

## The General Staff's Throw-Weight

The Russian Military's Role in and  
Views of US-Russian Arms Control

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## Abstract

This study is intended as a reference for US policy-makers seeking to engage with their Russian counterparts on nuclear weapons and arms control issues in the future. An attempt to look inside the black box of Moscow's decision-making, it adds dimensions of bureaucratic analysis and civil-military relations to a small set of present-day primers on negotiating with Russia on arms control. This study describes key Russian civilian and military stakeholders in arms control, traces the evolution of relevant interagency processes in the Soviet Union and now Russia, highlights the role of the General Staff leadership in international negotiations and at the domestic interagency, and provides Russian military perspectives on the value of arms control in Russia's national security as well as on key issues that may potentially be important for Russian negotiators, including nuclear weapons, missile defense, nonnuclear capabilities, and artificial intelligence.

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**Cover image:** Russian Army Gen. Nikolai Makarov, right, chief of the Armed Forces General Staff, welcomes US Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to Moscow, June 26, 2009. US Department of Defense.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is intended as a reference for US policy-makers seeking to engage with their Russian counterparts on nuclear weapons and arms control issues in the future. An attempt to look inside the black box of Moscow's decision-making, the study adds dimensions of bureaucratic analysis and civil-military relations to a small set of primers on negotiating with Russia on arms control.

The study answers the following questions:

- 1 Who are the organizational stakeholders in Russia's arms control interagency process?
- 2 How do these stakeholders interact with one another in the domestic interagency process?
- 3 What is the role of the Russian military in international arms control negotiations?
- 4 What do Russian military stakeholders identify as the most salient challenges in future arms control negotiations with the US?

## Findings

Russia's nuclear policy and, by extension, its approach to arms control are the result of an interplay among numerous civilian and military stakeholders in the Russian bureaucracy. These stakeholders participate in an interagency process. A well-balanced and functional interagency process is critical to effective US-Russian arms control negotiations. The Soviet Union's Big Five senior decision-making bodies and Little Five interagency coordination mechanism provide a useful reference point of a fully engaged interagency process. There does not appear to be a comparable process focused specifically on arms control in Russia today.

On the civilian side, the president and his administration, including through the Security Council, set overall political strategy and facilitate

interagency coordination. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs focuses on diplomatic strategy and leads a delegation to international negotiations. In turn, intelligence officials, industry leaders, other political leaders, and civilian experts may provide input at the senior decision-maker or the working interagency level.

The military's role in the interagency process has the potential to fluctuate greatly depending on the state of the civil-military relationship and the ability of the military to monopolize relevant information and limit the participation of civilian interagency participants. When it comes to arms control, military engagement at the high level is essential for resolving senior policy-makers' concerns and driving bureaucracy at the working level.

Russian military stakeholders consist of specialized entities in the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff who engage in nuclear planning and in developing, negotiating, and implementing arms control accords. Some of these military organizations are likely to lose capacity and institutional memory during a time when there are no active US-Russian arms control agreements. This potentially means a generation of Russian military officers who have no experience participating in the interagency process, in negotiations, or in implementing arms control agreements.

As it has been since the Cold War, the heart of Russian expertise on nuclear planning is the General Staff's Main Operational Directorate. The participation of stakeholders from that military organization signals the seriousness of Russian engagement in any arms control talks. Tracking this organization's role, leadership, and perspectives, including through Russian authoritative military literature, is essential to understanding Moscow's perspectives on the "new security equation."

An analysis of Russian authoritative military writings suggests that the Russian military views arms control as an important way to plan for the predictable development of its strategic forces and to limit arms racing. The writings also point to the potential challenges of negotiating numerical limits on all Russian nuclear weapons; evolving discordant perspectives on missile defense; an interest in limiting certain conventional capabilities, especially those at the intermediate-range level; and an emerging understanding that artificial intelligence could be transformative for nuclear deterrence.

Washington's current capacity to analyze Moscow's decision-making is limited. Growing Russian restrictions on open-source information and media reporting further challenge Western research and scholarship. In this environment, a dedicated US effort to understand Russian domestic bureaucracies, leaders in those bureaucracies, and decision-making processes can help to improve the effectiveness of US deterrence, particularly if prospects of risk reduction are slim.

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## PROLOGUE

At a June 2021 meeting in Geneva, Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Joseph Biden initiated a Strategic Stability Dialogue (SSD) process. The parties entered this process with diverging understandings of how to evolve their decades-long relationship of mutual vulnerability. The US sought to limit all Russian nuclear weapons.<sup>1</sup> Russia wanted to discuss a “new security equation” that included “all types of offensive and defensive weapons...[and] new areas of confrontation, such as cyberspace, outer space, and artificial intelligence.”<sup>2</sup> After several meetings, the SSD was halted following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

In February 2023, Putin announced that Moscow would suspend the implementation of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which

since 2010 had verifiably limited the size of US and Russian actively deployed strategic nuclear forces. In the past, Russian officials had commended New START as a “gold standard” that buttressed strategic stability.<sup>3</sup> The Russian General Staff also argued that the treaty provided important transparency and predictability in forecasting the balance of strategic nuclear forces.<sup>4</sup> But, in his announcement, Putin cited the inability to compartmentalize arms control or allow US onsite inspections while he perceived that the US, and the West in general, were seeking to inflict a “strategic defeat” on Russia.<sup>5</sup> Given the halt of the SSD and the collapse of the bilateral relationship in the context of the war in Ukraine, New START was on a trajectory to expire without a replacement in 2026.

<sup>1</sup> “Under Secretary Bonnie Jenkins’ Remarks: Nuclear Arms Control: A New Era?” US Department of State, Sept. 6, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/under-secretary-bonnie-jenkins-remarks-nuclear-arms-control-a-new-era/>.

<sup>2</sup> “Russian Security Proposals Cover All Types of Offensive, Defensive Weapons, Cyberspace, Outer Space, AI - General Staff,” Interfax, Dec. 9, 2021, <https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/73344/>.

<sup>3</sup> “Russian Ambassador to the US Calls New START ‘Gold Standard’” [Посол России в США назвал «золотым стандартом» договор СНВ-3], *Regnum*, Apr. 9, 2022, <https://regnum.ru/news/3560113>.

<sup>4</sup> A. E. Sterlin and A. L. Khryapin, “On the Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Area of Nuclear Deterrence” [Основах государственной политики Российской Федерации в области ядерного сдерживания], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, Aug. 7, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> “Presidential Address to Federal Assembly,” Kremlin.ru, Feb. 21, 2023, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70565>.



# INTRODUCTION

For five decades following the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, leaders and negotiators from Moscow and Washington met periodically to discuss ways to restrain their nuclear competition and reduce the risks of nuclear war.<sup>6</sup> Because of the scarcity of official contacts and the absence of reliable media reporting, the Soviet interagency process was an analytical black box during the Cold War.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, in the 1970s and 1980s, US scholars and academics sought to understand the inner workings of the Soviet political and military bureaucracy and how it produced decisions on nuclear weapons.<sup>8</sup> In the context of arms control, this understanding could provide the US with negotiating leverage.

During the Cold War, numerous anecdotes circulated about Soviet interagency dynamics. For example, during the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks I (SALT I) negotiations in the 1970s, the US delegation reportedly observed tensions between the Soviet military and its civilian counterparts. A senior military representative from the Soviet delegation, Colonel General Nikolai Ogarkov, took aside several members of the US delegation and requested that they not share US intelligence data on Soviet military

capabilities with Ogarkov's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) counterparts from the Soviet delegation.<sup>9</sup> This intervention by Ogarkov, who would shortly become the Soviet Union's chief of the General Staff, potentially hinted at an interagency process in which the military was highly protective of its nuclear expertise and relied on it to remain influential. By contrast, in the 1980s, the military's influence seemed to wane as the new general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Mikhail Gorbachev, looked for civilian sources of advice on nuclear policy and clashed with the military on the terms of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty.<sup>10</sup>

The end of the Cold War put an end to the intense focus by US scholars and academics on Russia. Nevertheless, post-Cold War interviews with individuals in the Soviet military apparatus shed light on the role of industry interests in driving nuclear procurement, including during a time when senior Soviet decision-makers were ill or incapacitated.<sup>11</sup> Russian scholars wrote about the immense influence of the military, in particular the General Staff, on nuclear weapons employment

<sup>6</sup> This study uses the term "arms control" to mean numerical arms control focused on nuclear weapons, as discussed in greater detail in "The International Negotiations" section.

<sup>7</sup> Steven M. Meyer, "Soviet National Security Decisionmaking: What Do We Know and What Do We Understand?" in *Soviet Decisionmaking for National Security*, ed. Jiri Valenta and William Potter (UCLA, 1984), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003108108-16/soviet-national-security-decisionmaking-know-understand-stephen-meyer>.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Edward L. Warner III, *The Military in Contemporary Soviet Politics: An Institutional Analysis*, (Praeger Publishers, 1977); Thomas W. Wolfe, "The SALT Experience: Its Impact on US and Soviet Strategic Policy and Decisionmaking," RAND, Sept. 1975; and the many chapters in *Soviet Decisionmaking for National Security*, ed. Valenta and Potter. This is discussed in greater detail in "The Domestic Interagency Process" section.

<sup>9</sup> John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1973), pp. 55–56.

<sup>10</sup> Alexei Arbatov, "Russia," in *Governing the Bomb: Civilian Control and Democratic Accountability of Nuclear Weapons*, ed. Hans Born, Bates Gill, and Heiner Hanggi (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 54–56.

<sup>11</sup> See "Soviet Intentions" in "Previously Classified Interviews with Former Soviet Officials Reveal U.S. Strategic Intelligence Failure Over Decades," ed. William Burr and Svetlana Savranskaya, National Security Archive, Sept. 11, 2009, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb285/>.

plans.<sup>12</sup> In the 1990s, Moscow's bureaucratic process ceased to be a mystery as US-Russian interagency contacts thrived, as did media reporting. In addition, Russian nongovernmental experts openly debated nuclear issues. Following the conclusion of arms control agreements and the inception of the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction programs, US government representatives inspected and improved security at Russian nuclear facilities.<sup>13</sup>

In the decade since Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, information on the Russian military and Russian nuclear policy, so widely accessible for several decades, gradually began to dissipate. The Russian government criminalized certain reporting and writing on military issues, shuttering outlets that were once reliable forums for expert debates.<sup>14</sup> US-Russian nuclear security engagements also ceased, and then the 2022 war in Ukraine severed official US-Russian bureaucratic contacts. Today, prevailing Western debates center on the degrees of Putin's omnipotence in national security decision-making and the levels of "ad hoc" in the system. In the meantime, Moscow's interagency process is once again reverting to an analytical black box.

## Questions

This study is intended as a reference for US policy-makers seeking to engage with their Russian counterparts on nuclear weapons and strategic stability issues in the future.<sup>15</sup> An attempt to look inside the black box of Moscow's decision-making, it adds dimensions of bureaucratic analysis and civil-military relations to a small set of present-day primers on negotiating with Russia on arms control.<sup>16</sup> The study answers the following questions:

- 1 Who are the organizational stakeholders in Russia's arms control interagency process?
- 2 How do these stakeholders interact with one another in the domestic interagency process?
- 3 What is the role of the Russian military in international arms control negotiations?
- 4 What do Russian military stakeholders identify as the most salient challenges in future arms control negotiations with the US?

<sup>12</sup> Arbatov, "Russia," p. 54.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Joseph P. Harahan, *With Courage and Persistence: Eliminating and Securing Weapons of Mass Destruction with the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Programs* (DOD, 2014); Joseph P. Harahan, *On-Site Inspections Under the INF Treaty: A History of the On-Site Inspection Agency and INF Treaty Implementation, 1988–1991* (DOD, 1993); and Sigfried Hecker, *Doomed to Cooperate* (Bathtub Row Press, 2016).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Anton Troianovski and Valeriya Safronova, "Russia Takes Censorship to New Extremes, Stifling War Coverage," *New York Times*, Mar. 4, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/04/world/europe/russia-censorship-media-crackdown.html>.

<sup>15</sup> The study does not take a position on whether arms control is inherently good or bad, or in the US national interest. It treats the decision to negotiate and conclude an arms control agreement as an outcome of any country's internal bureaucratic processes.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Michael Albertson, *Negotiating with Putin's Russia: Lessons Learned from a Lost Decade of Bilateral Arms Control*, CGSR, Mar. 2021, <https://cgsr.llnl.gov/content/assets/docs/CGSR-LivermorePaper9.pdf>, and Michael O. Wheeler, "International Security Negotiations: Lessons Learned from Negotiating with the Russians on Nuclear Arms," Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) Occasional Paper, Feb. 2006, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA460350>.

## Approach

International negotiations are widely acknowledged to have domestic and international dimensions. The classic framework is Robert Putnam's two-level game model, which focuses on the interaction between domestic stakeholders and then the delegations in international negotiations.<sup>17</sup> This is loosely the approach taken in this study, which first maps the stakeholders, then looks at the functioning of the domestic interagency process, and then focuses more specifically on the military's role in negotiations at the international level. Finally, the study looks at issues that could come to play in future negotiations. We provide an overview and a roadmap in the sections that follow.

Russian military stakeholders are entities in the MOD and the General Staff that participate in nuclear planning and in developing and implementing arms control accords.

## The stakeholders

This section offers a reference on military and civilian stakeholders, noting changes between the Soviet and the Russian periods. It offers rough maps of how these stakeholders are organized, focusing primarily on depicting the entities in the formal decision-making structure. It draws on literature on Russian and Soviet decision-making in national security, articles from Russian-language military publications about the evolution of key military entities and their role in arms control, and the websites of key military and civilian stakeholders.

Russian military stakeholders consist of specialized entities in the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the General Staff that participate in nuclear planning and

in developing, negotiating, and implementing arms control accords. Some of these stakeholders in the MOD and the General Staff were developed as part of the bilateral arms control process during the Cold War, and some have been reorganized between the two military bureaucracies. In addition, as this study notes, the relationship between the leaders of the MOD and the General Staff, including on nuclear weapons issues, has not always been smooth in contemporary Russian history.

During the Soviet period, the Politburo and the Defense Council, chaired by the Communist Party's general secretary, were the most instrumental civilian stakeholders. Today, the president and his administration, including through the presidential administration and the Security Council, set overall strategy and facilitate

interagency coordination. Throughout both periods, the MFA led arms control negotiations. Foreign intelligence and domestic security services have provided certain inputs into negotiations, while defense and nuclear industry experts who designed and manufactured nuclear weapons systems and nuclear warheads offered inputs. Civilian experts outside of government have also provided input, though their influence in the system has fluctuated. The contemporary process also includes the legislative branch, though its effect on the process, and its ability to block arms control on the grounds of its potential damage to national security, has varied greatly over time.

<sup>17</sup> Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988), pp. 427–460, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2706785>.

### *The domestic interagency process*

The goal of this section is to trace the evolution of the arms control interagency process from the Soviet era to the Russian period with a focus on understanding the role of the military in internal arms control decision-making. The military can have a contentious or a harmonious relationship with the political leadership and can be compliant to civilian will, seek to conduct its own policy, or remain disengaged. It can also monopolize information to influence the interagency process. All these dynamics can have implications for arms control negotiations.

During the Soviet era, civil-military relations were relatively smooth. The interagency process on arms control had senior military representation and was supported by a working group led by the General Staff. The end of the Cold War featured extensive civil-military tensions, and Russia then went through a brief period when arms control did not go through a formal interagency process. The present-day interagency process on national security appears to be run through the presidential administration and the Security Council, and although military expertise is paramount, numerous civilian stakeholders also appear to be involved.

This section of the study applies some of the lessons from the literature to the Soviet and Russian periods. It draws on scholarship on the role of the Soviet/Russian military in foreign policy, on civil-military relations in the Soviet Union/Russia, and on expert analytical literature on the arms control and national security decision-making processes in Moscow.

### *The military's role in international arms control negotiations*

This section explores the role of the Soviet/Russian military in arms control negotiations at the international level by examining mini-cases of several

successful and failed major nuclear arms control negotiations. It examines elements of civil-military relations and the military's role in negotiations and describes the role of General Staff leaders in securing arms control treaties. It draws on memoirs, contemporaneous writings by US and Russian experts, and oral histories with Russian negotiation participants.

### *Military views on arms control*

The SSD, discussed in the prologue, involved disagreements between the US and Russia on the nature of the next arms control agreement. This section analyzes select authoritative Russian-language military articles on arms control issues, drawn from authoritative MOD journals between 2020 and 2023, to capture how the Russian military viewed issues relevant to potential arms control with the US during that time. It describes how Russian military stakeholders view the role of arms control in Russian national security and then provides a topical overview of some of the elements of the new security equation.

### *Conclusion and implications*

The concluding section summarizes key arguments, findings, and implications for US policy-makers seeking to negotiate with Russia on arms control issues. It underscores the importance of understanding the relationship between senior political leadership and the military at the time of negotiations, the structure of Russia's arms control decision-making process, and military views on arms control. As the Russian political system continues to evolve, civilian stakeholders—including political leaders, senior diplomats, industry leaders, and the legislature—can also reassert themselves and engage in disagreements with one another and with the military, thus affecting the negotiation and conclusion of arms control agreements in the future.

# THE STAKEHOLDERS

This section provides a reference on Russian military and civilian stakeholder organizations and depicts their formal structure. These stakeholders include the following:

## Military stakeholders:

- General Staff: the military planning lead
  - Main Operational Directorate (GOU): the heart of nuclear planning
  - Main Directorate (GU): intelligence on foreign capabilities
- MOD: the military policy lead
  - Main Directorate of International Military Cooperation: the military interagency lead
  - Directorate on Treaty Implementation Control (Nuclear Risk Reduction Center): the data-exchange and onsite inspections center
  - 12th Main Directorate: the lead for nuclear weapons security
  - The armed forces: the nuclear triad
  - MOD research institutes and service academies: the military thinkers

## Civilian stakeholders:

- The president and his administration: the command-and-control center
- Security Council: interagency coordination
- MFA: the diplomatic lead
- Security services: protection for Russian internal security
- The legislature: oversight and ratification
- The government of Russia: defense budget and potential political lead
- Defense and nuclear industry: the technical experts with potential agendas
- Academy of Sciences: civilian nongovernmental experts

## Military stakeholders

This study defines the military as officers currently serving in the Russian armed forces and civilians serving in the MOD or the General Staff.<sup>18</sup> The Russian president is the commander-in-chief of the Russian armed forces. The MOD and the General Staff, subordinate to the president, are legally responsible for defending Russia against external threats.<sup>19</sup> Open sources suggest that the president, the minister of defense, and the chief of the General Staff participate in Russia's nuclear command-and-control arrangements.<sup>20</sup>

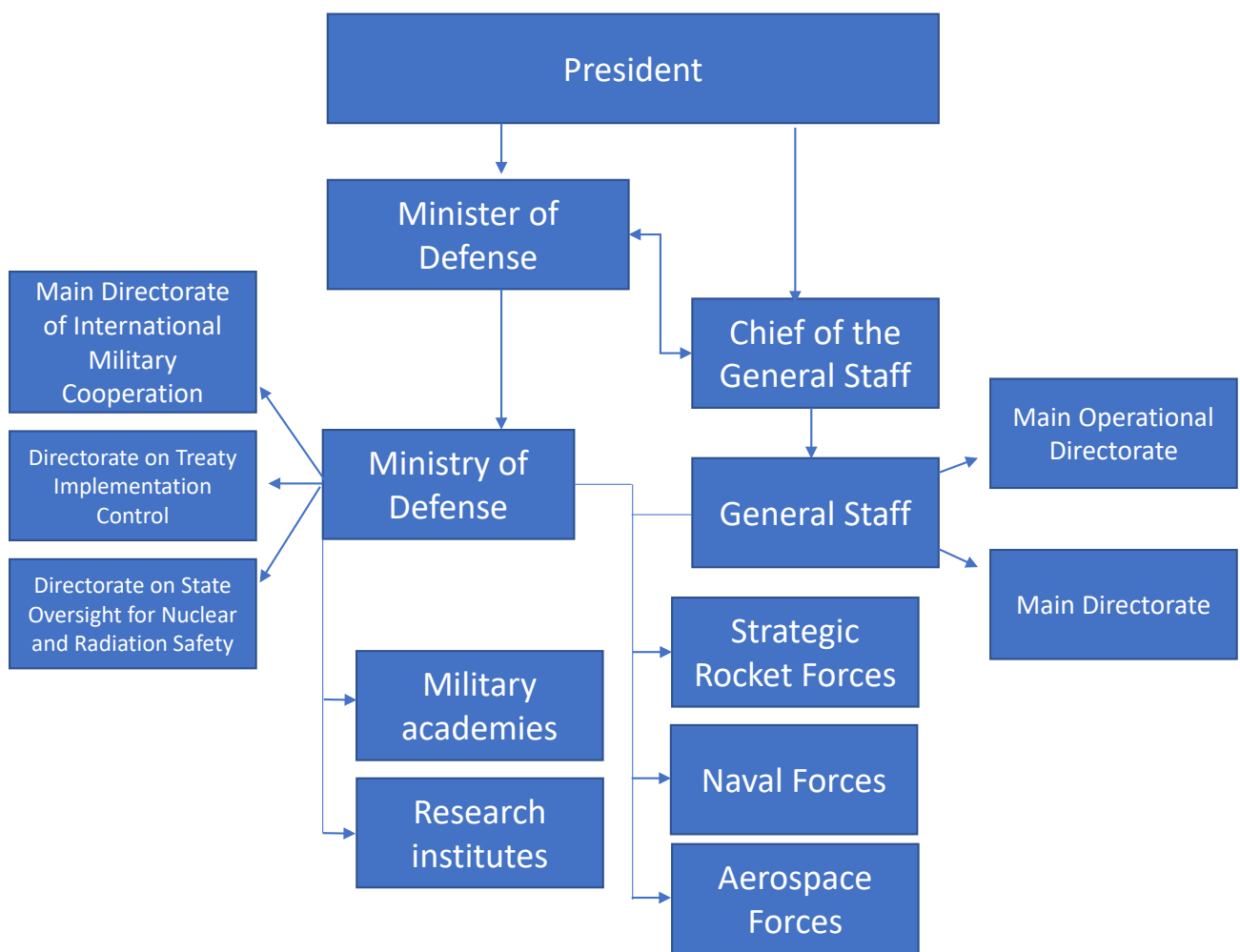
<sup>18</sup> The "military" as used here is not equivalent to the "siloviki," or individuals with intelligence or security-service backgrounds who have a close relationship with Putin, as once debated in Ol'ga Kryshchanovskaya and Steven White, "Putin's Militocracy," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 19, no. 4 (2023), pp. 289–306, and in Bettina Renz, "Putin's Militocracy? An Alternative Interpretation of Siloviki in Contemporary Russian Politics," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 6 (2006), pp. 903–924.

<sup>19</sup> A useful primer is Bettina Renz, "Russia's 'Force Structures' and the Study of Civil-Military Relations," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 18, no. 4 (2005), pp. 559–585.

<sup>20</sup> See "How Does Russia Command and Control Its Nuclear Forces?," pp. 16–23, in Anya Fink et al., in *The Nuclear Programs of Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran*, CNA, Jan. 2024, <https://www.cna.org/reports/2024/01/the-nuclear-programs-of-russia-china-north-korea-and-iran>.

Drawing on the MOD website, **Figure 1** depicts the formal military stakeholder organizations that are likely involved in nuclear arms control issues. These stakeholder organizations are described in greater detail in the sections that follow.

Figure 1. Key military stakeholders in arms control



Source: CNA.

### General Staff: the military planning lead

The General Staff, which dates to 1763 during the Russian Empire, is the key planning and operational body of the Russian military. The General Staff is subordinate to the MOD, and currently the two organizations and their leaders have a “symbiotic” relationship, with each carrying out distinctive duties and activities.<sup>21</sup> The MOD carries out the administrative functions of the military, while the General Staff focuses on preparing war plans, procuring weapons, and commanding military operations in wartime. The chief of the General Staff is the first deputy minister of defense. The minister of defense is generally a civilian, and both the minister and the chief of the General Staff are appointed by the president. The current relationship between the two bodies and their leaders, Minister of Defense Sergey Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, is relatively harmonious. But, as discussed in the next section, there is a precedent of public disagreements between the senior military leaders in these positions, including on nuclear issues.

The division of responsibilities between the General Staff and the MOD has shifted throughout Russian and Soviet history, with the General Staff at times carrying out more administrative functions than at present. As discussed in this section, certain

functions related to arms control have been shared between the two bodies, with several waves of military reforms following the end of the Cold War. At present, the two parts of the General Staff that appear to participate in the arms control process are the Main Operational Directorate and the Main Directorate.<sup>22</sup>

### MAIN OPERATIONAL DIRECTORATE: THE HEART OF NUCLEAR PLANNING

Currently headed by a colonel general (a three-star officer), the General Staff's GOU (Главное оперативное управление) is the heart of the Russian military planning structure.<sup>23</sup> In the words of its current leadership, “all the decisions and guidance of the military-political leadership of the country, the Main Operational Directorate transforms into directives, combat guidance and orders, and operationally delivers them to the forces.”<sup>24</sup> In the nuclear policy context, the GOU creates nuclear targeting lists, advises on weapons procurement, and provides expertise in terms of Russian nuclear doctrine and capabilities.<sup>25</sup>

### MAIN DIRECTORATE: INTELLIGENCE ON FOREIGN CAPABILITIES

Formerly known as the GRU, the GU (Главное управление) is the military's intelligence organization. It is currently headed by an admiral (a three-star officer).<sup>26</sup> In the nuclear policy

<sup>21</sup> See Alexis A. Blanc et al., *The Russian General Staff: Understanding the Military's Decisionmaking Role in a “Besieged Fortress,”* RAND, 2023, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA1233-7.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1233-7.html).

<sup>22</sup> The General Staff has its own academy, with a center that focuses, *inter alia*, on forecasting the nature of war and deriving implications for Russian operational concepts and procurement priorities. It also publishes journals like *Voennaya Mysl' (Military Thought)* that provide authoritative military views on key issues, including arms control, as discussed in greater detail in later sections of this report.

<sup>23</sup> See Russian Ministry of Defense, “Главное оперативное управление,” N.D., [https://structure.mil.ru/structure/ministry\\_of\\_defence/details.htm?id=9710@egOrganization](https://structure.mil.ru/structure/ministry_of_defence/details.htm?id=9710@egOrganization); “In the Center of Country's Defense” [В центре обороны страны], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, Feb. 19, 2012; Russian Ministry of Defense, “On 20 February GOU GS Will Turn 309 Years” [20 февраля ГОУ ГШ ВС РФ исполнится 309 лет], N.D., <https://pda.mil.ru/pda/news/more.htm?id=10369803@egNews>; and “Generator of Ideas and Concepts” [Генератор идей и замыслов], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, Feb. 18, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> “In the Center of the Country's Defense” [В центре обороны страны], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, Feb. 19, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Arbatov, “Russia,” p. 72.

<sup>26</sup> See Russian Ministry of Defense, “Главное оперативное управление.” For a useful primer, see Andrew Bowen, *Russian Military Intelligence: Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report R46616, updated Nov. 15, 2021.

context, the GU is responsible for collecting and providing to leadership intelligence on adversary military capabilities related to nuclear weapons. Representatives of the GU are also embedded in Russia's embassies abroad.

## *Ministry of Defense: the military policy lead*

The MOD is the top administrative body of the Russian military.<sup>27</sup> It has a leadership body called the Collegium, which is led by Shoigu and currently composed of Gerasimov, a number of other deputy ministers of defense, heads of Russian armed services and branches, and directors of federal services on export control and military-technical cooperation.<sup>28</sup>

At present, there are at least three relevant directorates at different levels in the MOD with varying duties and with input into the arms control process. Other stakeholders include the MOD research institutes and the armed forces that make up Russia's nuclear triad.

According to its mission statement, the MOD Main Directorate of International Military Cooperation is responsible for preparing for the arms control negotiations process and drafting treaties.

## **MAIN DIRECTORATE OF INTERNATIONAL MILITARY COOPERATION: THE MILITARY INTERAGENCY LEAD**

Currently headed by a lieutenant general (a two-star officer), the Main Directorate of International Military Cooperation (Главное управление международного военного сотрудничества) leads all military and military-technical engagements with

foreign states and international organizations. According to its mission statement, the Main Directorate is responsible for preparing for the arms control negotiations process and drafting treaties.<sup>29</sup>

As part of a reorganization of responsibilities between the General Staff and the MOD in the post-Cold War period, the Main Directorate of International Military Cooperation subsumed the General Staff's Directorate of Treaty and Law (Договорно-правовое управление), which was created in 1979 and was described by its former leaders as

the "kitchen" of arms control negotiations during the 1980s.<sup>30</sup> This part of the military organization would thus be a critical stakeholder for coordinating the military perspective and potentially the interagency.

<sup>27</sup> The structure of the MOD is available here: Russian Ministry of Defense, "Structure," N.D., <https://structure.mil.ru/structure/structuremorf.htm>.

<sup>28</sup> The current list of the Collegium participants is available at Russian Ministry of Defense, "College of the Russian Defense Ministry," N.D., [https://structure.mil.ru/management/college\\_of\\_the\\_russian\\_defense\\_ministry.htm](https://structure.mil.ru/management/college_of_the_russian_defense_ministry.htm).

<sup>29</sup> Russian Ministry of Defense, "Main Directorate of International Military Cooperation" [Главное управление международного военного сотрудничества], N.D., [https://structure.mil.ru/structure/ministry\\_of\\_defence/details.htm?id=11367@egOrganization](https://structure.mil.ru/structure/ministry_of_defence/details.htm?id=11367@egOrganization).

<sup>30</sup> "Military Advisers and Specialists on the Guard of Russia's Interests" (Военные советники и специалисты на страже интересов России), MOD, undated, <https://encyclopedia.mil.ru/encyclopedia/history/more.htm?id=12348362@cmsArticle>.



## DIRECTORATE ON TREATY IMPLEMENTATION CONTROL (NUCLEAR RISK REDUCTION CENTER): THE DATA-EXCHANGE AND ONSITE INSPECTIONS CENTER

Created in 1987 as part of a US-Soviet agreement, the Directorate on Treaty Implementation Control (Управление по контролю за выполнением договоров) houses the Russian Nuclear Risk Reduction Center (Национальный Центр по уменьшению ядерной опасности).<sup>31</sup> Between 1992 and 1997, it was part of the MOD Main Directorate of International Military Cooperation, and then briefly became part of the General Staff.<sup>32</sup> This directorate, currently headed by a civilian with a military background, is responsible for Russia's arms control information exchanges with numerous countries, including the US and China. It is also responsible for coordinating arms control onsite inspection work across the armed forces and industry and for training onsite inspectors who travel abroad.<sup>33</sup>

Nuclear Risk Reduction Center is responsible for Russia's arms control information exchanges with numerous countries, including the US and China.

Russia's cessation of onsite inspections under New START raises questions about the capacity of the Directorate on Treaty Implementation Control to conduct onsite inspections and the ability of Russian military facilities to easily accept such inspections in the future.

## 12TH MAIN DIRECTORATE: THE LEAD FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS SECURITY

Created in 1947, the 12th Main Directorate has been part of the MOD since 1974, when it was moved from the Strategic Rocket Forces and, before then, the General Staff.<sup>34</sup> Among their many duties, those serving in this directorate handle, transport, and provide security for Russian nuclear warheads at central and base storage facilities. They are responsible for the security, testing, and physical protection of nuclear weapons, and for understanding their employment effects and studying their survivability. The directorate runs the nuclear testing facilities at Novaya Zemlya and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty monitoring stations.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Russian Ministry of Defense, "Directorate on Treaty Implementation Control" [Управление по контролю за выполнением договоров], N.D., [https://structure.mil.ru/structure/ministry\\_of\\_defence/details.htm?id=11148@egOrganization](https://structure.mil.ru/structure/ministry_of_defence/details.htm?id=11148@egOrganization).

<sup>32</sup> Nikolai Artukhin, "Under Reliable Control" [Под надежным контролем], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, Dec. 2002, and "Military Advisers and Specialists on the Guard of Russia's Interests."

<sup>33</sup> Anna Potekhina, "Trust, but Verify" [Доверяй, но проверяй], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, no. 140, Aug. 4, 2009; Leonid Khairemdinov, "Without Trust There Is No Cooperation" [Без контроля взаимодействия нет], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, no. 57, Apr. 3, 2013; and Anna Potekhina, "Control That Strengthens Trust" [Контроль, укрепляющий доверие], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, no. 108, June 22, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> "12th Main Directorate Is 60 Years" [60 лет 12 главному управлению министерства обороны РФ], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, Sept. 4, 2007; Vadim Gontar, Anatoliy Koryak, and Vladimir Loborev, "Military-Scientific Elite of the 12th Main Directorate of the MOD RF" [Военно-научная элита 12 Главного управления МО РФ], *Rossiiskoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, no. 8, Aug. 31, 2007; and Russian Ministry of Defense, "12th Main Directorate of the MOD RF" [Двенадцатое главное управление Министерства обороны Российской Федерации (12 ГУМО)], N.D., <http://encyclopedia.mil.ru/encyclopedia/dictionary/details.htm?id=12993@morfDictionary>.

<sup>35</sup> Vladimir Verkhovtsev, "On the Main Nuclear Directorate" [О главном ядерном управлении], *Index Bezopasnosti* 83, 2007, <https://pircenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2007-SI-RUS-Verhovtsev.pdf>.

The directorate played an important role in ensuring the transfer of Soviet nuclear weapons to Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>36</sup> It also has engaged extensively with US Department of Defense counterparts on the security of nuclear warheads as part of the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction programs.<sup>37</sup> However, this engagement ceased more than a decade ago as of this writing.

### THE ARMED FORCES: THE NUCLEAR TRIAD

Russia has a triad of strategic nuclear forces: the Strategic Rocket Forces, the Navy, and the Aerospace Forces. All are headed by three-star officers who advocate with the political and military leadership for their respective services' funding and procurement programs. Russian nuclear forces are completing a wave of modernization activities. The Strategic Rocket Forces are the dominant leg of Russia's nuclear triad; thus, these forces' leadership could have the most input into any Russian arms control positions. The Russian Navy maintains Russia's undersea nuclear retaliatory-strike capabilities and must ensure the survivability of these platforms. Russia also has nonstrategic nuclear weapons capabilities spread across the Navy, the Aerospace Forces, and the ground forces.

### MOD RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND SERVICE ACADEMIES: THE MILITARY THINKERS

The MOD has numerous research institutes (центральные научно-исследовательские институты) that participate in the planning process for defense procurement and strategic operations, including those with nuclear employment.<sup>38</sup> As

detailed in previous reports by this author, military scholars from these organizations and military academies contribute to authoritative MOD journals focused on the evolution of Russian nuclear weapons policy.<sup>39</sup> Some of the more prominent institutes include the following:

- The 4 MOD research institute, focused on Strategic Rocket Forces
- The 12 MOD research institute, focused on nuclear weapons and nuclear effects
- The 27 MOD research institute, focused on command and control, computation and modeling, forecasting, and information infrastructure
- The 46 MOD research institute, focused on military technology development and state armament program planning

Some of the military academies focused on educating the Russian officer class also house scholars who write about doctrinal concepts and plans. These include the General Staff Military Academy's Center for Military-Strategic Research as well as the military academies of the Strategic Rocket Forces and the Aerospace Forces.

<sup>36</sup> Verkhovtsev, "On the Main Nuclear Directorate."

<sup>37</sup> See *In Memoriam: Col. Gen. (ret.) Evgeny Maslin 1937–2022*, National Security Archive, Mar. 2022, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/news/russia-programs/2022-03-04/memoriam-col-gen-ret-evgeny-maslin-1937-2022>.

<sup>38</sup> Arbatov, "Russia," p. 54.

<sup>39</sup> Anya Fink and Michael Kofman, *Russian Strategy for Escalation Management: Key Debates and Players in Military Thought*, CNA, Apr. 2020, [https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA\\_Files/pdf/dim-2020-u-026101-final.pdf](https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA_Files/pdf/dim-2020-u-026101-final.pdf).

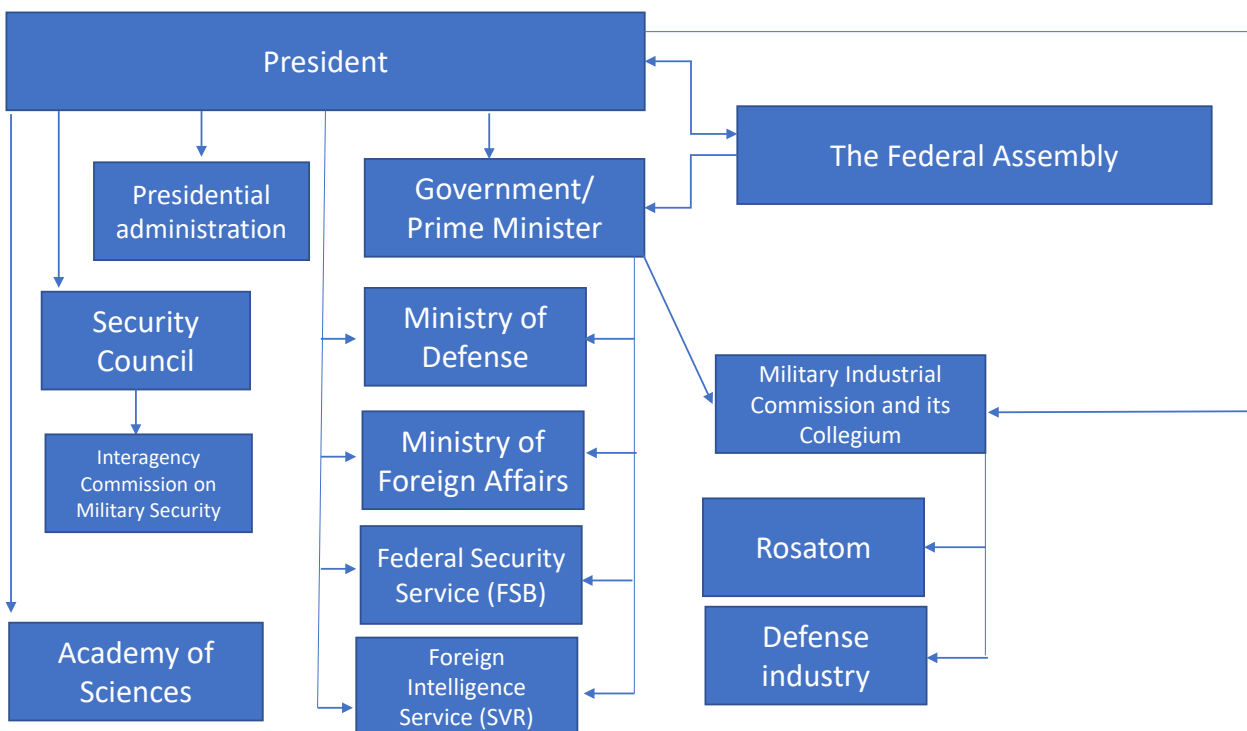
## Civilian stakeholders

Headed by the Russian president, numerous civilian stakeholders appear to participate in the arms control interagency process. **Figure 2** depicts the potential formal configuration of civilian stakeholders on nuclear weapons and arms control issues. Their informal relationships and authorities likely differ somewhat from what is shown in this organizational chart.

## *The president and his administration: the command-and-control center*

National security policy-making in the Soviet Union and Russia has generally been associated with strong civilian leadership. The major difference between the two historical periods is the central role of the CPSU structures in all issues of state governance from the 1917 Revolution to the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

Figure 2. Key civilian stakeholders in arms control



Source: CNA.

During the Soviet years, the highest decision-making body of the CPSU was the Politburo, whose members were elected from among the party leadership. As discussed in the next section of this study, key US-Soviet summits during the Cold War usually involved high-level engagement between the CPSU general secretary and his US counterpart, the US president. Internally, all important defense decisions were formally made by a civil-military Defense Council, which was composed of the CPSU general secretary, the minister of defense, the chief of the General Staff, and others.<sup>40</sup> In present-day Russia, the ultimate civilian lead on nuclear weapons policy is the president, who is also the commander-in-chief of the Russian armed forces and is responsible for Russia's decision to employ nuclear weapons.<sup>41</sup>

The president has staff in the presidential administration who serve as gatekeepers and power brokers, manage intelligence briefings, and provide public clarification of presidential statements on nuclear policy, among other functions.<sup>42</sup> The presidential administration can also serve as an interagency coordination lead for issues important

to the president, including arms control.<sup>43</sup> Its representatives can be high-level envoys for the president.

### *Security Council: interagency coordination*

Created in 1992, the Security Council can be viewed as part of the presidential administration, though it operates largely autonomously.<sup>44</sup> It develops doctrinal and conceptual documents, such as the national security and foreign policy concepts.<sup>45</sup> The council is like an "inner circle" equivalent to the Soviet Politburo, though the exact level and nature of its power are debated.<sup>46</sup> Some have described it as an "institutionalized forum for resolving disputes between crucial stakeholders within the [political] system."<sup>47</sup> The center of gravity in the Security Council is the secretariat, which has departments responsible for various national security issues that are staffed largely by seconded staff, as well as an advisory council composed of external civilian experts.<sup>48</sup> The Security Council has a secretary and

<sup>40</sup> By the time these decisions were elevated to the Defense Council, they were likely already made by the interagency or decided by the General Staff, according to Arbatov, "Russia," pp. 52–53.

<sup>41</sup> *Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Area of Nuclear Deterrence*, informal translation by the CNA Russia Studies Program, June 2020, <https://www.cna.org/reports/2020/06/state-policy-of-russia-toward-nuclear-deterrence>.

<sup>42</sup> Mark Galeotti, *The Presidential Administration: The Command and Control Nexus of Putin's Russia*, Marshall Center Security Institute, no. 44, (Feb. 2020), <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/presidential-administration-command-and-control-nexus-putins-russia-0>.

<sup>43</sup> For example, around 2013, the presidential administration had an interagency working group that focused on ballistic missile defense issues between Russia and NATO. See Vladimir Kozin, "Russian Approach to Non-strategic Nuclear Weapons and Confidence-Building Prospects," Remarks at the Warsaw Workshop "Prospects for Information Sharing and Confidence Building on Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe," Feb. 7–8, 2013.

<sup>44</sup> For a useful history, see Carolina Vendil, "The Russian Security Council," *European Security* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2001), pp. 67–94.

<sup>45</sup> David J. Betz, "No Place for a Civilian? Russian Defense Management from Yeltsin to Putin," *Armed Forces & Society* 28, no. 3 (2002), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0095327X0202800307>.

<sup>46</sup> Edwin Bacon, "The Security Council and Security Decision-Making," in *Routledge Handbook of Russian Security*, ed. Roget Kane (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2019), pp. 119–130; Mark Galleotti, *Russia's Security Council: Where Policy, Personality, and Process Meet*, Marshall Center, Oct. 2019, <https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/publications/security-insights/russias-security-council-where-policy-personality-and-process-meet-0>; and Ekaterina Schulmann and Mark Galleotti, "A Tale of Two Councils: The Changing Roles of the Security and State Councils During the Transformation Period of Modern Russian Politics," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 37, no. 5 (2021), pp. 453–469.

<sup>47</sup> Schulmann and Galleotti, "A Tale of Two Councils."

<sup>48</sup> "Composition of the Scientific Council of the SC RF" [Состав научного совета при Совете Безопасности Российской Федерации], SC, N.D., [http://www.scrf.gov.ru/about/NS\\_spis\\_organ/sost\\_NS/](http://www.scrf.gov.ru/about/NS_spis_organ/sost_NS/).

a deputy secretary who may make statements on nuclear policy, though their actual decision-making role is unclear.

Meetings of the Security Council, chaired by the president, at present feature 12 permanent members, including Minister of Defense Shoigu, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, and 17 nonvoting members, including chief of the General Staff Gerasimov.<sup>49</sup> Elevated to the Security Council in 2000, the chief of the General Staff chairs the Interagency Commission on Military Security. The working group currently includes 38 individuals from defense, intelligence, and industry, as discussed in the next section.<sup>50</sup>

### *Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the diplomatic lead*

The MFA, the key organizational entity responsible for developing and implementing Russian foreign policy, traces its history to 1549. The MFA and its leaders are traditional heads of any Soviet/Russian delegation involved in foreign negotiations. They might also compete for influence with the MOD in some circumstances, thus affecting arms control.

The MFA and its leaders are traditional heads of any Soviet/Russian delegation involved in foreign negotiations.

Since 2004, the MFA has been headed by Sergey Lavrov, who has numerous deputies with experience on arms control issues. The recent structure of the MFA includes a department focused on nonproliferation and arms control.<sup>51</sup> An important MFA actor involved in negotiations could also be the leader of the in-country embassy.<sup>52</sup>

### *Security services: foreign intelligence and protection for Russian internal security*

Because arms control issues involve the intake of information about foreign capabilities and intentions, and because arms control can touch on domestic security issues, such as allowing foreigners access to sensitive military, industry, or nuclear facilities, the interagency process also involves stakeholders from Russia's security services. During the Soviet period, these stakeholders included the Committee on State Security (KGB) and its leadership. Following post-Soviet reform of internal security and intelligence agencies, the KGB was broken up, creating the Federal Security Service (FSB) and Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), among several other successor organizations.

<sup>49</sup> "SC RF Composition" [Состав Совета Безопасности Российской Федерации], SC, N.D., <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/council/composition/>.

<sup>50</sup> For a useful history, see Vendil, "The Russian Security Council," pp. 67–94; "The Composition of the Interagency Commission of the RF SC on Military Security by Positions" [Состав Межведомственной комиссии Совета Безопасности Российской Федерации по военной безопасности по должностям], SC, N.D., [http://www.scrf.gov.ru/about/commission/MVK\\_VB\\_members/](http://www.scrf.gov.ru/about/commission/MVK_VB_members/).

<sup>51</sup> "The Central Apparatus" [Центральный аппарат], MFA, N.D., [https://www.mid.ru/ru/about/structure/central\\_office/](https://www.mid.ru/ru/about/structure/central_office/).

<sup>52</sup> For example, the Soviet ambassador to the US, Anatoly Dobrynin, played an important role during the SALT negotiations. Russia's former lead negotiator for New START, Anatoly Antonov, is currently the Russian ambassador to the US.

Today, Russia's security services are diverse in mission, culture, experiences, and background.<sup>53</sup> The SVR is a natural competitor to the military's GU. Although the remit of SVR and GU is intelligence collection and covert activities, measures such as inspections of Russian facilities and onsite inspection policies would arguably be the remit of the FSB, the organization responsible for domestic security and counterintelligence. Leaders from the FSB and the SVR are on the Security Council and have working-level representation in the Security Council's Interagency Commission on Military Security.

### *The Federal Assembly: oversight and ratification*

In the Soviet Union, the Supreme Soviet was the equivalent of the Federal Assembly, but it had little to no real authority. In modern-day Russia, treaties must be approved by the Federal Assembly, a legislative body consisting of the Duma and the Federation Council. Aside from a contentious period during the 1990s, when the Duma sought to counter President Boris Yeltsin's arms control initiatives, the Russian legislature has generally ratified arms control agreements signed by the president.<sup>54</sup> Although committees in the legislature provide oversight on the defense budget and procurement

programs, and the minister of defense has to report to both chambers, the level of their actual authority is debated.<sup>55</sup> Leaders from the Federal Assembly and relevant defense committees participate in the Security Council's Interagency Commission on Military Security.

### *The government of Russia: defense budget and potential political lead*

The Russian government is headed by the prime minister of the Russian Federation. The role of this body is to provide funding for nuclear weapons procurement and the implementation of all government programs, including arms control. This is the part of the governing process where defense-budget negotiations appear to take place.<sup>56</sup> Since the 1990s, Russia's prime ministers have played diverse roles, sometimes chairing initiatives touching on nuclear issues with their US counterparts.<sup>57</sup> The only prime minister with a reportedly significant role in arms control accords was Putin, who held that position during the New START negotiations.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Mark Galeotti, *The Intelligence and Security Services and Strategic Decision-Making*, Marshall Center, May 2019, [https://www.marshallcenter.org/sites/default/files/files/2019-09/SecurityInsights\\_30\\_Galeotti\\_May2019.pdf](https://www.marshallcenter.org/sites/default/files/files/2019-09/SecurityInsights_30_Galeotti_May2019.pdf).

<sup>54</sup> For a discussion of the Duma, see George Bunn and John B. Rhinelander, "The Duma-Senate Logjam on Arms Control: What Can Be Done?," *Nonproliferation Review* (Fall 1997), [https://fsi9-prod.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Bunn\\_Duma-Senate\\_Logjam.pdf](https://fsi9-prod.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Bunn_Duma-Senate_Logjam.pdf) and Anya Loukianova, "The Duma-Senate Logjam Revisited: Actions and Reactions in Russian Treaty Ratification," in PONI 2011 conference papers, Aug. 2019, [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/120809\\_Spies\\_ProjectNuclearIssues\\_web.pdf](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/120809_Spies_ProjectNuclearIssues_web.pdf).

<sup>55</sup> Valery Konyshchev and Alexander Sergunin, "Military," in *Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Andrei Tsygankov (Routledge, 2018), p. 174 ; Arbatov, "Russia"; and Ben Noble, "Amending Budget Bills in the Russian State Duma," in *The Russian Budget*, ed. Stephen Fortescue (Routledge, 2019).

<sup>56</sup> For a discussion of the 2024 federal budget process, for example, see Julian Cooper, *Another Budget for a Country at War: Military Expenditure in Russia's Federal Budget for 2024 and Beyond*, SIPRI, Dec. 2023, [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/sipriinsights\\_2312\\_11\\_russian\\_milex\\_for\\_2024\\_0.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/sipriinsights_2312_11_russian_milex_for_2024_0.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> One example would be the Gore-Chernomyrdin process during the 1990s.

<sup>58</sup> See the discussion of this in "The International Negotiations" section of this study.

## *Defense and nuclear industry: the technical experts with potential agendas*

Russia inherited much of the Soviet Union's vast defense complex, which supports the development and procurement of nuclear weapons delivery vehicles and warheads.<sup>59</sup> During the Soviet days, the Military-Industrial Commission had dedicated stakeholders in the Politburo and clashed with military interests in terms of developing requirements for nuclear weapons capabilities.<sup>60</sup> Industry decision-makers had senior roles, and in the 1970s, an individual who served as the industry lead became the minister of defense, which gave industry an even greater role in decision-making.<sup>61</sup> In present-day Russia, industry stakeholders could include numerous state-owned companies and design bureaus, though the degree to which they participate in arms control decision-making or negotiations—aside from potentially advising on the characteristics of certain military systems—is unknown. The dedicated coordinating body is the Military-Industrial Commission formally under the Russian president. The government of Russia serves as the convening forum for the commission's Collegium. This features the participation of key leaders from defense (Roskosmos and Rostec) and the nuclear industry (Rosatom), as well as the minister of defense and other officials involved in the budget process.<sup>62</sup> The Commission's representatives also participate in the Security Council Interagency Commission on Military Security.

Rosatom, like its predecessor, the Ministry of Medium Machine-Building of the USSR, is responsible for all processes related to the production, refurbishment, and dismantlement of nuclear warheads.<sup>63</sup> These processes also include the production of necessary fissile materials at a handful of facilities.<sup>64</sup> Research-and-development institutes subordinate to Rosatom could also be included in interagency work and potentially even negotiations, given their respective expertise on warheads and relevant infrastructure and security procedures.

## *Academy of Sciences: civilian nongovernmental experts*

In the past, representatives from civilian institutes affiliated with the Academy of Sciences, such as the Institute for US and Canadian Studies and the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, have provided advice to arms control negotiators. Leadership of the Soviet Academy of Sciences also participated in the senior decision-making process.<sup>65</sup> As discussed in greater detail in the following section, the role of nongovernmental experts in the process has ebbed and flowed throughout the history of the Soviet Union and Russia.

<sup>59</sup> See Fink et al., *The Nuclear Programs of Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran*, pp. 27–57.

<sup>60</sup> See the discussion of this in "The Domestic Interagency Process" section.

<sup>61</sup> Dmitry Ustinov served as the minister of defense of the Soviet Union from 1976 to 1984.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, "The VPK Collegium Discusses the Effort to Assure Armed Forces' Needs" [Работу по обеспечению потребностей Вооружённых Сил обсудили на заседании коллегии ВПК], Government of Russia, Jan. 25, 2023, <http://government.ru/news/47622/>.

<sup>63</sup> See "The Nuclear Weapons Production Complex" in *Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces*, ed. Pavel Podvig (Cambridge: MIT, 2001), pp. 67–116.

<sup>64</sup> See Fink et al., *The Nuclear Programs of Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran*, pp. 46–56.

<sup>65</sup> Arbatov, "Russia," p. 53.

# THE DOMESTIC INTERAGENCY PROCESS

The goal of this section is to build on the stakeholder map developed in the previous section by depicting the inner workings of Moscow's interagency process on arms control. It first highlights insights from literature on civil-military dynamics in Moscow. It then traces the features and contributions of the arms control interagency process during the Cold War and in the post-Cold War period. Finally, it argues that the interagency process can be viewed through the prism of the civil-military relationship and the ability of the military to hold a monopoly on relevant information and expertise, limiting the role of civilian participants in the process.

The post-Cold War interagency process is best understood as divided between two periods: under Yeltsin and under Putin.

The Soviet Union's interagency process on arms control operated at a senior level and the interagency working level to coordinate Moscow's position for complex technical negotiations. The General Staff coordinated the interagency at the working level. Civilian authority effectively constrained the military throughout the period, but its monopoly on information was gradually eroded by the end of the Cold War.

The post-Cold War interagency process is best understood as divided between two periods: under

Yeltsin and under Putin. In both periods, decision-making on national security was constrained to a small circle of individuals. The Yeltsin period featured extensive challenges by the military to civilian authority and the participation of numerous civilian stakeholders in contesting agreements that were concluded without the full involvement of the interagency. The Putin period began with a set of inter-military disputes about the future of the nuclear forces and featured a gradually increasing role for the president and the Security Council.

## Insights from literature

During the Cold War, Western scholars and practitioners drew on the experience of the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) to understand the Soviet national security decision-making process. Some scholars collected observations of US negotiators and constructed organizational diagrams of the Soviet interagency.<sup>66</sup> Others wrote extensively on the Soviet interagency dynamics and the role of the Soviet military in the talks.<sup>67</sup> Still others focused on the means by which the military exercised its authority.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Wolfe, "The SALT Experience," and Rose E. Gottemoeller, "Decision Making for Arms Limitation in the Soviet Union," in *Soviet Decisionmaking for National Security*, ed. Jiri Valenta and William Potter (UCLA, 1984).

<sup>67</sup> Raymond Garthoff, "The Soviet Military and SALT," in *Soviet Decisionmaking for National Security*, ed. Jiri Valenta and William Potter (UCLA, 1984), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003108108-9/soviet-military-salt-raymond-garthoff>, and Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation* (Brookings, 1985).

<sup>68</sup> Warner, *The Military in Contemporary Soviet Politics*. See also Michael Sulmeyer and Michael Albertson, "Early Contributions to the Study of the Soviet Armed Forces and Bureaucratic Politics," in *Challenges in US National Security: A Festschrift Honoring Edward L. (Ted) Warner*, ed. David Ochmanek and Michael Sulmeyer, RAND, 2014, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate\\_pubs/CP765.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/corporate_pubs/CP765.html).



In 2010, Russian scholar and policy practitioner Alexey Arbatov detailed the interplay between civilian authorities and the military in nuclear decision-making in the Soviet Union and Russia. He traced the evolution of attempts by civilian authorities to constrain military power in the process of making decisions about nuclear-force structure and employment and noted the existence at that time of a “paradoxical situation” in which “genuine policymaking on nuclear weapons is the most closed and narrow of all defense-related policymaking while [the] public discussion on this subject is the broadest and most substantive of Russia’s various security dilemmas.”<sup>69</sup> At its heart, then, the basic dimension of analysis of the interagency process is the nature of the civil-military relationship and the ability of the military to hold a monopoly on nuclear-related information and expertise.

Russian history is replete with instances of tensions between civilian leadership and military officers.

### Civil-military relations

Russian history is replete with instances of tensions between civilian leadership and military officers. In a work examining the challenges of defense leadership and military reform in Russia, Russian statesman Andrey Kokoshin wrote of the damaging effects on the Imperial, Soviet, and Russian armed forces of leadership shakeups and political repression by civilian authorities over the military.<sup>70</sup> In the Soviet period, military leaders were members of the CPSU,

and this party membership, as well as party structures and party officers within the military, served to ensure their loyalty to the state and its political leadership.

Before the 1991 coup attempt, whose planners and sympathizers included Soviet military leaders, scholars of Soviet civil-military relations focused largely on

explaining the “quiescence of the military” as a political actor and why the relationship between the Soviet military command and the CPSU “persisted without essential change.”<sup>71</sup> Some have argued that “civilian supremacy applied both in sovereign power and in defense politics issues.”<sup>72</sup> More recently, others described “an imperfect equilibrium” in which “the Russian

military is professional and subject to unquestionable civilian control,” but an “existing civil–military divide creates an imbalanced perception of Russian military power.”<sup>73</sup>

Conceptually, the military can have a contentious or a harmonious relationship with the political leadership. A recent literature review by Fredrik Westerlund proposed a model of Soviet/Russian civil-military dynamics in foreign policy decision-making. The model specifies three roles of the military in such decision-making, based on the military’s will and ability to conform to political preferences.<sup>74</sup> These roles are described in **Table 1**.

<sup>69</sup> Arbatov, “Russia,” p. 51.

<sup>70</sup> A. A. Kokoshin, “Defense Leadership in Russia: The General Staff and Strategic Management in a Comparative Perspective,” Belfer Center, Nov. 2002.

<sup>71</sup> Timothy J. Colton, *Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1979).

<sup>72</sup> Brian D. Taylor, *Politics and the Russian Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1689–2000* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 203.

<sup>73</sup> Kirill Shamiev, “The Imperfect Equilibrium of Russian Civil-Military Relations,” RUSI, Apr. 12, 2021, <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/imperfect-equilibrium-russian-civil-military-relations>.

<sup>74</sup> Fredrik Westerlund, “The Role of the Military in Putin’s Foreign Policy,” *FOI*, Feb. 2021.

Table 1. Three potential military roles in foreign policy

Role	Relationship with Political Authority	Will/Ability to Conform to Political Preferences
<b>Servant</b>	Obedient to the political leadership in foreign affairs (does as told)	Willing and able
<b>Shaper</b>	An independent player in foreign affairs (does as it wants)	Able but unwilling
<b>Sinker</b>	Unable or unwilling to contribute to foreign affairs (has little ability to play a constructive role)	Willing but unable, or unwilling and unable

Source: Fredrik Westerlund, "The Role of the Military in Putin's Foreign Policy," FOI, Feb. 2021.

Westerlund argues that the military had a period of serving as a sinker of foreign policy in Imperial Russia when it had weak leadership and experienced losses in wars. It largely played the role of a servant throughout the Soviet period before transitioning to the role of a shaper during the Yeltsin period in the 1990s because of the weakness of civilian authority. Under the second Putin Administration, it returned to being a servant.<sup>75</sup>

This typology of civil-military relations is useful for examining the role of the military in the arms control interagency between the Soviet and Russian periods, when, Westerlund argues, the military shifted from servant to shaper. It is also potentially important for considering the military's role in the future, given what some have argued is the ongoing transformation of Russian civil-military relations because of the war in Ukraine.<sup>76</sup>

In the future, the Russian military could continue to be a servant of a strong civilian authority. In this situation, the civilian authority will drive arms control policy and facilitate the military's involvement in negotiations. But the military could also transition to being a marginalized sinker if its leadership is weak or the war in Ukraine results in significant losses. In

this case, the military might choose to abstain from effective participation in arms control negotiations, potentially rendering any resulting agreement brittle. Or, the military could be an empowered shaper if civilian leadership is weak. In this situation, the military might seek to constrain civilian attempts to negotiate arms control.

### *Monopoly on information*

Another dimension of analysis is the military's ability to monopolize expertise about nuclear capabilities and war plans and even to shield that knowledge from civilian authorities. During the Cold War, Western scholars described a situation in which the military held a "monopoly of expertise" and ensured the secrecy of information, thus preserving the continuation of this monopoly.<sup>77</sup> As one scholar wrote, "the Party leadership is the dominant force in the process and sets the objectives of policy. [But] the armed forces appear to have considerable influence on the methods used to obtain these objectives." And "in assessing military requirements, the Party leaders must rely on the General Staff, for there appears to be no other institution competent or well enough informed to provide alternative advice."<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Westerlund, "The Role of the Military in Putin's Foreign Policy."

<sup>76</sup> Kirill Shamiev, "Suspensions, Detentions, and Mutinies: The Growing Gulf in Russia's Civil-Military Relations," Carnegie Politika, July 26, 2023, <https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/90266>.

<sup>77</sup> David Holloway, "Decision-Making in Soviet Defence Policies," Adelphi Papers, 1979, p. 27.

<sup>78</sup> Holloway, p. 28.

Another scholar described civil-military interaction during Leonid Brezhnev's period as general secretary of the CPSU in the 1970s as a "loosely coupled system" in which "the [political] leadership concentrate[d] on setting the broad outlines of policy while option formation and implementation are left to the professional core."<sup>79</sup> In this description, the military was given autonomy and maintained a degree of monopoly on defense information. In some areas of national security policy, the military could be a key source of advice for the political leadership because there was little comparable expertise among civilians; thus, the process was not competitive among the interagency.<sup>80</sup>

Referencing this work, scholars would later write that this interaction evolved to "tighter" coupling in the 1980s because of political, civilian, and MFA interference into what traditionally were understood as issues of military jurisdiction.<sup>81</sup> This interference, some have argued, eventually culminated in the "defeat" of the "military establishment" "with support from Gorbachev."<sup>82</sup> However, as discussed later in this study, it also resulted in the military's lingering resentment over certain arms control decisions made by the political leadership and civilians without regard for the military's opinion.

Drawing on these two sets of literature, the military's role can be analyzed across two different dimensions. The first includes the relationship between the civilian political authority and the military and the degree of the military's will and ability to conform

to political preferences. The second is the degree to which the military is capable of monopolizing relevant information, thus stifling competition in the interagency process. The rest of this section traces the military's role across these two dimensions in the Soviet and post-Soviet interagency processes on arms control.

## The Cold War process: the Big Five

The period from the late 1960s to 1990 corresponds to the existence of a highly centralized Soviet interagency process on arms control, members of which were known colloquially as the Big Five. Contributing to Moscow's conclusion of the SALT agreements, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START), and the INF Treaty, this process spanned the period when the military was a servant and its monopoly on information was eroded gradually because of increased participation of nonmilitary stakeholders at the senior and working levels. At least from the process perspective, the military was compliant to civilian authority and played an important coordinating role at the interagency level.

The Big Five consisted of the general secretary of the CPSU (or a delegate), the minister of defense, the minister of foreign affairs, and leadership from the KGB and the Military-Industrial Commission. This senior decision-making body, depicted roughly in **Figure 3**, was supported by an interagency working group known as the Little Five, which was coordinated by the General Staff.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Condoleezza Rice, "The Party, the Military, and Decision Authority in the Soviet Union," *World Politics* 40 (October 1987), pp. 55–81.

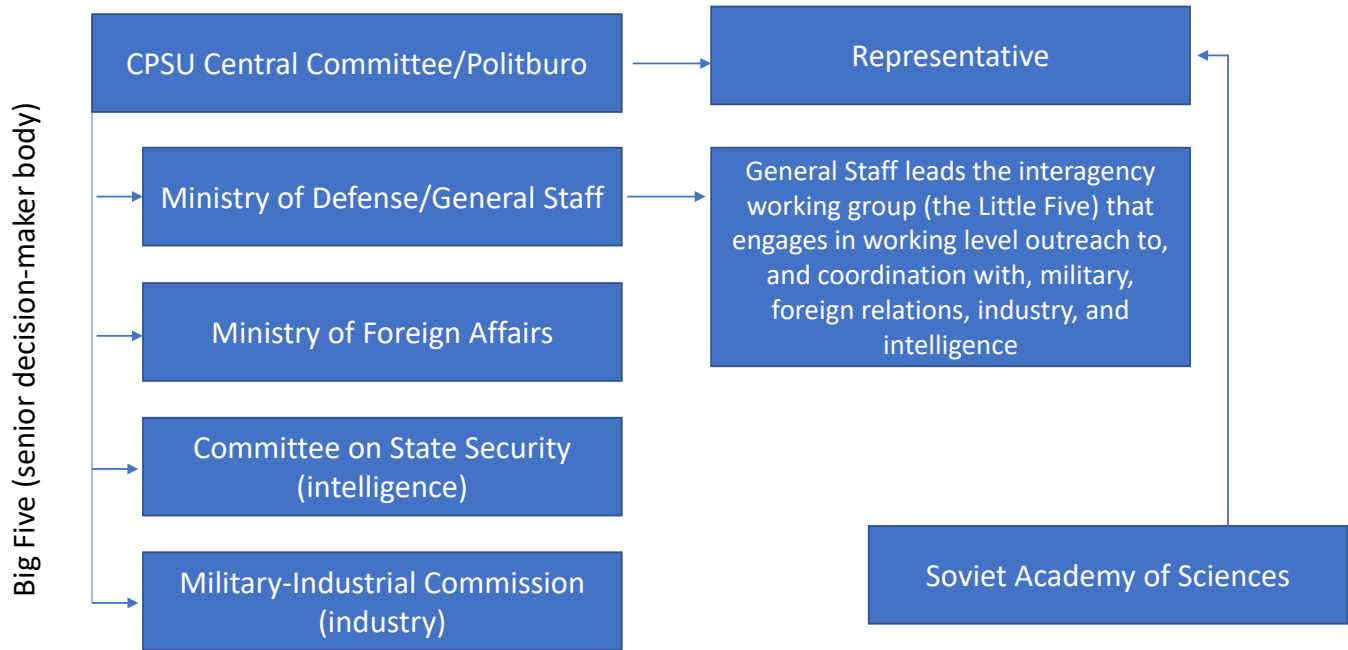
<sup>80</sup> Rice, pp. 69–70.

<sup>81</sup> Brian A. Davenport, "Civil-Military Relations in the Post-Soviet State: 'Loose Coupling' Uncoupled?," *Armed Forces & Society* 21, no. 2 (Winter 1995), pp. 175–194.

<sup>82</sup> Arbatov, "Russia," pp. 52–53.

<sup>83</sup> A. G. Savel'yev and Nikolai N. Detinov, *The Big Five: Arms Control Decision-Making in the Soviet Union* (Praeger, 1995) and "Viktor Koltunov on US-Russian Negotiations, START 1, and Arms Control" [Виктор Колтунов: о российско-американских переговорах, СНВ и режиме контроля над вооружениями], PIR Center, Mar. 7, 2023, <https://pircenter.org/news/viktor-koltunov-o-rossijsko-amerikanskih-peregovorah-snv-i-rezhime-kontrolja-nad-vooruzhenijami>.

Figure 3. The Soviet interagency process



Source: CNA.

The Big Five process began with the Politburo setting a broad agenda that was then worked out at the interagency level, after which it was brought back up to the leadership level for a decision.<sup>84</sup> In the 1970s, though competition at the interagency existed and the military struggled with the influence of industry on nuclear weapons procurement, the constructive relationships between MOD and MFA leaders ensured that the SALT negotiations were successful.<sup>85</sup> This changed with the 1985 appointment of an outsider to the MFA as minister of foreign affairs who sought

to exert MFA and his own authority over foreign relations. During the 1980s, there were also tensions between CPSU General Secretary Gorbachev and the military leadership. For a variety of reasons, the later Gorbachev period featured civil-military instability and rotations in senior-level military posts not common to the Cold War senior leadership.

The Little Five was created in the 1970s because of the growing complexity of technologies involved in arms control issues, in particular the Anti-Ballistic

<sup>84</sup> N. Chervov, "How Yesterday's 'Kitchen' of Negotiations Worked" [Как работала вчерашняя кухня переговоров], *Obozrevatel'* no. 10, 141 (2001).

<sup>85</sup> Savel'yev and Detinov, *The Big Five*, pp. 184–186.

Missile (ABM) Treaty, which sought to limit strategic defenses.<sup>86</sup> Throughout the SALT talks, it featured joint MFA-military leadership and a separation of responsibilities: “the [MFA] proposed general areas for arms limitations, while the [military] prepared the technical issues and detailed responses.”<sup>87</sup> This early period involved the intense engagement of the General Staff’s Main Operational Directorate (before the creation of the Directorate of Treaty and Law). The definitive Russian work on the subject argues that this engagement was “immensely beneficial for the development of well thought-out arms control decisions since the arms controllers were concurrently in control of the Armed Forces.”<sup>88</sup> The General Staff also conducted initial coordination with the armed forces, and the result would then be brought to the minister of defense, before being put to the interagency level.<sup>89</sup> During the 1980s, the Little Five was led by the General Staff and included representatives from industry, the armed forces, intelligence, foreign affairs, and other areas.<sup>90</sup> General Staff participants noted that the working group’s process was one in which “consensus-based” documents were prepared by individuals with broad interagency representation and taken up to the Big Five.<sup>91</sup>

The Cold War period led to the creation of numerous stakeholders with the technical expertise to engage in negotiations and the actual implementation of the arms control process.

The Cold War period led to the creation of numerous stakeholders with the technical expertise to engage in negotiations and the actual implementation of the arms control process. Nikolai Chervov, the former head of the General Staff’s Directorate of Treaty and Law, credits the Little Five interagency process with facilitating the development of an expert cadre from across the interagency, services, research institutes, and industry. These experts had a significant understanding of the issues and the ability to effectively support Soviet arms control negotiations efforts.<sup>92</sup>

### The Post–Cold War process: from Five to One

Even before the official end of the Cold War, the civil-military dynamic on nuclear issues and arms control began to shift, and the interagency process transitioned from the Politburo to the newly created Security Council. The features of the post–Cold War arms control interagency cannot be summarized as neatly as those of the Cold War interagency because much less information is available about the inner workings of the present-day interagency process. Also, much of the post–Cold War period has focused on arms control implementation and not negotiation. This section describes the national security decision-making process during the Yeltsin and Putin years,

<sup>86</sup> Savel'yev and Detinov, pp. 31–32.

<sup>87</sup> Savel'yev and Detinov, p. 33 and pp. 28–29.

<sup>88</sup> Savel'yev and Detinov, pp. 37–38: “As they understood both their operational and arms control roles, when Main Operational Directorate experts were told to solve various disarmament issues, they quickly developed practical solutions.”

<sup>89</sup> Chervov, “How Yesterday’s ‘Kitchen’ of Negotiations Worked” [Как работала вчерашняя кухня переговоров].

<sup>90</sup> Nikolai Chervov, *The Nuclear Whirlpool* [Ядерный Круговорот] (Olma Press, 2001), p. 185.

<sup>91</sup> “Viktor Koltunov on US-Russian negotiations, START 1, and Arms Control” [Виктор Колтунов: о российско-американских переговорах, СНВ и режиме контроля над вооружениями].

<sup>92</sup> Chervov, “How Yesterday’s ‘Kitchen’ of Negotiations Worked” [Как работала вчерашняя кухня переговоров].

over which time the military transitioned from being a shaper in national security affairs to once again being a servant. These periods marked two different phases in civil-military relations and in the evolution of the overall national security interagency coordination process.<sup>93</sup>

### The Yeltsin period

During the Yeltsin Administration, bilateral arms control efforts sputtered despite extensive ties between US and Russian bureaucracies, including military-military and laboratory-laboratory cooperation on nuclear weapons security, in a variety of Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction programs.<sup>94</sup> The Yeltsin period featured a military that sought to be a shaper against the backdrop of a dysfunctional interagency process and extensive domestic instability in Russia. This was not a good time for arms control and, if such instability recurs, that might not bode well for arms control either.

The Yeltsin period was marked by political instability, intense civil-military tensions, and Russia's participation in armed conflict.

The Yeltsin period was marked by political instability, intense civil-military tensions, and Russia's participation in armed conflict. Yeltsin fought with the legislature and sought to quash electoral competition from military stakeholders.<sup>95</sup> Between

1991 and 1999, he appointed numerous different ministers of defense and chiefs of the General Staff. There was also division within the military between the MOD and the General Staff about the wisdom of deeper cuts to Russia's nuclear weapons and the ability to afford them.<sup>96</sup> The military was largely autonomous and operated without oversight, at times dominating the Security Council.<sup>97</sup> That nascent coordinating body was largely unstable during this period and featured a rotating cast of characters as secretary.<sup>98</sup>

History has not been kind to Yeltsin. As discussed in greater detail later in this study, the biggest arms control failure of the Yeltsin Administration was its inability to negotiate a START 2 agreement that the diverse Russian government stakeholders would find palatable. Most accounts from those familiar with the Big Five process are highly critical of the Yeltsin Administration and Yeltsin's

minister of foreign affairs, Andrei Kozyrev, for not engaging a proper interagency process on START 2.<sup>99</sup> The agreement featured the president's own decision-making as well as that of his ministers, without the involvement of interagency channels.<sup>100</sup> Despite its conclusion, the agreement would fail to secure a timely approval by the Russian legislature, as discussed in greater detail in the following section.

<sup>93</sup> Betz, "No Place for a Civilian?" and Vendil, "The Russian Security Council," pp. 67–94.

<sup>94</sup> See, for example, Harahan, *With Courage and Persistence*; Harahan, *On-Site Inspections under the INF Treaty*; and Hecker, *Doomed to Cooperate*.

<sup>95</sup> For a useful overview of how this affected the interagency coordination process, see Vendil, "The Russian Security Council," pp. 67–94.

<sup>96</sup> Arbatov, "Russia," p. 61.

<sup>97</sup> Konyshchev and Sergunin, "Military," p. 174.

<sup>98</sup> Vendil, "The Russian Security Council," pp. 67–94.

<sup>99</sup> See "The International Negotiations" section of this study.

<sup>100</sup> Alexander Pikayev, *The Rise and Fall of START II: The Russian View*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP), Sept. 1999, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Rise\\_Fall\\_StartII.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Rise_Fall_StartII.pdf), p. 15.

### *The Putin period*

During the Putin presidency, the military has transitioned back to a servant role, with a relatively competitive national security interagency process that involves the presidential administration and the Security Council.<sup>101</sup> The Security Council has gradually expanded its remit as an interagency coordination mechanism engaged in drafting relevant conceptual documents, including military doctrines.<sup>102</sup> In the early 2000s, the Security Council also served as a venue for bitter debates between the minister of defense and the chief of the General Staff about the future of Russia's strategic nuclear forces.<sup>103</sup> Putin, who ultimately served as a referee in the debates, sided with the minister of defense. The Duma also amended key legislation to ensure that the General Staff was firmly under MOD control and that such a conflict would not recur.<sup>104</sup>

Russian scholars have credited Putin with the ability "to establish effective civilian control" over the military.<sup>105</sup> His appointees to the minister of defense position have all been civilians. During the second Putin Administration, the relationship between the minister of defense and the chief of the General Staff has been relatively stable, a durability not seen since the times of the Soviet Union.

At present, the minister of defense and the chief of the General Staff are both on the Security Council in various roles (as discussed in the second section of this study). A level down, the Interagency Commission on Military Security, led by the chief of the General Staff, includes a cast of voices similar to those participating in the Cold War interagency process, with military, foreign affairs, industry, and security-services interests represented.<sup>106</sup>

This author's perspective on a formal present-day Russian interagency process on national security is offered in **Figure 4**.

<sup>101</sup> For more on the involvement of the presidential administration and the Security Council, see Konyshv and Sergunin, "Military," p. 174.

<sup>102</sup> Vendil, "The Russian Security Council," pp. 67–94.

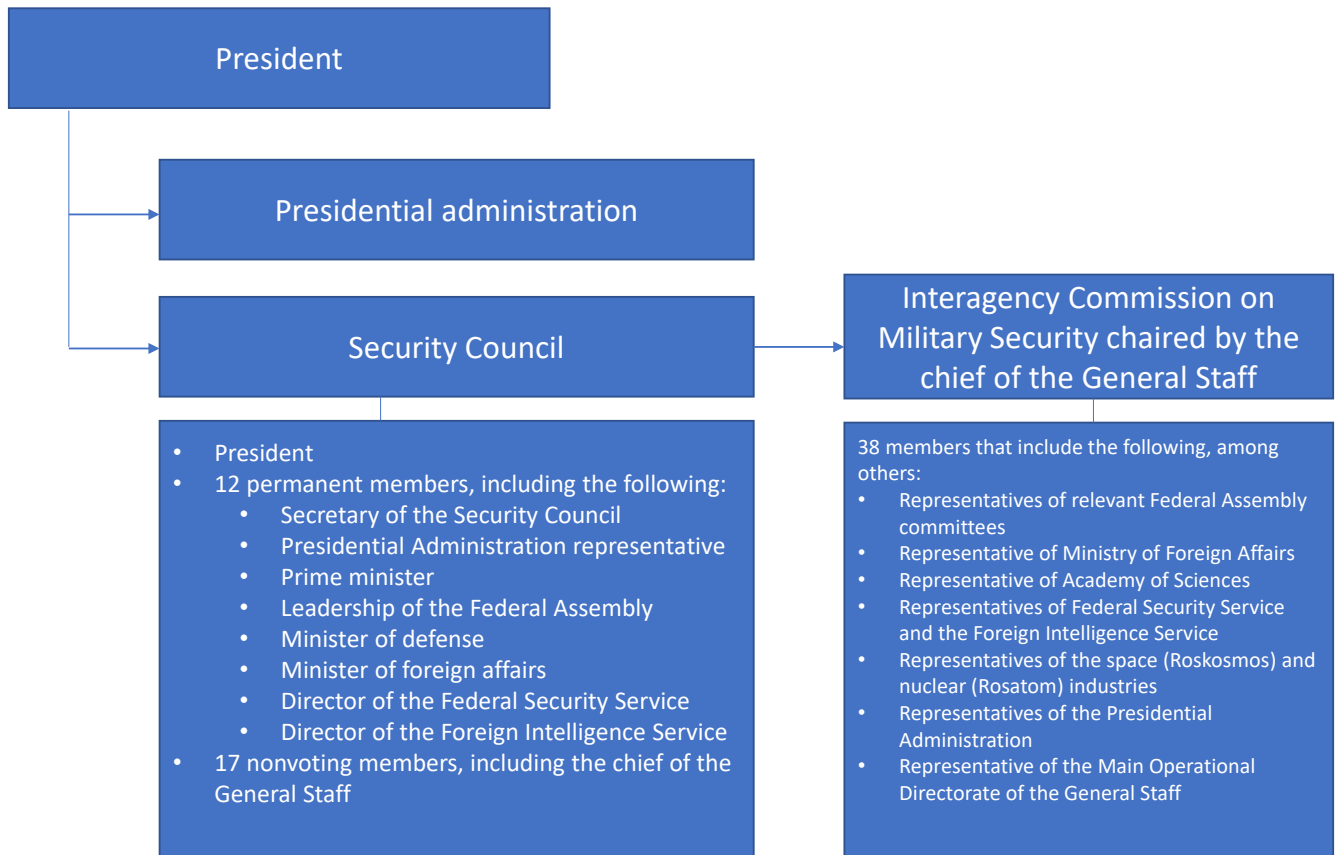
<sup>103</sup> Nikolai Sokov, "The Nuclear Debate of Summer 2000," NTI, June 30, 2004, <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/nuclear-debate-summer-2000/> and Rose Gottemoeller, "Nuclear Weapons in Current Russian Policy," in *The Russian Military: Power and Policy*, ed. Steven Miller and Dmitri Trenin (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2004), <https://www.amacad.org/publication/russian-military-power-and-policy>.

<sup>104</sup> Arbatov, "Russia," pp. 64–65.

<sup>105</sup> Konyshv and Sergunin, "Military," p. 174.

<sup>106</sup> "Composition of the Scientific Council of the Security Council of the Russian Federation on Military Security by Position" [Указом Президента Российской Федерации от 12 декабря 2016 г. N 666], [http://www.scrf.gov.ru/about/commission/MVK\\_VB\\_members/](http://www.scrf.gov.ru/about/commission/MVK_VB_members/).

Figure 4. A possible present-day Russian interagency process on national security



Source: CNA.

Western scholars debate the extent to which the current Russian interagency is competitive and whether this competition is driven by institutions or personalities.<sup>107</sup> As Russian scholars have argued, however, despite and because of the importance of individual presidential appointments to senior military positions, Russia's next president will inherit

"a military that can either obey decisive presidential guidance or shirk and decay in the lack thereof."<sup>108</sup> This statement suggests that although the military has been compliant with the political leadership, it does not mean that it will continue to act this way in the future.

<sup>107</sup> Fabian Burkhardt, "Institutionalizing Authoritarian Presidencies: Polymorphous Power and Russia's Presidential Administration," *Europe-Asia Studies* 73, no. 3 (Apr. 2021) and Galeotti, *The Intelligence and Security Services and Strategic Decision-Making*.

<sup>108</sup> Kirill Shamiev, "Understanding Senior Leadership Dynamics within the Russian Military," CSIS, July 20, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/understanding-senior-leadership-dynamics-within-russian-military>.



In an environment that features civilian oversight of military affairs, an ideal process would involve a military that acts like a servant coupled with a competitive interagency process that accounts for all inputs and opinions. As discussed in the following section, this is arguably the environment that resulted in the Soviet Union's conclusion of the INF and START 1 arms control agreements. Although these agreements were successful, the military resented the political leadership over some of their terms. The Soviet Union eventually participated in the SALT process and concluded the relevant agreements during a period in which the military acted as a servant and retained a monopoly on information. Perhaps the worst case could be one in which the military is a shaper that also maintains monopoly on information, or in which that information is not engaged at all. In this case, effective negotiations that impose constraints on the military may be impossible, or the negotiated agreement may fail. This was arguably the case in START 2. There are no examples of arms control at a time when the military is a sinker, but, arguably, such a situation could also be detrimental to fruitful negotiations.

## THE INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

This section examines how Moscow's civil-military relations and interagency process shaped Russia's experience in international arms control negotiations. There is voluminous literature on bilateral arms control, and this section does not seek to summarize each agreement and its context. Instead, it focuses on issues of contention between the military and political leadership and the military's role in negotiations. This section begins with a broad overview of arms control and transitions to mini-cases of agreements. It argues that the Russian military can play an important role in international negotiations. Military leaders from the General Staff can be engaged and interested in arms control at the highest levels, and, at the working level, the military can help facilitate interagency coordination. At the same time, the military has a long memory of slights by the political leadership when it comes to arms control, particularly when it believes that its advice was not adopted.

### Nuclear arms control: an overview

Not long after Presidents Vladimir Putin and Joseph Biden met in Geneva in 2021, the General Staff journal *Voennaya Mysl'* (Military Thought) published an article by A. A. Novikov and S. A. Medvedkov of the MOD Main Directorate for International Military Cooperation. This article offered a Russian military perspective on the evolution of US-Soviet/Russian arms control from the 1970s to the present.<sup>109</sup>

As described throughout this section, Novikov and Medvedkov contend that US-Soviet/Russian arms control has consisted of three substantively different phases between 1972 and the present. **Table 2** outlines the main parameters of these treaties as presented by Novikov and Medvedkov. The authors then argue for the need to transition to a fourth phase of arms control that would involve "all factors that impact strategic stability." This fourth phase is the subject of the next section of this study.

<sup>109</sup> A. A. Novikov and S. A. Medvedkov, "International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations" [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений], *Voennaya Mysl'*, Sept. 2021.

Table 2. Main parameters of international agreements in the nuclear arms limitation area

Name of Agreement/Year	Means Limited	Numbers	
		USSR/ Russia	US
<b>SALT 1 (OCB-1), 1972</b>	Intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launchers	1,526	1,054
	Ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs)	62	44
	Submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) launchers	950	710
<b>SALT 2 (OCB-2), 1979<sup>a</sup></b>	ICBM and SLBM launchers, heavy bombers, and air-to-surface ballistic missiles	2,250	
	Launchers of multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV'ed) ballistic missiles and heavy bombers with long-range (over 600 km) cruise missiles	1,320	
	Launchers of MIRV'ed ballistic missiles	1,200	
	Launchers of MIRV'ed ICBMs	820	
<b>INF (PCМД), 1987</b>	Liquidated ground-based ballistic and cruise missiles	1,846	846
<b>START 1 (CHB-1), 1991</b>	ICBM, SLBM and associated launchers, and heavy bombers	1,600	
	Warheads on ICBM, SLBM, and heavy bombers	6,000	
	Aggregate throw-weight (tons)	3,600	
<b>START 2 (CHB-2), 1993<sup>b</sup></b>	Warheads on ICBM, SLBM, and heavy bombers	3,000-3,500	
<b>SORT (CHП), 2003</b>	Deployed strategic warheads	1,700-2,200	
<b>New START (CHB-3), 2010</b>	Deployed ICBM, SLBM, and heavy bombers	700	
	Warheads on deployed ICBM, SLBM, and heavy bombers	1,550	
	Deployed and nondeployed launchers for ICBM, SLBM, and deployed and nondeployed heavy bombers	800	

a. SALT 2 was not ratified, but it was still implemented until 1986.

b. START 2 was signed in 1993, but it did not come into force.

Source: A. A. Novikov and S. A. Medvedkov, "International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations" [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений], *Voennaya Mysl'*, Sept. 2021.

This section of the study examines arms control negotiations and what they accomplished and considers the military's role. In brief, the SALT process of the 1970s focused on limits and restraint in both sides' capabilities, the INF/START 1 process of the 1980s and the START 2 process of the 1990s focused on actual nuclear reductions, and the Moscow Treaty and New START of the early 2000s focused on managing nuclear parity between the two sides. While discussing these negotiations, this section highlights the modern Russian MOD perspective.

## The SALT process: limits on nuclear weapons

According to Novikov and Medvedkov of the MOD, throughout the 1970s, the US and the Soviet Union sought to "halt the arms race" and "increase predictability in the area of strategic forces development."<sup>110</sup> During SALT, the sides "froze" the number of strategic delivery vehicles at their existing levels. Because of significant distrust, there were no onsite inspections, and the sides could use only national technical means for monitoring. The MOD authors posit that because the treaties focused on limits to delivery vehicles, the US and the Soviet Union were free to pursue MIRV<sup>111</sup> capabilities, which led to an increase of up to 20 to 30 percent in their total warhead numbers.<sup>112</sup> They also note the 1972 signing of the ABM Treaty, under which the sides

reached agreement "on the inseparable link in the issues of limiting strategic offensive and defensive weapons."<sup>113</sup>

According to Western analysts, the Soviet Union resisted bilateral negotiations until it achieved a level of comfort with the deployment levels of its own strategic offensive forces and the initial deployment of ABM capabilities, and the moment was right for Soviet political leadership. After the completion of SALT 1, both MOD and General Staff leadership publicly affirmed the importance of the treaties, including in "preventing the emergence of a chain reaction of competition between offensive and defensive arms."<sup>114</sup>

Preparations for SALT marked the beginning of the Big Five senior-level and Little Five working-level coordination processes (discussed in the previous section). The initial Soviet position in SALT 1 was worked out jointly between the military and the MFA and then approved by the Politburo.<sup>115</sup> In SALT 2, the military and the MFA continued to jointly lead the delegation, with the General Staff Main Operational Directorate leading the interagency in Moscow.<sup>116</sup> At the interagency level, there were no significant tensions because the MFA focused on political objectives while the military focused on military objectives.

Accounts of the SALT negotiations suggest that the Soviet military, as opposed to the US delegation,

<sup>110</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, "International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations" [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений].

<sup>111</sup> For an overview of Soviet MIRV developments, see Alexey Arbatov and Vladimir Dvorkin, "The Impact of MIRVs and Counterforce Targeting on the US-Soviet Strategic Relationship" in *The Lure and Pitfalls of MIRVs: From the First to the Second Nuclear Age*, ed. Michael Krepon, Travis Wheeler, and Shane Mason, May 2016, [https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/Lure\\_and\\_Pitfalls\\_of\\_MIRVs.pdf](https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/Lure_and_Pitfalls_of_MIRVs.pdf). See also Pavel Podvig, "The Window of Vulnerability That Wasn't: Soviet Military Buildup in the 1970s: A Research Note," *International Security*, vol. 33, no. 1 (Summer 2008), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40207103> and Nikolai Chervov, *The Nuclear Whirlpool* [Ядерный Круговорот] (Olma Press, 2001), p. 66.

<sup>112</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, "International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations" [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений].

<sup>113</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, "International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations" [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений].

<sup>114</sup> Garthoff, "The Soviet Military and SALT," pp. 141–142.

<sup>115</sup> Savel'yev and Detinov, *The Big Five*, pp. 9–30.

<sup>116</sup> Savel'yev and Detinov, pp. 33–37.

dominated the MFA.<sup>117</sup> In SALT 1, the second person on the delegation was then–First Deputy Head of the General Staff Nikolai Ogarkov. Ogarkov arguably had an information monopoly on the delegation, because the MFA had no access to classified information on the Soviet Union's own capabilities—as described in the anecdote that opened this paper.<sup>118</sup> There was extensive senior military representation throughout the SALT negotiations, including individuals who participated in earlier US-Soviet disarmament talks during the 1950 and 1960s, adding negotiation experience. Ogarkov continued to track negotiations from Moscow as he ascended in the General Staff.<sup>119</sup>

The SALT process was relatively smooth insofar as civil-military relations in the Soviet Union were concerned. The military played a dominant role in treaty negotiations, and there were no key issues of contention between the Soviet political and military leadership that translated into dysfunction at the negotiations level. But, then, arms control did not involve any radical cuts and fit neatly into the political framework of “détente.”

## The INF/START process: reductions of nuclear weapons

This period featured a set of intense negotiations with a rapidly evolving security environment as a backdrop. The INF Treaty negotiations began in the 1980s, and then the Soviet Union chose to walk away in 1983 after the US began to deploy intermediate-range Pershing 2 missiles. By the time the negotiations resumed, in 1985, the political-military leadership

in Moscow had completely changed, with Gorbachev in charge, the outsider Eduard Shevardnadze at the MFA, Sergey Sokolov at the MOD, and Sergey Akhromeyev at the General Staff. This decade saw extensive civil-society concerns about the possibility of nuclear war, which were especially acute in Moscow after the 1986 accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.<sup>120</sup> Among Soviet military leadership, there was also a growing “consensus

about the diminishing military utility of nuclear weapons” coupled with an interest in conventional strike technologies, enabling a revolution in military affairs.<sup>121</sup>

Among Soviet military leadership, there was also a growing “consensus about the diminishing military utility of nuclear weapons” coupled with an interest in conventional strike technologies, enabling a revolution in military affairs.

<sup>117</sup> Savel'yev and Detinov, p. 39.

<sup>118</sup> Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, p. 56.

<sup>119</sup> Garthoff, “The Soviet Military and SALT,” pp. 137–138 and Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, p. 56.

<sup>120</sup> Akhromeyev also argues that the General Staff advocated for cuts in defense expenditures beginning in 1975–1976, but this became an issue on which senior MOD leadership and others could not agree. S. V. Akhromeyev and S. F. Kornienko, *Through the Eyes of a Marshal and a Diplomat* [Глазами маршала и дипломата] (Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1992), Chapter 1, available at [http://militera.lib.ru/research/ahromeev\\_kornienko/01.html](http://militera.lib.ru/research/ahromeev_kornienko/01.html).

<sup>121</sup> Mary C. FitzGerald, *Arms Control and the New Revolution in Soviet Military Affairs*, CNA, Aug. 1987, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA184407.pdf>.

After bilateral negotiations restarted in 1985, high-level leader summits were followed by negotiations in three working groups: on intermediate-range nuclear capabilities (which led to the 1987 signing of the INF Treaty), on strategic forces (which led to the 1991 signing of the START 1 treaty), and on ABM and outer space security issues (this working group had little hope for a breakthrough, according to Soviet representatives, because of US President Ronald Reagan's interest in missile defense systems).<sup>122</sup> These negotiations focused on the reductions of systems as opposed to just their negotiated limits. And, in 1991, shortly after the signing of START 1, Gorbachev would survive a coup that included military and intelligence participants.

### *The INF Treaty*

According to Novikov and Medvedkov, the INF Treaty was unique because it “fully eliminated” several classes of ground-based missiles, and it was a breakthrough for reciprocal onsite inspections at “closed” facilities.<sup>123</sup> However, the MOD authors also contend that the arms reductions, agreed to by the political leadership, disproportionately affected a much greater number of Soviet systems and resulted in the loss of key strike systems, such as the SS-23 Oka.<sup>124</sup>

Akhromeyev, then first deputy chief of the General Staff, played a key role in setting up the framework

for the INF talks and provided leadership throughout. However, the negotiations were highly contentious at the interagency level, with the military repeatedly clashing with Shevardnadze's MFA and Gorbachev.<sup>125</sup> In their recollection of the negotiations, the General Staff's representatives, from Akhromeyev to the working-level military lead, General Viktor Koltunov, complained bitterly about the political decision to eliminate the SS-23 Oka, which was made without the inclusion of the military leadership.<sup>126</sup> However, senior General Staff participants in the negotiations also argued that because the treaty enabled the elimination of the threat to Soviet command and control and other critical targets from the Pershing 2 missiles, the disproportionate trade was worth it.<sup>127</sup>

Although the Soviet Union, and later Russia, complied with the treaty provisions, beginning in the early 2000s, Russian leadership sought to discuss with the US the possibility of revising or internationalizing the treaty. These proposals failed to gain traction. In 2014, the US accused Russia of violating the treaty, but despite the ongoing controversy, the agreement remained in force until the US withdrew in 2018, citing the Russian development of noncompliant missile systems for the SS-26 Iskander platform. (Development of the Iskander was initiated following the decision to eliminate the Oka.)

<sup>122</sup> Yuriy Nazarkin, “The Peak of the Negotiations Process: On the 30th Anniversary of START 1” [Вершина переговорного процесса: к тридцатилетию подписания ДСНВ], *Russia in Global Affairs*, July 30, 2021, <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/peregovory-podpisaniye-dsnv/>.

<sup>123</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, “International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations” [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений]. According to Russian sources, this shift on OSI policies was a political leadership decision. Savel'yev and Detinov, *The Big Five*, pp. 151–154.

<sup>124</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, “International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations” [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений].

<sup>125</sup> Akhromeyev and Kornienko, *Through the Eyes of a Marshal and a Diplomat* [Глазами маршала и дипломата], Chapter 5, available at [http://militera.lib.ru/research/ahromeev\\_kornienko/05.html](http://militera.lib.ru/research/ahromeev_kornienko/05.html).

<sup>126</sup> “Viktor Koltunov on US-Russian Negotiations, START 1, and Arms Control” [Виктор Колтунов: о российско-американских переговорах, СНВ и режиме контроля над вооружениями] and Akhromeyev and Kornienko, *Through the Eyes of a Marshal and a Diplomat* [Глазами маршала и дипломата], Chapter 4, available at [http://militera.lib.ru/research/ahromeev\\_kornienko/04.html](http://militera.lib.ru/research/ahromeev_kornienko/04.html).

<sup>127</sup> “Viktor Koltunov on US-Russian Negotiations, START 1, and Arms Control” [Виктор Колтунов: о российско-американских переговорах, СНВ и режиме контроля над вооружениями].

### START 1

Until September 1989, Soviet officials believed that US-Soviet negotiations on strategic weapons were at a stalemate because of a Soviet insistence on a legal link between offensive and defensive systems and the need to set a period of guaranteed compliance with the ABM Treaty. An anecdote from a START 1 negotiator, the MFA's Yuriy Nazarkin, illustrates the shifting balance of the MOD-MFA relationship at the interagency level. According to Nazarkin, "the Soviet side insisted on a term of at least 10 years, while the American side agreed to seven years, no more. Apparently, in the opinion of the [Soviet] military, seven years was not enough to find a means of overcoming the American missile defense system."<sup>128</sup> Eventually, Nazarkin maintains, the MFA proposed to the US a political link instead of a legal one, where the Soviet Union could withdraw from START 1 if the US withdrew or breached the ABM Treaty.<sup>129</sup>

START 1 was highly technical and required extensive input from the military. The General Staff's Directorate of Treaty and Law played a key role in the negotiations and in coordinating the interagency.<sup>130</sup> The tone of the recollections from the Soviet military participants in the interagency and the negotiations process is largely positive, at least compared with the negotiations surrounding the INF Treaty.<sup>131</sup>

However, a closer look points to a highly complex picture of interagency working-level discussions. These featured the extensive interplay of General Staff, MOD, industry, and intelligence stakeholders in decisions that, in the end, significantly shaped the Russian nuclear forces.<sup>132</sup> The participation of representatives of various legs of the Russian nuclear triad as well as civilians from the Academy of Sciences was also much more significant in this process.<sup>133</sup>

During Big Five discussions, Akhromeyev, by then senior military adviser to Gorbachev, and chief of the General Staff General Mikhail Moiseev disagreed about the technical details of the treaty, with Akhromeyev ultimately convincing senior leaders because he personally negotiated the issue with the US side.<sup>134</sup> Nazarkin said that despite opposition to the treaty from senior-level industry leaders in the Big Five, the discussion ultimately concluded with the argument that the arms race was unsustainable for the Soviet economy.<sup>135</sup> Toward the end of the negotiations, several other issues required the agreement of senior military leadership on both sides. According to Nazarkin, these issues, including upload potential, the definition of a "new type of missile," and telemetry data exchange, required a meeting between Moiseev and his US counterpart, General Colin Powell, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>128</sup> "How the START 1 Negotiations Took Place" [Как шли переговоры по СНВ-1], Interfax, July 29, 2021, <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/781020>.

<sup>129</sup> "How the START 1 Negotiations Took Place" [Как шли переговоры по СНВ-1].

<sup>130</sup> "How the Head of the GRU Defended the Military in the 1990s" [Как начальник ГРУ защитил армию в 90-е], Vzgyad, Dec. 20, 2021, <https://vz.ru/opinions/2021/12/20/1135152.html> and "Viktor Koltunov on US-Russian Negotiations, START 1, and Arms Control" [Виктор Колтунов: о российско-американских переговорах, СНВ и режиме контроля над вооружениями].

<sup>131</sup> "Viktor Koltunov on US-Russian Negotiations, START 1, and Arms Control" [Виктор Колтунов: о российско-американских переговорах, СНВ и режиме контроля над вооружениями] and Chervov, "How Yesterday's 'Kitchen' of Negotiations Worked" [Как работала вчерашняя кухня переговоров].

<sup>132</sup> Nikolai Sokov, *Russian Strategic Nuclear Modernization: The Past and the Future* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), Chapter 2, pp. 55–84 and Savel'yev and Detinov, *The Big Five*, pp. 141–161.

<sup>133</sup> Sokov, *Russian Strategic Nuclear Modernization*, pp. 55–84 and Savel'yev and Detinov, *The Big Five*, pp. 141–161.

<sup>134</sup> "How the START 1 Negotiations Took Place" [Как шли переговоры по СНВ-1].

<sup>135</sup> Sokov, *Russian Strategic Nuclear Modernization*, pp. 85–120.

<sup>136</sup> "How the START 1 Negotiations Took Place" [Как шли переговоры по СНВ-1].

Summarizing the START 1 experience in 2021, MOD authors Novikov and Medvedkov discuss their perception that START 1 disproportionately sought to shape Soviet forces to a much greater extent than US ones. Nevertheless, they argue that START 1 involved “real and significant cuts to delivery vehicles and nuclear warheads as well as the introduction of a strategic weapons control regime at all phases of their lifecycle—from their creation to their elimination.”<sup>137</sup>

## START 2

In 1993, START 2 was signed in the Kremlin by Russia's new president, Boris Yeltsin, and US President George H. W. Bush. The context of the treaty was that Russia's economy was struggling, making it challenging for the country to, inter alia, maintain a state of parity of strategic nuclear forces with the US. The bilateral political relationship was evolving, and the threat perception shifted much more toward concerns regarding the security of nuclear weapons in Russia as well as the challenging politics of their removal from former Soviet states.

The treaty committed both sides to reducing their strategic nuclear forces significantly, and it called for Russia to reshape its forces toward a much greater reliance on mobile ICBMs and SLBMs. However, it did not impose limits on SLBMs, where the US had advantages, and it gave the US breakout advantages

by not addressing the issue of upload capacity, where Washington could meet treaty obligations by downloading warheads.<sup>138</sup> Treaty limits were to be met by 2003, a timeline that Russia could not meet because treaty implementation would require the production of a significant number of single-warhead ICBMs.<sup>139</sup>

Nikolai Sokov provides a nuanced view of an interagency process preceding negotiations. Although initial military and MFA perspectives were similar on key positions, all these government actors and the armed forces were themselves undergoing significant change.<sup>140</sup> Eventually, the pressures of the external environment coupled with domestic instability contributed to a single-minded interest by the political leadership in an agreement with the US.

The formal negotiations of the treaty took several months and featured a Russian government that was dysfunctional at the highest level and that, according to the former START 1 negotiator, acceded to US pressure to sign the accord.<sup>141</sup> Russian authors of the definitive work on the Big Five maintain that, at its final stages, START 2 did not have a formal interagency coordination mechanism and was only possible because of the Five's work during START 1.<sup>142</sup> Sources cite an anecdote about the role of Defense Secretary General Pavel Grachev, who “signed one of the negotiation protocols immediately upon receiving it from US Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney. The text

<sup>137</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, “International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations” [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений].

<sup>138</sup> Pikayev, *The Rise and Fall of START II*, p. 15.

<sup>139</sup> Nazarkin also notes that “the draft also established a deadline of January 1, 2003, for achieving the aggregate levels of armaments after the reduction provided for by the treaty, instead of the usual practice of setting a deadline a number of years after the treaty's entry into force.” Yuri Nazarkin, “Negotiating as a Rival,” in *American Negotiating Behavior: Wheeler-Dealers, Legal Eagles, Bullies, and Preachers*, ed. Richard Solomon and Nigel Quinney (USIP, 2010), p. 249.

<sup>140</sup> Sokov, *Russian Strategic Nuclear Modernization*, pp. 85–124.

<sup>141</sup> Nazarkin, “Negotiating as a Rival,” p. 249 and Pikayev, *The Rise and Fall of START II*.

<sup>142</sup> Savel'yev and Detinov, *The Big Five*, pp. 189–190. Chervov writes that “under the leadership and direction of Yeltsin, [Kozyrev and Grachev, individuals who were not familiar with the issues] began to ‘drive’ from the position of volunteerism which led to unbalanced actions among the ministries and, as a result, to mistakes to miscalculations in the disarmament area.” Chervov, “How Yesterday's ‘Kitchen’ of Negotiations Worked” [Как работала вчерашняя кухня переговоров].



was in English, which Grachev didn't understand."<sup>143</sup> Among representatives from the military and the MFA who participated in START 2, the retrospective level of frustration is clear regarding the absence of a functional interagency process in the later stages and the absence of high-level accountability.<sup>144</sup>

START 2 would go on to be at the center of extensive domestic political drama in Russia, where Yeltsin replaced military officials and clashed with the military and legislature about the treaty until his resignation in 1999. As Russia's threat perception evolved and defense budgets decreased, military officials changed their attitudes and disagreed with one another about the wisdom of the treaty.<sup>145</sup>

As negotiations continued in the framework of the treaty, the Russian military sought to restrict the ability of the US to develop high-speed theater missile defense interceptors. Talks would eventually center on a possible framework for a follow-on agreement, one that would involve deeper cuts to strategic nuclear forces, warhead transparency, and, possibly, negotiations on nonstrategic nuclear weapons and sea-launched cruise missiles.<sup>146</sup> But Russian domestic political instability as well as the NATO bombing of the former Yugoslavia continued to complicate ratification. In the end, according to Novikov and Medvedkov, START 2 failed because "the implementation of all of its requirements would have significantly reduced the potential of the Strategic Rocket Forces for nuclear deterrence,

which was [eventually] unacceptable in the context of the [2002] US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty."<sup>147</sup>

## The Moscow Treaty and New START processes: managing parity

In an environment where Russia appeared to be uninterested in maintaining nuclear parity, the US sought to make decisions about its own force structure. This set the stage for continuing arms control that sought primarily to verifiably limit—but not deeply cut—both sides' nuclear forces as they made choices about nuclear modernization.

### *The Moscow Treaty*

The 2002 Moscow Treaty, in the words of START 1 negotiator Nazarkin, "did not require any negotiations in the real sense of the word."<sup>148</sup> Following disputes between the General Staff and the MOD about the future evolution of Russia's strategic forces, Putin secured the signing of the Moscow Treaty, which would set limits for warheads and rely on START 1 for verification. MOD's Novikov and Medvedkov note that the treaty's "preparation was influenced by the absence of significant contradictions between Russia and the United States."<sup>149</sup> Against the backdrop of the Moscow Treaty's implementation, Russia was planning for new weapons that could potentially counter the evolution of the US ballistic missile

<sup>143</sup> Pikayev, *The Rise and Fall of START II*, p. 15.

<sup>144</sup> Chervov, "How Yesterday's 'Kitchen' of Negotiations Worked" [Как работала вчерашняя кухня переговоров] and Nazarkin, "Negotiating as a Rival," pp. 238–239.

<sup>145</sup> Pikayev, *The Rise and Fall of START II*, pp. 15–16.

<sup>146</sup> Pikayev, *The Rise and Fall of START II*, p. 21.

<sup>147</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, "International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations" [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений].

<sup>148</sup> Nazarkin, "Negotiating as a Rival," p. 249.

<sup>149</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, "International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations" [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений].

defense.<sup>150</sup> At the same time, a budding relationship between Presidents George W. Bush and Putin involved extensive discussions about the possibility of ballistic missile defense cooperation. Ultimately, these efforts would not bear fruit.

### *New START*

New START was signed on April 8, 2010, by Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev. Because of the relative recency of negotiations, we do not have a clear record of the New START interagency process from the Russian side. The chief US negotiator, however, has noted the possibility of an intervention by Russia's then-Prime Minister Putin, who may have sought to influence treaty negotiations through the Security Council.<sup>151</sup>

At the international level, it appears that the negotiations featured an MFA-MOD balance on the negotiating teams and required military expertise and high-level involvement to resolve certain issues. The military, including General Staff and MOD participants, were involved in the negotiations from early on.<sup>152</sup> Russian military sources maintain that the General Staff Main Operational Directorate participated "at every step."<sup>153</sup> They also maintain that the chief of the General Staff, General Nikolai Makarov, paid "close attention and participated" in the treaty negotiations process.<sup>154</sup>

The head of the General Staff Main Operational Directorate has noted that the two sides faced challenges negotiating the numerical levels of launchers and warheads, inspection and verification mechanisms, and the relationship between offense and defense.<sup>155</sup> This is consistent with the chief US negotiator's description of military resistance on certain issues, which were elevated to the chief of the General Staff and his US counterpart for resolution.<sup>156</sup> The Russian military's involvement in the negotiations at one point became symbolic when the treaty teams met for negotiations at the MOD building in Moscow and required Makarov's intervention at the working level to ensure that the Russian military understood the potential importance of agreement on telemetry issues.<sup>157</sup>

Russia appears to have entered the negotiations having learned from the terms of START 1. According to MOD's Novikov and Medvedkov, Moscow sought to "eliminate discriminatory restrictions on mobile launchers, reduce the cost of implementing commitments, maintain the link between strategic offensive and defensive weapons, and provide flexibility in determining the composition of its nuclear forces."<sup>158</sup>

<sup>150</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, "International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations" [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений].

<sup>151</sup> Rose Gottemoeller, *Negotiating the New START Treaty* (Cambria Press, 2021), pp. 84–85.

<sup>152</sup> Gottemoeller, *Negotiating the New START Treaty*, pp. 32–34.

<sup>153</sup> Russian Ministry of Defense, "On 20 February GOU GS Will Turn 309 Years" [20 февраля ГОУ ГШ ВС РФ исполнится 309 лет], N.D., <https://pda.mil.ru/pda/news/more.htm?id=10369803@egNews>.

<sup>154</sup> Potekhina, "Control That Strengthens Trust" [Контроль укрепляющий доверие].

<sup>155</sup> Russian Ministry of Defense, "On February 20, GOU GS RF Will Turn 309 Years" [20 февраля ГОУ ГШ ВС РФ исполнится 309 лет].

<sup>156</sup> Gottemoeller, *Negotiating the New START Treaty*, pp. 73–83.

<sup>157</sup> For the discussion of the Moscow meeting, see Gottemoeller, *Negotiating the New START Treaty*, pp. 83–111. For the point about telemetry, I am grateful to a former US official (interview, Dec. 13, 2023).

<sup>158</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, "International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations" [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений].

## Negotiations following New START

There were several fits and starts to the negotiations of a New START follow-on. After the ratification of New START, the Obama Administration signaled to Russia its desire to negotiate an arms control agreement that would also include Russia's nonstrategic nuclear weapons. Later, it expressed interest in negotiating deeper cuts in strategic nuclear weapons. These were both nonstarters in Moscow, particularly as attempts to engage in ballistic missile defense cooperation between the two sides, an issue led by the Russian presidential administration, faltered. Russia sought an expansive dialogue involving issues that it was unable to tackle in New START, including long-range conventional strike missiles and missile defense.<sup>159</sup> The issue then transitioned to the Trump Administration.

Throughout 2018, it seemed clear that Putin, who was by then once again Russia's president, drove arms control policy. He appeared deeply familiar with New START issues as he articulated Russia's concerns about its inability to verify the irreversibility of certain US reductions and noted the importance of continued dialogue on these issues.<sup>160</sup> Later that year, Putin sought to raise the possibility of a dialogue to develop a broader understanding of strategic stability with US President Donald Trump

in Helsinki.<sup>161</sup> In addition, working-level discussions on arms control between Security Council officials from both sides continued.<sup>162</sup> Echoing Putin, the military beat the drum on the importance of such an extension. In this regard, chief of the General Staff Gerasimov argued at the April 2019 Moscow Conference on International Security that the expiration of New START and the cessation of onsite inspections could lead to an arms race.<sup>163</sup>

In 2020, the Trump Administration sought to negotiate a follow-on agreement. According to MOD's Novikov and Medvedkov, these proposals sought to "limit all warheads, including nonstrategic" and ensure "continuous monitoring of places of... production, storage, and disposal." The US also called on Russia to bring China to the negotiating table.<sup>164</sup> The MOD authors contend that these ideas ignored Russian interests and that their implementation "would mean a violation of the logical integrity and balance of the provisions of the New START Treaty with the receipt of unilateral advantages by the United States."<sup>165</sup>

Reports suggest that Russia's position on the US offer evolved throughout the year and that officials at the highest level discussed the possibility of accepting

<sup>159</sup> Nikolai Sokov, *Beyond New START: Two Forecasts for Future Russian-US Arms Control*, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), Apr. 2023, p. 18, <https://www.iiss.org/globalassets/media-library---content--migration/files/research-papers/2023/04/beyond-new-start-two-forecasts-for-future-russian-us-arms-control.pdf>.

<sup>160</sup> Elena Chernenko and Aleksandra Djordjevich, "Russia and the US Have Hit the Ceiling" [Россия и Америка уперлись в потолок], *Kommersant*, Feb. 3, 2018, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3539637>.

<sup>161</sup> Elena Chernenko, "Measures on Agreements Control" [Меры по контролю над соглашениями], *Kommersant*, July 26, 2018, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3696084>.

<sup>162</sup> Elena Chernenko, "Только две страны в мире связаны Договором о РСМД, и одна нарушает его," *Kommersant*, no. 194, Oct. 23, 2018, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3778456>.

<sup>163</sup> Russian Ministry of Defense, "Speech by the First Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation and Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, General of the Army Valery Gerasimov at the MCIS-2019 Conference" [Выступление первого заместителя Министра обороны РФ — начальника Генерального штаба Вооруженных Сил Российской Федерации генерала армии Валерия Герасимова на конференции MCIS-2019], 2019, <https://mil.ru/mcis/news/more.htm?id=12227590@cmsArticle>.

<sup>164</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, "International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations" [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений].

<sup>165</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, "International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations" [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений].

the US proposal to freeze all warhead numbers.<sup>166</sup> However, this change in position did not obligate Russia to actual concession or include enhanced verification or permanent presence of US inspectors at Russian facilities.

When the Biden Administration entered office, New START was extended without preconditions. In the summer of 2021, the two sides began an SSD that included interagency teams on both sides. Russian military stakeholders were present and engaged. The intention was to negotiate on a range of issues, including a potential follow-on to New START and ways to consider other factors influencing strategic stability. These issues are covered in greater detail in the next section.

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<sup>166</sup> Elena Chernenko, "Refreezal" [Перезаморозка], *Kommersant*, Oct. 20, 2020, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4539781>.

# MILITARY VIEWS ON ARMS CONTROL

Having established the role of the Russian military in the arms control interagency and in negotiations, this section seeks to illustrate the current views of the Russian military on issues that may come up in future US-Russian arms control talks. Since before the initiation of the SSD in 2021, Russian political and military officials—with Putin in the lead—have argued for the need to agree on a so-called new security equation (or “stability equation”) that would view nuclear weapons as just one of a range of technologies affecting strategic stability.<sup>167</sup>

This section focuses on the military's view of the role of arms control in Russia's national security and discusses aspects of Russia's security equation. Our findings suggest that the Russian military views arms control as an important way to plan for the predictable development of its strategic forces and to limit arms racing. It also points to the potential challenges of negotiating numerical limits on all Russian nuclear weapons; evolving discordant perspectives on missile defense; an interest in limiting certain conventional capabilities, especially those at the intermediate-range level; and an emerging understanding that artificial intelligence (AI) could be transformative for nuclear deterrence.

## Methodology

This section highlights a number of authoritative Russian-language articles drawn primarily from the General Staff journal *Voennaya Mysl'* and published between 2020 and 2023. This is the journal of record for the Russian military and features publications

from service commanders, General Staff officers, military scholars from MOD research institutes, and military professors from service academies. The editorial board of the publication is made up of the most esteemed Russian military leaders and thinkers. The authors represented in this sample are from the General Staff Main Operational Directorate, the 27th MOD research institute close to the General Staff, the commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, the commander of the Navy, and several others from across MOD institutes and service academies.

From a methodological standpoint, analyzing writings in authoritative Russian military journals is essential to figuring out internal debates and points of consensus and debate among Russian military stakeholders. For example, the evolution of Russia's approaches to deterrence and escalation management and the concomitant changes to its military doctrine are traceable through an analysis of authoritative military writings over a period of time.<sup>168</sup> It should be noted that these writings do not share a single, monolithic viewpoint. Rather, they are a vetted spectrum of opinion deemed important by the General Staff. Analyzing these writings is also important because *Voennaya Mysl'*'s editorial board has used the journal's content to send messages to the West. For example, in 1999, according to the journal's editorial board, there was a decision to permit the publication of a controversial (inside the editorial board) article on the potential change to Russia's nuclear doctrine specifically to signal displeasure with the NATO bombing of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>167</sup> This concept has been generally defined by MFA officials as including the whole spectrum of offensive and defensive strategic technologies, including nuclear, nonnuclear, missile defense, space, cyberspace, and other technologies that have “strategic potential.” Elena Chernenko, «Состояние стабильно стратегическое», *Kommersant*, July 27, 2021, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4918323>.

<sup>168</sup> Fink and Kofman, “Russian Strategy for Escalation Management.”

<sup>169</sup> “Dedication to Army General M. A. Gareev” [Генералу армии М.А. Гарееву посвящается], *Voennaya Mysl'*, Feb. 28, 2020.

### The importance of transparency and predictability

Russian military writings reinforce the role of arms control in Russian national security and Moscow's ability to plan for the future of its doctrine and capabilities. In a 2020 article that explained Russia's document on nuclear declaratory policy, Major-General A.E. Sterlin of the General Staff Main Operational Directorate and Colonel A.L. Khryapin of the General Staff Academy Center for Military-Strategic Research noted the importance of arms control for "transparency of both sides' strategic forces" that enables "accurate forecasting" in a certain future time period.<sup>170</sup> More explicit writings have appeared recently from senior military analysts in MOD research centers that work closely with the General Staff.

In a July 2022 article, Colonel V. V. Sukhorutchenko, Colonel A. S. Borisenko (head and department head, respectively, of the Research Institute of Management, Informatization and Modeling), and Colonel E. A. Shlotov of the 27th MOD research institute wrote that "treaty restrictions" coupled with verification and data exchanges enable a state in which "the balance of power remains predictable and stable" and arms races are avoided. They posit that arms control is important because it allows for the "reduction of expenditures on armaments... because [t]he system of treaties makes it possible to maintain an approximate balance of armaments at a less costly level." More specific threats could include the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, an unlimited US missile defense, the deployment

of intermediate-range systems, and the "continuing uncontrolled militarization of outer space as a new sphere of strategic confrontation." The authors note that without arms control, Russia's ability to defend critical targets, including those that are part of its nuclear command and control, becomes highly challenging.<sup>171</sup> The end of New START, among the end of other arms control agreements, they posit, would suggest "serious challenges to maintaining strategic stability in the world and ensuring military security."<sup>172</sup>

As discussed in the previous section of this study, chief of the General Staff Gerasimov strongly argued for extending New START at the April 2019 Moscow Conference on International Security. He said:

Despite contradictory assessments of the effectiveness of these agreements, their existence ensured predictability in Russian-American relations. Compliance by the parties with restrictions on the deployment of the most destabilizing defensive and offensive weapons, constant dialogue with the participation of military experts, and discussion of emerging problems formed a certain level of trust between the military departments. Today, that important element—trust—has been lost.

He further posited that the collapse of New START would:

lead to the loss of the only control mechanism in the field of strategic weapons—inspection activities at the facilities of Russia and the United States. Refusal to allow inspectors

<sup>170</sup> A. E. Sterlin and A. L. Khryapin, "On the Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Area of Nuclear Deterrence" [Об основах государственной политики Российской Федерации в области ядерного сдерживания].

<sup>171</sup> V. V. Sukhorutchenko, A. S. Borisenko, and E. A. Shlotov, "Threats to the Military Security of the Russian Federation Determined by the System of Control of Armaments and Military Activities" [Угрозы военной безопасности Российской Федерации, обусловленные системой контроля над вооружениями и военной деятельностью], *Voennaya Mysl*, July 2022.

<sup>172</sup> Sukhorutchenko, Borisenko, and Shlotov, "Threats to the Military Security of the Russian Federation Determined by the System of Control of Armaments and Military Activities" [Угрозы военной безопасности Российской Федерации, обусловленные системой контроля над вооружениями и военной деятельностью].

access to facilities will lead to the fact that in assessing the potential of opposing weapons, we will be obliged to proceed from their maximum capabilities, and not from the real state, which can be checked during inspections. The result is an aggravation of mistrust and a new round of the missile arms race.<sup>173</sup>

Despite Russia's violations and suspensions of arms control agreements, Russian military authors generally follow the lead of Russian political-military leadership in blaming the US for challenges in bilateral arms control, beginning with the 2002 US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. However, the concerns they articulate for Russian national security in an environment without arms control remain valid even in the case of Russia's own 2023 decision to suspend New START implementation.

## The security equation

In the context of the US-Russian SSD, kicked off by the 2021 Biden-Putin summit in Geneva, Russian political and military officials have argued for the need to agree on a so-called new security equation (or stability equation) that would include more than just nuclear weapons and that might include "third countries," such as France, the United Kingdom,

and potentially China, in the negotiations.<sup>174</sup> In and of itself, the desire to tackle some of these issues is not new, but this central organizing concept appears to be. In his April 2021 message to the Federal Assembly, Putin called for talks on this security equation that would involve "all offensive and defensive systems capable of attaining strategic goals regardless of the armament."<sup>175</sup>

Russian military scholars have long contended that the development of certain capabilities would herald profound changes in the nature of warfare.<sup>176</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov from the MOD's Main Directorate for International Military Cooperation connect the list of elements of the "equation" to a set of "main military dangers" that could transition to "military threats" listed in Russia's 2020 nuclear doctrine document.<sup>177</sup> According to the document, Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Area of Nuclear Deterrence, these dangers include the "systems and means of missile defense, cruise and ballistic missiles of medium and short range, high-precision conventional and hypersonic weapons, unmanned combat aerial vehicles, and directed energy weapons," among others.<sup>178</sup> Chief of the General Staff Gerasimov stated in December 2021 that the equation "encompasses all types of offensive and defensive weapons impacting strategic stability, as well as new spheres of combat—

<sup>173</sup> "Speech by the First Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation and Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, General of the Army Valery Gerasimov at the MCIS-2019 Conference" [Выступление первого заместителя Министра обороны РФ — начальника Генерального штаба Вооруженных Сил Российской Федерации генерала армии Валерия Герасимова на конференции MCIS-2019].

<sup>174</sup> Chernenko, "Состояние стабильно стратегическое." The "third countries" issue has been discussed in US-Soviet/Russian negotiations since the Cold War.

<sup>175</sup> "Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly," Kremlin.ru, Apr. 21, 2021, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/65418>.

<sup>176</sup> M. P. Stepashin and A. N. Anikonov, "The Development of Armaments, Military and Specialized Technology and Their Impact of the Character of Future War" [Развитие вооружения, военной и специальной техники и их влияние на характер будущих войн], *Voennaya Mysl'*, Dec. 2021.

<sup>177</sup> Novikov and Medvedkov, "International Obligations in the Area of Nuclear Arms Limitations" [Международные обязательства в сфере ограничения ядерных вооружений].

<sup>178</sup> *Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Area of Nuclear Deterrence*, informal translation by the CNA Russia Studies Program.

cyberspace, space, and artificial intelligence.”<sup>179</sup> Some of the components of this list are discussed in the following sections.

### *Nuclear weapons*

Rhetorically, Russian positions on deeper nuclear cuts have been linked to other components of the security equation. After the conclusion of the New START agreement, some Russian military thinkers perceived deeper cuts in strategic forces, as well as the possible inclusion of nonstrategic nuclear weapons on the negotiating agenda, as potentially damaging to Russian national interests. They were concerned that the evolution of US missile defense and nonnuclear capabilities could pose a threat to Russian nuclear forces at certain lower levels.<sup>180</sup>

At the beginning of the SSD, observers expected that both sides would seek to reach a New START follow-on agreement. There were disagreements over the approach, as the US sought to limit or make transparent Russia's strategic and nonstrategic nuclear arsenal and some of its novel nuclear systems through a limit on all nuclear warheads. Russia has generally not been interested in negotiating on nonstrategic nuclear weapons issues. Instead, according to the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States, Russia has expanded its nuclear stockpile as well as its upload capacity.<sup>181</sup>

According to 2019 writings by the General Staff's Major-General A.E. Sterlin (alongside Colonel A. A. Protasov and Colonel S. V. Kreydin of the 27th TsNII), nonstrategic nuclear weapons are unlikely to be replaced by strategic nonnuclear weapons at the regional level of war.<sup>182</sup> Therefore, as NATO's membership and military footprint continue to evolve, and as Russia rebuilds its conventional capabilities, the Russian military will be unlikely to limit nonstrategic nuclear forces that are linked in the Russian military plans to NATO's perceived conventional superiority.<sup>183</sup> In the wake of Russia's suspension of New START, it will not be easy to negotiate with the country on such limits or to obtain the greater access required to verify that these limits have been met.

Those affiliated with the Strategic Rocket Forces have argued strongly against any cuts to nuclear capabilities notwithstanding any challenges in Russia's economy or the potential need to make tradeoffs between conventional and nuclear capabilities. In a February 2023 article, Colonel General S. Karakaev, commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, posited that nuclear weapons will continue to be relevant for 30 or more years. He also noted these weapons' role in ensuring Russian sovereignty, particularly in light of a troubled economy, and he pointed to the need to keep developing the strategic missile forces to ensure their survivability into the future.<sup>184</sup> In a July 2022

<sup>179</sup> Russian Ministry of Defense, “ТЕЗИСЫ выступления начальника Генерального штаба ВС РФ на брифинге перед военными атташе иностранных государств,” Dec. 9, 2021, <https://function.mil.ru/files/morf/%D0%A2%D0%B5%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%81%D1%8B.pdf>.

<sup>180</sup> See, for example, Vasilij Burenok and Yuriy Pechatnov, “Strategic Stability—Misconceptions and Future” [Стратегическая стабильность – заблуждения и перспективы], *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, Mar. 7, 2014.

<sup>181</sup> *America's Strategic Posture: The Final Report of the Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States*, IDA, Oct. 2023, <https://www.ida.org/research-and-publications/publications/all/a/am/americas-strategic-posture>, pp. 9–10.

<sup>182</sup> A. E. Sterlin, A. A. Protasov, and S. V. Kreydin, “Modern Transformation of Concepts and Forceful Instruments of Strategic Deterrence Tools” [Современные трансформации концепций и силовых инструментов стратегического сдерживания], *Voennaya Mysl'*, no. 8, 2019.

<sup>183</sup> For a discussion of the role of nonstrategic nuclear forces, see Michael Kofman, Anya Fink, and Jeffrey Edmonds, *Russian Strategy for Escalation Management: Evolution of Key Concepts*, CNA, Apr. 2020, <https://www.cna.org/reports/2020/04/DRM-2019-U-022455-1Rev.pdf>.

<sup>184</sup> S. V. Karakaev, “On the Issue of Employment of Strategic Rocket Forces in Future Wars” [К вопросу о применении Ракетных войск стратегического назначения в войнах будущего], *Voennaya Mysl'*, Feb. 2023.



article, Major-General R.O. Nogin of the Strategic Rocket Forces Academy wrote of the need to consider whether current force levels are even sufficient given evolving threats and US missile defense capabilities.<sup>185</sup> In a March 2023 article, Lieutenant-General A. M. Kovalyov and Colonel A. A. Tuzhikov of the Strategic Rocket Forces Academy argued that, despite Russia's challenging economy, investments in modernizing strategic nuclear forces should not be curtailed, in part because doing so would pose challenges for the relationships between designers and various actors in the defense industrial base.<sup>186</sup>

### Missile defense

Since the signing of the 1972 ABM Treaty, the evolution of missile defense capabilities has dogged the strategic nuclear relationship between Moscow and Washington. Although New START negotiations did not spend a significant amount of time on missile defense, for the Russian side, this issue continues to come up across military writings. Some have argued for further development of Russia's own missile defense capabilities because of the need to increase decision time in the context of emerging adversarial nonnuclear strike capabilities that threaten command and control and strategic forces.<sup>187</sup> Several other dimensions of the debate are notable.

Perceptions of the threat of US missile defense capabilities differ across the Russian armed forces. For example, in 2023, echoing Putin, Strategic Rocket Forces Commander Karakaev wrote that US missile defense no longer presents a threat to Russian strategic retaliatory strike capabilities.<sup>188</sup> However, the commander of the Russian Navy, Admiral N. Evmenov, has pointed to the growing threat of US and allied sea-based missile defense vessels to Russia's ballistic missile submarine bastions.<sup>189</sup>

Around the time of the SSD, numerous articles suggested ways to reduce the effect of missile defense on the nuclear relationship. For example, Colonel A. A. Protasov, Colonel S. V. Kreydin from the 27th TsNII, and Major-General Yu. A. Kublo from the General Staff Main Operational Directorate argued in 2021 that the sides are not interested in the dynamic of first-strike instability, and they noted that this needed to be the focus of a new treaty.<sup>190</sup> In a July 2021 article, Colonel M. G. Valeev, Lieutenant Colonel A. V. Platonov, and Colonel V. I. Yaroshevskiy of a MOD research institute supporting the Aerospace Forces posited that Russia's chief concern is the ability of the US missile defense system to intercept ballistic missiles in active flight as well as the missile defense system's possible offensive and counter-space potential. The authors suggested

<sup>185</sup> R. O. Nogin, "On the Role and Place of the Strategic Rocket Forces in the Future System of Complex Strategic Deterrence of Possible Aggression against the Russian Federation" [О роли и месте Ракетных войск стратегического назначения в перспективной системе комплексного стратегического ядерного сдерживания возможной агрессии против Российской Федерации], *Voennaya Mysl'*, July 2022.

<sup>186</sup> A. M. Kovalyov and A. A. Tuzhikov, "Possible Approaches to the Justification of the Combat Composition of a Future Grouping of the Strategic Rocket Forces" [Возможные подходы к обоснованию достаточности боевого состава перспективной группировки Ракетных войск стратегического назначения], *Voennaya Mysl'*, Mar. 2023.

<sup>187</sup> M. N. Kukmashev and A. V. Kravtsov, "Missile Defense as a Component of the Russian Federation Strategic Deterrence System" [Противоракетная оборона как составляющая системы стратегического сдерживания Российской Федерации], *Voennaya Mysl'*, Dec. 2021.

<sup>188</sup> Karakaev, "On the Issue of Employment of Strategic Rocket Forces in Future Wars" [К вопросу о применении Ракетных войск стратегического назначения в войнах будущего].

<sup>189</sup> N. A. Evmenov, "Main Tendencies of the Change in the Character and Content of Military Threats to the Russian Federation from Oceanic and Maritime Directions" [Основные тенденции изменения характера и содержания военных угроз Российской Федерации с океанских и морских направлений], *Voennaya Mysl'*, May 2023.

<sup>190</sup> A. A. Protasov, S. V. Kreydin, and Yu. A. Kublo, "Current Aspects of the Development of Force Instruments and Concepts of Strategic Deterrence" [Актуальные аспекты развития силовых инструментов и концепций стратегического сдерживания], *Vestnik Akademii Voennykh Nauk* 3 (2021).

data-exchange measures, cooperative monitoring of missile launches, and cooperative monitoring of and negotiations against deployment of weapons in outer space.<sup>191</sup> Colonel Sukhorutchenko and Colonel Kreydin wrote in May 2022 that Russian technologies to counter US missile defense are the most effective way to ensure that this US capability is indeed limited, and proposed to negotiate keep-out zones for US and allied missile defense.<sup>192</sup> In other writings, Colonel Sukhorutchenko also noted numerous dangers from space, including from US missile defense capabilities, and posited that Russia and the US could build on the existing legal framework to ensure space security.<sup>193</sup>

### Nonnuclear capabilities

For Russia, nonnuclear systems, including some novel systems, such as Kinzhal and Peresvet, play a key role in local and regional conflicts, in the phase preceding potential nuclear employment.<sup>194</sup> Despite Russia's violation of the INF Treaty, the proliferation of

nonnuclear capabilities of various ranges and basing poses extreme dangers to Russian critical targets, which is a significant concern for the Russian military.

The Russian military has had long-standing concerns about US nonnuclear capabilities, including hypersonic systems, and their potential synergistic employment, which they argue could enable a "prompt global strike" on Russian command-and-control infrastructure as well as critical and nuclear-related targets. For example, in a November 2022 article, Colonel Ya. V. Beshpalov and Colonel M. V. Tikhonov from the Aerospace Forces Academy point to the danger of US nonnuclear capabilities to Russian strategic assets.<sup>195</sup> Russian Navy Admiral Evmenov has noted the growth of the NATO naval threat, which

includes submarine-launched cruise missiles and carrier-based aviation. These capabilities threaten critical Russian targets that would be unreachable by Russian air and ground-based forces.<sup>196</sup>

After the collapse of the INF Treaty, systems that were covered previously by it are now also an issue

Despite Russia's violation of the INF Treaty, the proliferation of nonnuclear capabilities of various ranges and basing poses extreme dangers to Russian critical targets, which is a significant concern for the Russian military.

<sup>191</sup> M. G. Valeev, A. V. Platonov, and V. I. Yaroshevskiy, "On the Crises of Cooperation between Russia and the USA on Missile Defense" [О кризисах во взаимодействии России и США в области противоракетной обороны], *Voennaya Mysl'*, July 2021.

<sup>192</sup> V. V. Sukhorutchenko and S. V. Kreydin, "Nuclear Deterrence in the Conditions of Development of a US Global Missile Defense System" [Ядерное сдерживание в условиях развития глобальной системы противоракетной обороны США], *Voennaya Mysl'*, May 2022.

<sup>193</sup> Sukhorutchenko, Borisenko, and Shlotov, "Threats to the Military Security of the Russian Federation Determined by the System of Control of Armaments and Military Activities" [Угрозы военной безопасности Российской Федерации, обусловленные системой контроля над вооружениями и военной деятельностью].

<sup>194</sup> Protasov, Kreydin, and Kublo, "Current Aspects of the Development of Force Instruments and Concepts of Strategic Deterrence" [Актуальные аспекты развития силовых инструментов и концепций стратегического сдерживания] and A. V. Evsuikov and A. L. Khryapin, "Role of New Systems of Strategic Arms in Supporting Strategic Deterrence" [Роль новых систем стратегических вооружений в обеспечении стратегического сдерживания], *Voennaya Mysl'*, Dec. 2020.

<sup>195</sup> Ya. V. Beshpalov and M. L. Tikhonov, "Analysis of Leading Country Concepts on the Employment of Future Nonnuclear Means" [Анализ концепций ведущих государств по применению перспективных неядерных средств поражения], *Voennaya Mysl'*, Nov. 2022.

<sup>196</sup> Evmenov, "Main Tendencies of Change of the Character and Content of Military Threats to the Russian Federation from Oceanic and Maritime Directions" [Основные тенденции изменения характера и содержания военных угроз Российской Федерации с океанских и морских направлений].

of concern for Russia, including potentially in NATO's new member states. Military analysts describe these threats as comparable to the dilemmas that led to the conclusion of the INF Treaty. For example, in a July 2022 article, Sukhorutchenko, Borisenko, and Shlotov wrote of intermediate-range cruise and ballistic missile threats that "will pose a serious threat to the forces and means of strategic nuclear and nonnuclear deterrence, objects of strategic information systems, state and military command."<sup>197</sup>

### Artificial intelligence

As far back as 2002, Major-General Vladimir Slipchenko, a key Russian military theorist who taught at the General Staff Academy, wrote of the so-called sixth revolution in military affairs, saying that AI could have "destabilizing" consequences for the "international and strategic environment." To Slipchenko, the potential danger lurked in the gap between the haves and the have-nots when it came to these technologies. He argued, "one can expect great resistance from nuclear powers that have lagged behind in reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons. The desire of nonnuclear countries to become nuclear may intensify," he concluded.<sup>198</sup>

In a November 2023 article, Colonel A. A. Protasov, Colonel A. V. Shirmanov, and Colonel S.I. Radomanov of the 27th TsNII posit that AI could be transformative

for deterrence. They note the definite existence of an arms race in AI technologies and ask whether AI could play a role in deterrence alongside nuclear weapons. Some of the implications, such as the elimination of uncertainty in the assessment of the decision-making environment and improvement in the precision of decision-making, could be positive, they write. But others, such as the inability to understand an adversary's motivations, intentions, or the true nature of the correlation of AI capabilities, could contribute to unintended escalation. The article concludes with a call for Russia to invest in narrowing the gap with other major powers that are investing in AI technologies.<sup>199</sup>

Like other emerging military technologies, AI and its potential risks have been the subject of an intense recent assessment by the Russian military.<sup>200</sup> Officials have expressed concerns about the possible implications of the US employing AI and autonomous technologies to enable strategic offensive and defensive capabilities. There are also fears about the US ability to track Russian mobile missiles from space, the significant improvement in the targeting of low-yield nuclear systems, and the potential transformation of antisubmarine warfare.<sup>201</sup> But, broadly, these perspectives point to a potential interest in engaging in conversations about the potential implications of AI for nuclear deterrence in the future.

<sup>197</sup> Sukhorutchenko, Borisenko, and Shlotov, "Threats to the Military Security of the Russian Federation Determined by the System of Control of Armaments and Military Activities" [Угрозы военной безопасности Российской Федерации, обусловленные системой контроля над вооружениями и военной деятельностью].

<sup>198</sup> V. Slipchenko, "Revolution. And Not the Only One" [Революция. И не одна], *Armeyskiy Sbornik*, no. 2 (2002).

<sup>199</sup> A. A. Protasov, A. V. Shirmanov, and S. I. Radomanov, "Technological Developments in the AI Area and the Deterrence of a Potential Aggressor" [Технологические разработки в области искусственного интеллекта и сдерживание потенциального агрессора], *Voennaya Mysl'*, Nov. 2023.

<sup>200</sup> See, for example, numerous writings by military theoreticians, such as V. M. Burenok, "Problems of Using Artificial Intelligence Systems in Military Affairs" [Проблемы применения систем с искусственным интеллектом в военном деле], *Izvestiya Rossiiskoi Akademii Raketnykh i Artileriiskikh Nauk*, Dec. 2021.

<sup>201</sup> Jeffrey Edmonds et al., *Artificial Intelligence and Autonomy in Russia*, CNA, May 2021, [https://www.cna.org/CNA\\_files/centers/CNA/sppp/rsp/russia-ai/Russia-Artificial-Intelligence-Autonomy-Putin-Military.pdf](https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/centers/CNA/sppp/rsp/russia-ai/Russia-Artificial-Intelligence-Autonomy-Putin-Military.pdf). See also Mary Chesnut et al., *Artificial Intelligence in Nuclear Operations: Challenges, Opportunities, and Impacts*, CNA, Apr. 2023, <https://www.cna.org/reports/2023/04/ai-in-nuclear-operations>.

# CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study set out to look inside the black box of the Russian bureaucracy. To provide a reference for future US-Russian arms control negotiators, this study answered the following questions:

- 1 Who are the organizational stakeholders in Russia's arms control interagency process?
- 2 How do these stakeholders interact with one another in the domestic interagency process?
- 3 What is the role of the Russian military in international arms control negotiations?
- 4 What do Russian military stakeholders identify as the most salient challenges in future arms control negotiations with the US?

This section offers a summary of key arguments, findings, and implications for US policy-makers. It argues for the importance of understanding the relationship between senior Russian political leadership and the military at the time of negotiations, tracking military leaders involved in the negotiating process and the capacity of their respective organizations, and following the evolution of military views on arms control issues.

## The importance of bureaucracy

Russia's nuclear policy and, by extension, its approach to arms control are the result of the interplay among numerous civilian and military stakeholders in the Russian bureaucracy. These stakeholders participate in an interagency process. The military's role in this process can fluctuate greatly depending on the state of the civil-military relationship and the ability of the military to monopolize relevant information and limit the participation of civilian stakeholders.

The Russian system features civilian control over the military, with the president being responsible for appointing the minister of defense and the chief of the General Staff, as well as other relevant leaders, and for setting a tone for their interactions. The president is also responsible for structuring the interagency process, identifying its participants, and making the decision to engage in arms control negotiations. The present Russian administration appears to run the interagency process primarily through the presidential administration and the Security Council, with the participation of various stakeholders from the civilian, military, industrial, and intelligence sectors at the senior and working levels. But there is precedent in the Soviet/Russian system for other modes of arms control decision-making with senior leaders, including one in which the military plays a key role in interagency coordination. There is also precedent for conflict between interagency stakeholders at the senior and working levels, and for the conclusion of arms control agreements without an interagency process, meaning that the stability and path dependency of the current approach are not assured.

This study puts forward several analytical dimensions for interagency dynamics. These include the evolution of the relationship between the political leadership and the military (whether the military is a sinker, a shaper, or a servant) and the ability of the military to maintain its monopoly on key information and expertise related to nuclear weapons, minimizing input from nonmilitary stakeholders. During the Cold War, the military was largely a servant with a monopoly on information, and it dominated negotiations, ran the interagency process, or both. This monopoly was eroded toward the end of the Cold War, as the military evolved into a shaper that

resented civilian leadership for its arms control decision-making. This turbulence in civil-military relations, as well as among Russian military leaders, and the cacophony of participants in the process in the early post-Cold War period contributed to challenges in achieving arms control. Although the military is now back in its Cold War-era position as a servant, the interagency process appears to be structured in a way that preserves some of its potential monopoly on information. The MFA and the MOD stay in their separate lanes and avoid conflict at the high and working levels, but other civilian actors are also engaged.

The obvious conclusion is that a well-balanced and functional Russian interagency is important for arms control negotiations. Military engagement at the high level is essential for resolving senior policy-makers' concerns and driving bureaucracy at the working level. And if the current civil-military relationship holds, the way the Russian political leadership chooses to structure the process and engage military stakeholders in a civilian-led process will matter for the outcome of negotiations and potentially even for treaty durability. But if the civil-military relationship becomes more competitive, and the military becomes a shaper, arms control negotiations might not even be possible. Finally, periods of intense political and civil-military instability might not be good for negotiations, particularly if the Russian political leadership fails to engage the whole interagency.

This study focuses primarily on the role of the Russian military. Its findings, however, suggest that much more analytical work needs to be done on the role of the presidential administration, Security Council, and other Russian civilian stakeholders, including industry, in national security and arms control negotiations. As the Russian political system continues to evolve, civilian stakeholders, including new political leaders, senior diplomats, industry

members, and the legislature, might also reassert themselves and engage in disagreements with one another and with the military. At that point, understanding the bureaucratic dimensions of their competition and its contextual history might be important for fruitful engagement to reduce mutual nuclear risks.

## The evolution of military stakeholders

The role of Russia's military has evolved throughout the history of US-Russian arms control. Military stakeholders are instrumental in crafting positions in the domestic interagency and participate in negotiations and the subsequent implementation of arms control. At present, a handful of organizations in the MOD and the General Staff participate in the procurement, operations, and employment planning of nuclear weapons and thus have the necessary expertise for the domestic interagency or international negotiations on arms control. Those leading and serving in those military organizations have diverse service backgrounds and perspectives, which means that their views are not at all uniform.

But these stakeholders will continue to evolve with Russian military reforms and may also lose capacity and institutional memory during a time when there are no active US-Russian arms control negotiations or implementation efforts. This scenario could lead to a generation of Russian military officers who have no experience participating in the relevant interagency process, in international negotiations, or in implementing arms control agreements. This is a far cry from the arms control process during the Cold War, when senior leaders (who would eventually rise to serve as chief of the General Staff) and officers from the General Staff had a wealth of institutional knowledge from negotiations and could affect bureaucratic negotiations at the highest levels. In addition, no process or institutional investment

exists that is comparable to the Little Five, which built an extensive interagency arms control negotiations capability in the late 1980s.

No matter the military reforms, the heart of Russian expertise on nuclear planning will remain the General Staff's Main Operational Directorate, as has been the case since the Cold War. The participation of stakeholders from that organization signals the seriousness of Russian engagement in any arms control talks. Tracking this organization's role, its leadership, and the leadership's perspectives, including through Russian authoritative military literature, is essential.

## Military views on arms control

Russian military stakeholders are not for or against arms control. Russian military writings suggest that, for the Soviet Union and Russia, arms control was important to contain the costs of the arms race, and the authors of these writings enumerate many positive features and experiences of the process since the 1970s. But they carry resentment, especially toward their own political leadership, for the nature of the compromises made for the conclusion of the INF Treaty, START 1, and START 2. Despite understanding the benefit of arms control for force planning, military stakeholders are unlikely to be interested in engaging in arms control that seeks to shape Russian force structure in ways they perceive to be disproportionate.

The Russian military has clearly defined views on numerous elements of the new security equation. Around the time of the SSD, there was a lot of substantive writing on potential proposals for engagement written by individuals from key MOD research institutes. If these authors are close to the General Staff, their writings could provide a useful insight into Russian perspectives on future negotiations.

Given concerns about defense budget cuts and of perceived and evolving threats from the West, Russian leaders will be challenged by choices about how to ensure nuclear deterrence and plan for the future of their nuclear forces. They will also closely follow the evolution of US and NATO doctrinal concepts and the changes to their nuclear and strategic nonnuclear force structures. In this environment, agreeing to engage on potential restraint of strategic nuclear capabilities might be possible. But this will not address other concerns of the US and its allies, including Russia's nonstrategic nuclear weapons or allegations about nuclear weapons in space.

Russian military leaders and thinkers diverge with regard to concerns about the future missile defense capabilities of the US and its allies, but they also think that the US is not interested in fundamentally challenging Russia's ability to retaliate. Ahead of the SSD, they proposed numerous cooperative approaches to resolve missile defense concerns as well as issues that linked missile defense and space. They also argued that the proliferation of nonnuclear capabilities of various ranges and basing poses extreme dangers to critical Russian targets and command and control. All of these are potential areas for discussions.

Like other emerging military technologies, AI and its potential risks have been the subject of an intense recent assessment by the Russian military. Russian military writers argue that AI could transform nuclear deterrence in positive and negative ways. These writings point to a possible interest in clarification on issues surrounding emerging technologies and their potential future effect on nuclear deterrence.

## Studying the black box

During the Cold War, the US government focused extensively on understanding the threat posed by the Soviet Union and its nuclear capabilities. There

were debates about Soviet nuclear doctrine and the value of open-source research, particularly in the Russian language, for US national security interests.<sup>202</sup> Scholars from academia and government sought to understand civil-military relations and the inner workings of the Soviet bureaucracy. Over time, they developed knowledge and skill sets to analyze the other side that eventually helped them to become participants, and sometimes leaders, in US arms control negotiations. These negotiations resulted in treaties that helped reduce the threat of nuclear war, buttressed deterrence, and provided the US with insights into Russia's nuclear modernization.

Washington's current capacity to analyze Moscow's decision-making is limited. Growing Russian restrictions on open-source information and media reporting further challenge Western research and scholarship. In this environment, a dedicated US effort to understand Russian domestic bureaucracies, leaders in those bureaucracies, and decision-making processes could help to improve the effectiveness of US deterrence, particularly if prospects of risk reduction are slim.

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<sup>202</sup> N. Bradford Dismukes, *Hidden in Plain Sight: CNA and the Soviet Navy*, CNA, Feb. 2018, [https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA\\_Files/pdf/cab-2018-u-017105-final.pdf](https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA_Files/pdf/cab-2018-u-017105-final.pdf).

## ABBREVIATIONS

ABM	anti-ballistic missile
AI	artificial intelligence
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
FSB	Federal Security Service
GU/GOU	Main (Intelligence) Directorate of the General Staff
ICBM	intercontinental ballistic missile
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty
KGB	Committee on State Security
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MIRV	multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle
MOD	Ministry of Defense
New START	New Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitations Talks or Treaty
SLBM	submarine-launched ballistic missile
SSD	Strategic Stability Dialogue
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
SVR	Foreign Intelligence Service



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