup> Russia called for serious long-term legal guarantees from the U.S. and NATO. Such guarantees would rule out any NATO expansion, prohibit deployment of U.S. weapons and armed forces on Russia’s

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<sup>1</sup> Maxim Starchak, “Североатлантический разлад” [“North Atlantic Disunity”], *Kommersant Vlast*, №21 (1176), May 30, 2016, 12-16.

<sup>2</sup> “Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly,” Website of the President of Russia, accessed March 1, 2018, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957>.

<sup>3</sup> “Expanded meeting of the Foreign Ministry Board,” Website of the President of Russia, accessed November 18, 2021, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67123>.

<sup>4</sup> “Treaty between The United States of America and the Russian Federation on security guarantees,” Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, accessed December 17, 2021, [https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/rso/nato/1790818/?lang=en](https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790818/?lang=en).

<sup>5</sup> “Agreement on measures to ensure the security of The Russian Federation and member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization,” Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, accessed December 17, 2021, [https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/rso/nato/1790803/?lang=en](https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/rso/nato/1790803/?lang=en).

western borders, prohibit deployment of land-based intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles and nuclear weapons outside U.S. homeland, and initiate the return of such weapons that have been already deployed outside of the United States. Russia suggested that NATO return the armed forces and armaments to their 1997 state. Russia also insisted on stopping flights of heavy bombers equipped for nuclear or non-nuclear armaments or deploying surface warships of any type in the areas outside national airspace and national territorial waters respectively, from where they can attack targets in the territory of the other Party.

In the Russian military theory, strategic parity is the basis of military-strategic stability.<sup>6</sup> Seeking a return from NATO to the borders of 1997, President Putin wants to return to a time when strategic parity was not threatened. Having put forward these demands, President Putin essentially delivered an ultimatum – either you agree to them or Russia will respond militarily. Despite the similarity of the claims with Putin’s Munich speech 2007<sup>7</sup>, nobody issued ultimatums. Today the entire situation is different. Having attacked Ukraine in February 2022, Moscow began to implement its threats, showing that it is, indeed, very serious. The preservation of strategic parity has received military implementation.

## Russia’s Complaints

What makes this kind of ultimatum possible today? What is the point of being so hasty and reckless? There seem to be multiple reasons. First of all, on June 12, 2020, NATO gave Ukraine the status of an enhanced opportunity partner. In other words, Russia fears that Ukraine’s membership in NATO is being systematically promoted, and that the presence of NATO troops, including short- and intermediate- range missiles on the border with Russia, is becoming more and more likely to happen.

Since 2014, Ukraine has been receiving extensive military assistance from NATO countries, and since 2018, they have been getting Javelin anti-tank missiles from the United States. Moscow opposes the advancement of these NATO armaments to the Russian border and is totally against the membership of the former Soviet republics in NATO.<sup>8</sup>

The second reason is that in 2021 the U.S. Missile Defense Agency launched the deployment of Aegis Ashore combat systems in Poland, including Mk-41 launchers, which are almost identical, in the opinion of the Russian Foreign Ministry, to those used on U.S. Navy ships to launch Tomahawk cruise missiles (the Russian Foreign Ministry believes this violated the existing INF Treaty).<sup>9</sup> According to Deputy Defense Minister Alexander Fomin, the fact that the United States launched a Tomahawk cruise missile from the Mk-41 land-based launcher on August 16, 2018, after it declared its withdrawal from the INF Treaty on August 2, 2018,

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<sup>6</sup> Военно-стратегический паритет, *Энциклопедия РВЧ* (Белгород: РВЧ, 2009) (“Military-strategic parity” in *Encyclopedia of Strategic Missile Forces* (Belgorod: SNF, 2009)), [https://encyclopedia.mil.ru/encyclopedia/dictionary/details\\_rvsn.htm?id=12825@morfDictionary](https://encyclopedia.mil.ru/encyclopedia/dictionary/details_rvsn.htm?id=12825@morfDictionary).

<sup>7</sup> “Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy,” Website of the President of Russia, accessed February 10, 2007, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>.

<sup>8</sup> See the speech of Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko, *RT*, June 19, 2021, <https://russian.rt.com/ussr/news/874944-nato-ukraina-spekulyacii>.

<sup>9</sup> Interview by Director of the Department for Nonproliferation and Arms Control of the Russian Foreign Ministry Mikhail Ulyanov, *RIA Novosti*, September 18, 2015, <https://ria.ru/20150918/1259924861.html>; “Comment by the MFA of Russia on the U.S. Department of State’s Annual Report on Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments,” Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, accessed April 29, 2017, [https://archive.mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2740264?p\\_p\\_id=101\\_INSTANCE\\_cKNonkJE02Bw&\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_cKNonkJE02Bw\\_languageId=en\\_GB](https://archive.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2740264?p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_cKNonkJE02Bw&_101_INSTANCE_cKNonkJE02Bw_languageId=en_GB).

confirms the strike capability of the American missile defense system.<sup>10</sup> Thus, given that the range of the Tomahawk missile is 2500 km, it is potentially capable of hitting many strategic targets in the territory of Russia. It is expected that this missile defense base becomes officially operational in 2022.

In addition, the Standard Missile-6 Dual II missile, capable of engaging both air and surface targets, causes discontent. Its tests were actively conducted in 2021. This means, as President Putin says, the U.S. missile defense system has new offensive capabilities,<sup>11</sup> which means Moscow's claims have always been justified.

Third, Moscow is disappointed with NATO's current nuclear policy. The Russian Foreign Ministry considers NATO to be too easy on the nuclear weapons deployment. The use of nuclear weapons in different situations involves more and more uncertainties, with thresholds being decreased through the use of force as well.<sup>12</sup>

The Russian Foreign Ministry sees equipping some of the U.S. Trident II SLBMs with W76-2 'tactical' nuclear warheads as a demonstration step in this direction.<sup>13</sup> U.S. SLBMs will be armed with these warheads as of 2024. Also, Moscow is not pleased with U.S. plans to deploy new B-61-12 nuclear bombs with reduced power and increased accuracy in Europe. Moscow feels that decreasing power while increasing accuracy of such weapons raises the risk of their use.<sup>14</sup>

According to the Foreign Ministry, low-power nuclear warheads are capable of solving a wide range of not just tactical, but also strategic tasks.<sup>15</sup> For example, the potential for the B61-12 carrier aircraft to be located at NATO bases in the states bordering Russia, changes the status of these nuclear weapons. They will be able to easily reach the facilities of the central industrial district of Russia, as well as major cities, including Moscow. This makes it possible to perceive the B-61-12 as part of the strategic offensive forces of the United States. According to Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov, "it is precisely such practical steps that have a significant destabilizing effect on nuclear deterrence."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Briefing by the Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Colonel-General Alexander Fomin for military attaches and representatives of embassies of foreign states, *Red Star*, December 29, 2021, <http://redstar.ru/rossiya-rasschityvaet-na-seryoznyj-konstruktivnyj-razgovor-v-interesah-vsej-evropy/>.

<sup>11</sup> "Address by the President of the Russian Federation", Website of the President of Russia, accessed February 21, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>.

<sup>12</sup> Interview by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Ryabkov, *Interfax*, December 18, 2021, <https://www.interfax.ru/interview/810198>.

<sup>13</sup> "Commentary by the Information and Press Department (MFA of Russia) on Executive Summary of the 2020 Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments (Compliance Report) – United States Department of State," Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, accessed April 23, 2020, [https://archive.mid.ru/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4104977?p\\_p\\_id=101\\_INSTANCE\\_cKNonkJE02Bw&\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_cKNonkJE02Bw\\_languageId=en\\_GB](https://archive.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4104977?p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_cKNonkJE02Bw&_101_INSTANCE_cKNonkJE02Bw_languageId=en_GB).

<sup>14</sup> Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, "Comment by the MFA of Russia on the U.S. Department of State's Annual Report on Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments," April 29, 2017.

<sup>15</sup> "Комментарий Департамента информации и печати МИД России в связи с «сигнальной» версией доклада Госдепартамента США о соблюдении международных договоров и соглашений в области контроля над вооружениями, разоружения и нераспространения" ("Comment by the Information and Press Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry in connection with the "signal" version of the report of the US State Department on compliance with international treaties and agreements in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation"), Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, accessed April 23, 2017, [https://archive.mid.ru/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4104977](https://archive.mid.ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4104977).

<sup>16</sup> Sergei Gusafov, "Стратегические носители становятся оружием поля боя": Антонов назвал фактор дестабилизации ядерного сдерживания в мире" ("Strategic carriers become weapons of the battlefield":

Another complaint, according to the Foreign Ministry, is that the United States continues to involve European non-nuclear NATO countries in so-called “joint nuclear operations” in violation of the NPT.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, as the Russian Defense Ministry points out, the Eastern European Air Force began to participate in the Steadfast Noon nuclear exercise, and the total number of countries participating in the exercise increased from six to nine and the number of carrier aircraft participating increased from twenty to fifty.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on November 19, 2021, that if Germany refuses to deploy U.S. nuclear weapons, the Alliance could easily find alternatives to deploy them in other European countries.<sup>19</sup> This statement was perceived by the Russian Foreign Ministry as a confirmation of the fiasco of the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act.<sup>20</sup> According to the Act, NATO member-states confirmed that they had no intentions, plans, or reasons to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of the new NATO members, and they had no need to change any aspect of NATO nuclear force development or NATO nuclear policy.

The fourth reason for the rush and the presentation of an ultimatum is that in August 2021 it became known that the 56th Artillery Command in Europe, which during the Cold War was responsible for the Pershing intermediate-range missiles eliminated under the INF Treaty, had been recreated. Moscow considered this a warning for future deployment of short- and medium-range missiles in Europe. Although the NATO Secretary General claims that the Alliance will not respond in kind to Russia’s destabilizing behavior and has no intention to deploy new nuclear missiles on European territory, Russia does not trust these statements. It is clear that Moscow is not satisfied with declarations; it sees an actual policy that threatens its national security. Moscow believes that short- and intermediate- range missiles in Europe are not a concept, but an upcoming reality. This will result in “a confrontation, it will be the next round, this will be the emergence of such means from our side,” points out the Russian Foreign Ministry.

The United States reconstituted the 41st Field Artillery Brigade in Germany in 2018, and as of 2020, there are thirty-two artillery missile launchers located there. In addition, two European members of NATO, Romania and Poland, have recently purchased seventy-four American HIMARS artillery missile launchers, and the first systems are to be delivered in 2022. According to U.S. Army Major Brennan Devereaux, as the INF Treaty has been terminated and long-range precision fire has been established as the number one development priority of the U.S. Army, the capabilities of artillery missile launchers are likely to grow exponentially over the next five years.<sup>21</sup> In other words, it is likely that Moscow sees the advancement of long-range high-precision weapons as a threat comparable to short- and intermediate- range missiles.

When it comes to HIMARS artillery systems, Moscow can raise the same claims that NATO has against Iskander-M missile system. The upgraded ATACMS short-range ballistic

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Antonov called the factor of destabilization of nuclear deterrence in the world), *RT*, September 5, 2020, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/780490-antonov-destabilizaciya-yadernoe-sderzhivanie>.

<sup>17</sup> Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, “Comment by the MFA of Russia on the U.S. Department of State’s Annual Report on Adherence to and Compliance with Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament Agreements and Commitments,” April 29, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> TASS, December 27, 2021, <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/13311295>.

<sup>19</sup> Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the German Atlantic Association ‘NATO Talk’ Conference 2021, NATO Website, accessed November 19, 2021, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_188772.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_188772.htm).

<sup>20</sup> Speech by Deputy Foreign Ministry Alexander Grushko, *RIA Novosti*, November 19, 2021, <https://ria.ru/20211119/razmeschenie-1759838694.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Brennan Devereaux, “Rocket Artillery Can Keep Russia Out of the Baltics,” *War on the rocks*, May 20, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/05/rocket-artillery-can-keep-russia-out-of-the-baltics/>.

operational-tactical missiles can be launched from HIMARS launchers. A new high-precision strike missile, the PrSM, is already being developed and tested to replace the ATACMS. Although no official upper limit is published, previously available estimates suggest that the missile would be capable of flying a range of at least 499 kilometers.<sup>22</sup> Moscow may question that PrSM range.

Furthermore, in December 2016, the Polish Ministry of National Defense signed a contract with the United States to supply JASSM-ER missiles. With a range of about 1000 kilometers, it means that in the airspace of Poland, the F-16s can shoot through the whole Russian Kaliningrad region and hit targets in Belarus, all the way to its capital, Minsk.

Apart from this, Moscow claims that there are risks of escalation and incidents. The Russian Defense Ministry is not happy with the exercises of NATO countries, as they increasingly involve strategic aviation carrying out simulated launches of nuclear missiles at Russian facilities. The number of flights near Russian borders has more than doubled, says the Defense Ministry.<sup>23</sup> For example, in February and March 2021, a task force of U.S. B-1B strategic bombers was deployed in Norway. They had missions in the Arctic and landed in Poland. Strategic bombers regularly fly out of Fairford Air Base in UK to participate in exercises on attacking Russia, as the Russian General Staff and the Aerospace Force report.<sup>24</sup> Also, B-1B and B-52H bombers flew over the Black Sea and Ukraine during 2019-21. In 2021, the number of their flights in this region increased by eighteen percent, and “the minimum distance between strategic bombers and the Russian border in the western part of Crimea was 15 kilometers,”<sup>25</sup> said Deputy Defense Minister Alexander Fomin. Moscow sees this as NATO provocations that could escalate into an armed conflict.

Moscow realizes that missile systems theoretically capable of reaching beyond the INF Treaty are being developed, and conditions are being created to deploy such weapons in Europe. Strike missile systems capable of hitting critical infrastructure are being placed at the Russian border, missile defense systems are being created, and the threshold of nuclear weapons use is being lowered. In addition, uncontrolled expansion of NATO provides grounds for these developments. There are no treaties, or at least no political agreements, that would limit missiles in Europe. Against this background, as Deputy Minister Sergei Ryabkov says, the destabilization risks increase, and the contours of a new crisis become sharper. Indeed, this may be similar to the Cuban Missile Crisis due to its level of danger.<sup>26</sup> The Kremlin probably considered that the threats created in the next couple of years will become irreversible. Because of this, it was important for Moscow to agree on three key issues: non-expansion of NATO, non-deployment of strike weapons, and termination of involvement of the states that joined the alliance after 1997. Each of these shows the desire to maintain strategic parity with the United States.

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<sup>22</sup> Ankit Panda, “US Army Conducts Third Test of Precision Strike Missile,” *The Diplomat*, May 06, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/05/us-army-conducts-third-test-of-precision-strike-missile/>.

<sup>23</sup> “Расширенное заседание коллегии Минобороны” (“Expanded Meeting of the Board of the Ministry of Defense”), Website of the President of Russia, accessed December 21, 2021, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67402>.

<sup>24</sup> *RIA Novosti*, March 16, 2019, <https://ria.ru/20190316/1551851866.html>; *RIA Novosti*, September 11, 2020, <https://ria.ru/20200911/ucheniya-1577092246.html>; *RIA Novosti*, November 23, 2021, <https://ria.ru/20211123/shoygu-1760383305.html>.

<sup>25</sup> *Interfax-AVN*, December 27, 2021, <https://www.militarynews.ru/story.asp?rid=0&nid=563123&lang=RU>.

<sup>26</sup> Interview by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergei Ryabkov, *RIA Novosti*, December 13, 2021, <https://ria.ru/20211213/ryabkov-1763391300.html>.

## Strategic Parity

The nuclear doctrine of Russia<sup>27</sup> states that nuclear deterrence is ensured by the presence of combat-ready forces and facilities in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. These military threats ensure unacceptable damage to a potential enemy under any conditions by using nuclear weapons.<sup>28</sup> However, with the increase of NATO missile weapons in Eastern Europe, Russia's ability to continue nuclear deterrence is impaired.

Army General Makhmut Gareev, a military theorist, has stated that Russia does not have and will not have "tactical" strike force capabilities (including proximity to U.S. targets) in the foreseeable future. Thus, there is an increasing imbalance in the combat capabilities of the U.S. and Russia's Strategic Nuclear Forces, due to failure to account for the influence of basic military technologies being developed. These technologies include the development of the strike air and naval component of the U.S. general-purpose forces. Another troubling point by Gareev was the planned build-up of the strike capability of the armed forces belonging to the so-called "front-line" NATO member states in order to provide them with counterforce capabilities.<sup>29</sup> Another military theorist, Vladimir Anenkov, says that an increase in counterforce capabilities is one of the disruptive factors for strategic stability.<sup>30</sup>

According to the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, the expansion of NATO to the East has provided extra military forces, weapons, equipment, infrastructure and military facilities, and has moved more than one thousand kilometers closer to the Russian borders. In other words, the operational capabilities of the alliance's land and naval forces have increased, and NATO can now use non-strategic weapons to attack targets in Russia.<sup>31</sup> In fact, Moscow finds itself unhappy that NATO is devaluing the nuclear factor and can now inflict comparable damage without strategic weapons. Moscow's desire to prevent the eastward expansion of NATO is about making sure that weapons that threaten Russia's security do not appear near Russia's borders. Putting forward its demands for the return of NATO strike weapons to the positions of 1997, Moscow says that it is dissatisfied with the fact that its strategic capabilities have been reduced. At the same time, this means that the role of Russian tactical nuclear weapons in a conflict with NATO has increased or will increase.

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<sup>27</sup> Under the name: Basic Principles of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence.

<sup>28</sup> "Основы государственной политики Российской Федерации в области ядерного сдерживания" ("Basic Principles of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence"), Website of the President of Russia, accessed June 2, 2020, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/45562>.

<sup>29</sup> The counterforce capability is determined by the ability to hit the enemy's offensive forces before launching, i.e. to deliver a "decapitation strike" that deprives the other side of the means for retaliatory actions. Mahmud Gareev, "The academy of military sciences activities results for 2017 and tasks of the academy in 2018." *Vestnik Akademii Voennyh Nauk*, 2(63) 2018. P.13.

<sup>30</sup> Vladimir Anenkov, "The Nuclear World: Geopolitical and military-political aspects of Modernity." (Moscow: KnoRus, 2016), 81-82.

<sup>31</sup> Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation Alexander Fomin at a briefing for military attaches and representatives of foreign embassies. Interfax, December 27, 2021, <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/812838>.

## NATO Response

The reaction to Russia's proposals in Europe was predictably negative. The presidents and ministers of Finland,<sup>32</sup> Lithuania,<sup>33</sup> Estonia<sup>34</sup> and other European countries expressed that the Russian proposals are an ultimatum and challenge the European security architecture.

On January 26, NATO and the United States provided Moscow with written responses to its proposals.<sup>35</sup> It was made clear to Moscow that the policy of containment and dialogue would continue. The United States and NATO are ready to discuss arms control, including nuclear weapons and ground defense. It was also made clear to Russia that Russia has no veto right over the presence of nuclear weapons, troops, or conventional weapons in NATO countries.<sup>36</sup> NATO is still committed to open policy. Russia will not be able to have any influence on the decision regarding membership of any country or to divide Europe into spheres of influence. Efforts to protect the allies and Ukraine remain in place.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the United States authorized \$200 million of additional security assistance to Ukraine<sup>38</sup> and in February it approved the deployment of 3,000 U.S. troops to Poland, Germany, and Romania.<sup>39</sup> In January, NATO started to increase its military presence in Eastern Europe amidst the increase in Russia's forces along the Ukrainian border.<sup>40</sup>

Ultimately, President Putin said that Russia's fundamental concerns were ignored. "We haven't seen adequate consideration of our three key requirements concerning the prevention of NATO expansion, the refusal to deploy strike weapons systems near the Russian borders as well as the return of the military infrastructure to NATO's 1997 borders when the NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed,"<sup>41</sup> said the president of Russia. According to Deputy

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<sup>32</sup> "Tasavallan presidentti Sauli Niinistön uudenvuodenpuhe" ("New Year's speech by President of the Republic Sauli Niinistö"), President of Finland Website, accessed January 1, 2022, <https://www.presidentti.fi/puheet/tasavallan-presidentti-sauli-niiniston-uudenvuodenpuhe-1-1-2022/>.

<sup>33</sup> Oliver Moody, Marc Bennetts, "Nato must arm Ukraine to repel invasion by Putin's Russia, says Lithuania," *The Times*, December 22, 2021, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/nato-must-arm-ukraine-to-repel-invasion-by-putins-russia-says-lithuania-99xrbt3mz>.

<sup>34</sup> "Estonian President Opposes Discussions on Russia's Security Proposals", *Sputnik International*, December 24, 2021, <https://sputniknews.com/20211224/estonian-president-opposes-discussions-on-russias-security-proposals-1091773473.html>.

<sup>35</sup> See: "US offered disarmament measures to Russia in exchange for deescalation of military threat in Ukraine." *El Pais*, February 2, 2022, <https://english.elpais.com/usa/2022-02-02/us-offers-disarmament-measures-to-russia-in-exchange-for-a-deescalation-of-military-threat-in-ukraine.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Crowley and David E. Sanger, "U.S. and NATO Respond to Putin's Demands as Ukraine Tensions Mount", *New York Times*, January 26, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/26/us/politics/russia-demands-us-ukraine.html>.

<sup>37</sup> "Press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg," NATO Website, accessed January 26, 2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_191254.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_191254.htm); "Remarks Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State," U.S. Department of State Website, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-at-a-press-availability-13/>; "Secretary Blinken's Call with NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg," U.S. Department of State Website, accessed December 23, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-call-with-nato-secretary-general-stoltenberg-10/>.

<sup>38</sup> "Biden approves \$200 mn aid for Ukraine under Emergency Powers: Report," *Business Standard*, January 12, 2022, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/biden-approves-200-mn-aid-for-ukraine-under-emergency-powers-report-122011200098\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/biden-approves-200-mn-aid-for-ukraine-under-emergency-powers-report-122011200098_1.html).

<sup>39</sup> Natasha Bertrand, Barbara Starr and Jeremy Herb, "US troops to deploy to Eastern Europe amid Ukraine crisis," *CNN*, February 3, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/02/02/politics/us-troops-europe-russia/index.html>.

<sup>40</sup> "NATO Allies send more ships, jets to enhance deterrence and defence in eastern Europe," NATO Website, accessed 24 Jan. 2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_191040.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_191040.htm).

<sup>41</sup> "Пресс-конференция по итогам российско-венгерских переговоров" ("Press conference on the results of the Russian-Hungarian negotiations"), Website of the President of Russia, accessed February 1, 2022, <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67690>.

Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, there is no point in discussing other issues that are secondary to the non-expansion of NATO.<sup>42</sup>

### Why Arms Control Proposed by the United States is Impossible

The United States has said that based on Russia's equivalent commitments, it was ready to explore an enhanced exercise notification regime and nuclear risk reduction measures, including strategic nuclear bomber platforms. These are transparency measures first and foremost. However, Russia has proposed limiting flights of heavy bombers outside national airspace, including within the Alliance.<sup>43</sup> Moscow actually proposed a unilateral ban on U.S. bombers not only flying near Russian borders, but also flying to the airbases of its NATO allies. Of course, Russia positively reacted to possible restrictions on the United States,<sup>44</sup> but it is unlikely that Washington would take such unilateral steps.

Next, the United States offered to open a discussion on the control of land-based intermediate- and shorter-range missiles. However, this is not of interest to Moscow. Throughout all the years of Vladimir Putin's presidency, the INF Treaty has been a source of discontent. For example, Putin first threatened to withdraw from the INF Treaty if the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty back in 2000 in an interview with *Welt am Sonntag*.<sup>45</sup> In 2007, Yury Baluevsky, Chief of the Russian General Staff, suggested the same.<sup>46</sup> In the same year, Vladimir Putin raised this topic in Munich, and former Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov frankly called the Soviet-American treaty a "relic of the Cold War" and said that "it cannot go on like this forever."<sup>47</sup>

On June 19, 2013, Vladimir Putin again expressed skepticism about the INF Treaty and called the USSR's decision to abandon medium-range missiles "controversial, to say the least." "But the decision has been made, and, in fact, we must act according to the realities of today," the president stated.<sup>48</sup> However, Russia could not unilaterally withdraw from the INF Treaty. "As a matter of principle, Russia did not want to be seen as a conflict starter and threat maker, and it could not count on U.S. support in this step,"<sup>49</sup> says General Evgeny Buzhinsky.

The moratorium on the deployment of short- and intermediate- range missiles proposed by Russia in August 2019 is likely the same gesture as the proposed draft treaties. The Kremlin probably understood that the United States, dissatisfied with Russia's compliance with the INF Treaty, would not take this proposal seriously. However, it was important for Moscow to show that by rejecting this proposal, the United States confirmed that it was the first to start

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<sup>42</sup> "Interview to RTVi," January 13, 2022, <https://rtvi.com/spetsgost/zamglavy-mid-ryabkov/>.

<sup>43</sup> Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, "Treaty between The United States of America and the Russian Federation on security guarantees," December 17, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> "Press release on submitting a written reaction to the US response concerning security guarantees," Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, accessed February 17, 2022, [https://mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/news/1799157/?lang=en](https://mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1799157/?lang=en).

<sup>45</sup> "Interview with the newspaper "Welt am Sonntag" (Germany)," Website of the President of Russia, accessed June 11, 2000, <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/interviews/24202>.

<sup>46</sup> Vladimir Soloviev, "Разведка словом" ("Intelligence by the word"), *Kommersant*, February 17, 2007, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/743637>.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> "Как критиковали Договор о ликвидации ракет средней и меньшей дальности" ("How the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty was criticized"), *TASS*, August 2, 2019, <https://tass.ru/info/6724624>.

<sup>49</sup> Evgeny Buzhinsky, "Есть ли будущее у Договора о ликвидации ракет средней и меньшей дальности" ("Is there a future for the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty?"), *Security Index*, No. 3 (110), Volume 20, 151.



production of the intermediate range missiles and was preparing for its deployment in Europe.

In addition, a moratorium on deployment is not the same as a moratorium on creation. Russia does not want to bind itself to an obligation not to produce or test short- and intermediate-range missiles. Even if the United States agreed to a moratorium on the deployment of land-based short- and intermediate- range missiles in Europe, Russia could continue to produce them. Amid mutual mistrust, any Russian missile systems relocating across the country's western regions would cause tension.

Moreover, in its response to the United States on February 17,<sup>50</sup> Moscow, linking the problems of the intermediate range missiles with the discussion of the overall security architecture, made it clear that the INF Treaty itself is not of value. "Debates on the post INF Treaty without the common security architecture are pointless," presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said at the end of January.<sup>51</sup> That is, Moscow was ready to discuss the INF Treaty only if it would help it achieve concessions on the deployment of missile defense systems and the deployment of other strike weapons in Eastern Europe.

The United States was ready to discuss transparency mechanisms to verify the absence of Tomahawk cruise missiles at Aegis Ashore facilities in Romania and Poland if Russia suggests similar transparency measures at two bases in Russia that accommodate ground-based missiles.<sup>52</sup> According to *The Wall Street Journal*, it was Warsaw that insisted on a response inspection of missile systems located in Kaliningrad.<sup>53</sup>

However, transparency of the U.S. missile defense system does not solve the missile defense problem for Moscow. This could only confirm that U.S. missile defense systems will not carry Tomahawk strike missiles. And that is only part of the problem. The impact of missile defense on strategic parity in Russian politics is permanent. The military doctrine of the Russian Federation declares that the creation and deployment of strategic missile defense systems disrupting global stability and existing balance of forces in the nuclear missile sphere is a major external military threat.

In 2007, Vladimir Putin declared that deployment of the U.S. missile defense system in Europe can be compared to deployment of Pershing missiles in Europe in the early 1980s. The threat is absolutely the same, and the U.S. missile defense units deployed in Europe are an integral part of the U.S. strategic nuclear weapons.<sup>54</sup> He repeated it in 2016<sup>55</sup> and in late 2021.<sup>56</sup> According to Putin, ballistic missiles are most vulnerable during launch, and that is why it is better to have the interceptor as close as possible. In other words, U.S. missile defense in Europe is an attempt to upset the strategic nuclear balance.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, even the potential ability of missile defense to shoot down ballistic missiles can reduce or affect the nuclear parity between Russia and the United States.

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<sup>50</sup> Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, "Press release on submitting a written reaction to the US response concerning security guarantees," February 17, 2022.

<sup>51</sup> TASS, January 27, 2022, <https://tass.com/politics/1393885>.

<sup>52</sup> See: *El Pais*, February 2, 2022.

<sup>53</sup> William Mauldin and Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Delivers Response to Russian Demands Amid Ukraine Crisis," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 26, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-delivers-response-to-russian-demands-amid-ukraine-crisis-11643220014>.

<sup>54</sup> *RIA Novosti*, April 27, 2007, <https://ria.ru/20070427/64541142.html>.

<sup>55</sup> TASS, May 13, 2016, <https://tass.ru/politika/3279509>.

<sup>56</sup> "Meeting with Defence Ministry leadership and defence industry heads," Website of the President of Russia, accessed November 1, 2021, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67051>.

<sup>57</sup> *ITV Chanel*, May 13, 2016, [https://www.itv.ru/news/2016-05-13/302109-vladimir\\_putin\\_soobschil\\_kakim\\_budet\\_otvet\\_rossii\\_na\\_razvertyvanie\\_amerikanskih\\_baz\\_v\\_polshe\\_i\\_rumynii](https://www.itv.ru/news/2016-05-13/302109-vladimir_putin_soobschil_kakim_budet_otvet_rossii_na_razvertyvanie_amerikanskih_baz_v_polshe_i_rumynii).

For Russia, it is about the fact that missile defense systems can be quite effective at protecting the initiator of a strategic nuclear exchange from a retaliatory strike. The latter strike is carried out by strategic forces that include naval and land-based ballistic missiles survived by the first attack. If just a few missiles are left, say a few dozen, then missile defense systems can at least hypothetically minimize the damage from retaliatory use of strategic nuclear missiles to an “acceptable limit.” In these circumstances, both sides of a potential conflict may conclude that in an escalating armed confrontation the most “rational” strategy, from the purely military point of view, may be to launch a massive nuclear strike first. This, in turn, is a factor that destabilizes the strategic balance and ruins mutual nuclear deterrence.<sup>58</sup>

The U.S. proposed including new types of intercontinental delivery vehicles with nuclear warheads in future arms control agreements and initiating a dialogue on all types of nuclear weapons, including so-called “non-strategic nuclear weapons.” Russia already includes Sarmat and Avangard as part of New START. And they were potentially ready to discuss other types of weapons, in particular Poseidon, Burevestnik, and Kinzhal. However, as stated in the response of the U.S. Foreign Ministry, for Russia, strategic stability is not only a matter of controlling nuclear weapons, it is also a consideration of all weapons that could have an impact on strategic parity. That is, Moscow was actually ready to put its latest weapons under control in response to the control of the U.S. missile defense system. This was difficult to imagine, both then and now.

In the context of an imbalance in the conventional arms of Russia and NATO, and the active deployment of strike weapons in Eastern Europe, the role of TNWs for Russia is only growing. Finally, as a compromise step in this direction, Moscow proposes to withdraw American nuclear weapons from Europe, but this proposal is unrealistic so far. This means that even with the continuation of negotiations, it would be extremely difficult to achieve real agreements.

## Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine and Arms Control

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has shown that Moscow is ready to implement the so-called military-technical responses to the West and to achieve strategic stability as it sees it. In the speech, anticipating the recognition of the independence of the DPR and the LPR, President Putin said that the medium-range missiles being developed by the United States will definitely appear in Ukraine. This means that the missiles can hit objects throughout the European territory of Russia, as well as beyond the Urals, and the time of their approach to Moscow will be reduced to 4-5 minutes.<sup>59</sup> Later, presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that Putin is angry at those people in Ukraine who want to be part of NATO in order to place U.S. nuclear missiles on their territory.”<sup>60</sup> This underscores that the threat of losing strategic parity with the United States became one of the key reasons for the invasion of Ukraine. In an effort to demilitarize Ukraine, Russia seeks to prevent the appearance of shock weapons capable of threatening Russia’s strategic potential.

The invasion of Ukraine is an attempt by military means to achieve what failed diplomatically. Moscow sees an opportunity for the formation of a new world order. According to Foreign

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<sup>58</sup> Yuri Fedorov, “Стратегический паритет и контроль над вооружениями”, *Современные международные отношения* (“Strategic parity and arms control” in *Modern International Relations*), ed. by A.Torkunov. Moscow: MGIMO, 1999.

<sup>59</sup> Website of the President of Russia, “Address by the President of the Russian Federation,” February 21, 2022.

<sup>60</sup> “Kremlin spokesperson on Putin's objectives in Ukraine,” *CNN*, March 22, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2022/03/22/russia-spokesman-dmitry-peskov-russian-invasion-amanpour-vpx.cnn>.

Minister Sergei Lavrov, the current crisis is a fateful moment. This is an epochal moment in modern history. It reflects the battle over what the new world order will look like.<sup>61</sup> The purpose of the special military operation, according to Lavrov, was the desire to receive security guarantees that will be based on the principle of indivisible common security for Ukraine, for Russia, for all European countries.<sup>62</sup>

Putin's nuclear threats, which became the refrain of this war, were probably an attempt to achieve some kind of mirror response of the United States in the nuclear sphere. Since Russia is trying to achieve “de-escalation by escalation” in order to build a new world order where it will play an important role, it is important that the United States, as Russia's main geopolitical opponent, participate in this crisis. Escalation for de-escalation should take place with the same tools and lead to the resolution of the issues and the conclusion of agreements on security guarantees. But that didn't happen. The United States did not increase the combat readiness of its nuclear forces in response, and did not defiantly send nuclear submarines on patrol. Moscow failed to create the Caribbean Crisis-2. It was not possible to actually bring the war in Ukraine to the pan-European level. The war in Ukraine remains a war in Ukraine, not a war with NATO. Although in the minds of Moscow politicians, this war is of course with the West.<sup>63</sup>

The invasion of Ukraine has made Russia the main destabilizing force in Europe, and makes it impossible to perceive Moscow as a possible partner on any issues of European and international security. President Biden suspended negotiations with Russia on arms control. It is likely that the United States will not be ready for arms control negotiations with Russia in the next few years. Deputy Minister Sergei Ryabkov confirmed that the United States is not ready to continue the dialogue on strategic stability. However, time will pass, and they will realize that they are shooting themselves in the foot,<sup>64</sup> the diplomat said.

Nevertheless, Russia apparently managed to achieve something with the war with Ukraine. There will be no NATO in Ukraine, and there will be no missiles threatening strategic parity. However, Ukraine is only part of the problem, since Ukraine is like the next candidate for the appearance of missile threats to the Russian Federation, as Deputy Minister Andrei Rudenko said in December. “We have other countries bordering the Russian Federation, where the approach time of the strike systems is 4-5 minutes,”<sup>65</sup> Rudenko said.

In these circumstances, the Russian president will be forced to look for other ways of escalation to achieve his goals and conclude the necessary agreements. In a couple of years, Vladimir Putin may gain strength and launch an invasion of Finland in order to prevent its entry into NATO. The director of the Foreign Ministry Department, Sergei Belyaev, is already threatening that the membership of Finland and Sweden in NATO will entail military and political consequences.<sup>66</sup> Finland, like Ukraine, is located on the border with Russia and was also part of the Russian Empire, the deployment of U.S. strike weapons on its territory will also threaten strategic parity.

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<sup>61</sup> “Exclusive interview of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to RBC,” March 16, 2022, <https://tv.rbc.ru/archive/ekskluziv/6231f7f42ae5960880726f7e>.

<sup>62</sup> “Exclusive interview of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to RT,” March 18, 2022, <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/977559-lavrov-intervyu-rt>.

<sup>63</sup> Opinion of Presidential Aide Vladimir Medinsky and Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service Sergei Naryshkin. See: *RIA Novosti*, March 24, 2022, [https://ria.ru/20220324/medinskiy-1779803336.html?utm\\_source=yxnews&utm\\_medium=desktop](https://ria.ru/20220324/medinskiy-1779803336.html?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop).

<sup>64</sup> *RIA Novosti*, March 22, 2022, <https://ria.ru/20220322/bezopasnost-1779415308.html>.

<sup>65</sup> *Interfax-AVN*, December 20, 2021, <https://www.militarynews.ru/story.asp?rid=1&nid=562628&lang=RU>.

<sup>66</sup> Director of the Second European Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry Sergei Belyaev in a written interview with Interfax news Agency, *Interfax*, March 12, 2022, <https://www.militarynews.ru/story.asp?rid=2&nid=570993&lang=RU>

Putin may threaten Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland with which Russia has problematic relations. He may also start conducting demonstrative military exercises near the borders of these countries. Threats against these countries are already coming from Kremlin's political experts.<sup>67</sup>

A great threat remains against Georgia. Back in December, Moscow demanded to withdraw the decision of the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest that Ukraine and Georgia would become members of the alliance.<sup>68</sup> Alternatively, Moscow called on the United States to make a unilateral commitment in a legally binding form that they would never vote for Ukraine and other countries to join NATO. Thus, all threats against Ukraine are relevant for Georgia and for all countries applying for membership in the Alliance. Moscow's threats and demonstrative military actions near the Georgian border may also become likely. Moldova, on whose territory the unrecognized Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, supported by Moscow, is located, will also face threats. More than two hundred thousand citizens with Russian passports live on its territory.

The increase in tension on the borders will be accompanied by nuclear threats and the continuing demands for so-called security guarantees. Even in this form, nuclear deterrence is in effect, Russia has ensured that NATO does not interfere in the war in Ukraine. Putin, seeing the power of nuclear threats, will use nuclear blackmail and the demonstration of nuclear weapons in the hope that Washington's response will involve the United States in a conflict with Russia, thereby obtaining a pretext for negotiations on security guarantees. Nuclear weapons in the rhetoric of today's Kremlin creates a dangerous dilemma for the West. On the one hand, it is difficult not to react to Moscow's threats, and not to respond by strengthening NATO's eastern flank, which is already happening. However, this response could provoke Putin to nuclear threats every time. On the other hand, it is impossible to coordinate any security agreements with Putin's Russia, when it does not fulfill them or chooses to interpret them in its own way. Under these conditions, the creation of an eastern front with hotbeds of tension on the borders with Russia awaits European security. Russian Defense Ministry has already developed a plan to strengthen the western borders of Russia with the relocation of new modern weapons systems and military units there.<sup>69</sup> Russia will probe the NATO and the United States in any direction and on any issue. Political and economic disputes and demonstrations of military force will become permanent, similar to the Cold War. Ensuring security can be accomplished by not responding to Moscow's provocations.

## Conclusion

Moscow made it clear in its response to the United States<sup>70</sup> that Russia wants to agree on security architecture in Europe. Without this agreement, possible deals on some narrow issues of arms control and mitigation of military risks will not be long-lasting. That is, all the strike weapons of NATO countries affect the architecture of European security, and agreements on certain issues do not reduce strategic threats to Russia's security. In this context, the results of the Russian-Ukrainian war will not affect it much either.

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<sup>67</sup> Political expert Sergei Mikheev on the air of the program "Evening with Vladimir Solovyov" on the "Russia 1" TV channel, See: VK, March 22, 2022, [https://vk.com/wall-51890114\\_180616](https://vk.com/wall-51890114_180616).

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov to Interfax news agency, accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.militarynews.ru/story.asp?rid=2&nid=562549&lang=RU>.

<sup>69</sup> "Meeting with permanent members of Security Council," Website of the President of Russia, accessed March 11, 2022, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67960>.

<sup>70</sup> Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, "Press release on submitting a written reaction to the US response concerning security guarantees," February 17, 2022.

According to Moscow's logic, the issue of arms control arrangements in Europe will simply disappear by itself when NATO stops expanding eastward and returns the armaments to the way they were in 1997. In fact, it is true that regardless of whether or not medium-range missiles will be created and deployed in Europe as of 1997, such missiles from Germany, the closest NATO country at the time, will have no strategic potential for Russia and threaten its strategic parity.

In Russian military theory, strategic parity is the foundation of military strategic stability<sup>71</sup>, and the main condition to counter military threats according to the opinion of the retired 1st Rank Lieutenant Commander and theorist of military policy Lennor Olshtynsky.<sup>72</sup> The Russian Ministry of Defense and the Kremlin are trying to implement this in the real world. However, strategic parity is currently unstable. Strike weapons could be stationed at the Russian border. Naval and airborne short- and intermediate- range missiles are within distance to hit Russian infrastructure. Land-based intermediate- range missiles are being created and threaten to appear near the borders of Russia. The U.S. nuclear weapons and missile defense system remain in Europe. In addition, the Russian invasion of Ukraine froze any arms control negotiations.

Under these conditions, Russia will continue to implement further military-technical actions aimed at encouraging agreements on arms control and maintaining strategic parity. They will take measures to maintain strategic parity by creating and deploying strike weapons on domestic territory including the western part of the country. Russia will keep producing short- and intermediate- range missiles, the advanced intercontinental ballistic missile systems, and hypersonic weapons. As the Russian invasion of Ukraine has shown, threats to implement further military-technical actions can be fulfilled as well. Russia will continue to escalate the situation in various regions of Europe, accompanied by a demonstration of military power and nuclear threats.

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<sup>71</sup> Военно-стратегический паритет. *Энциклопедия ПБСН* ["Military-strategic parity" in *Encyclopedia of Strategic Missile Forces*].

<sup>72</sup> Lennor Olshtynsky, "Характер современной военной угрозы России и опыт истории" ["The nature of the modern military threat to Russia and the experience of history"], *Military thought*, 2021, No.6, 16.