

20. U.S. and RUSSIAN MILITARY FORCES: Similarities, Differences, and Prospects for Cooperation

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INTRODUCTION

This paper surveys the military forces of the United States and Russia, two countries that fall under the general rubric of "big powers." Its aim is to compare and contrast their military similarities and differences, today and in future years. The following analysis discusses not only nuclear forces and related arms control talks, but also conventional forces, which will play important roles in carrying out their respective national security strategies. By focusing on military forces and strategies in a technical manner, this paper's purpose is to help gauge prospects for U.S.-Russian military cooperation and barriers to progress. In this context, it appraises broad policy options for how future cooperation might be pursued.

This paper's thesis suggests that a shifting focus may lie ahead in the future U.S.-Russian military dialogue. For many years, the principal focus of this dialogue has been on managing these countries' bilateral nuclear relationship through strategic arms control negotiations. In the future, these negotiations might produce further progress in the form of additional reductions and cooperative arrangements to control Russian nuclear weapons and fissile materials. Yet the centrality of the START negotiations seems likely to decline for the simple reason that considerable stability in this arena already has been achieved, and the biggest reductions are being made. The more important nuclear issue will be whether the two countries can cooperate in handling the threat of WMD proliferation, especially among rogue powers in critical regions. Their progress in this arena will have a major effect on global stability and on U.S.-Russian relationships.

Pursuing cooperation in conventional forces seems likely to rise in importance, but the task will not be easy. Although U.S. and Russian conventional forces are similar in some ways, they also differ in critical respects, and these disparities may widen as the future unfolds. One reason is that basic U.S. and Russian national security and defense strategies are different. Whereas the United States plays a global role with a military posture configured for power projection, Russia today is playing a more limited regional role with differently structured forces primarily designed for nearby operations on the Eurasian mainland. Moreover, the United States leads a large Western alliance system, of which Russia is not a member. In addition, U.S. forces are entering a lengthy period of profound change in which they will be adopting new military doctrines and modernizing in major ways. Owing heavily to fiscal constraints, Russia's forces seem unlikely to improve so dramatically in the coming years. As a result, a major quality gap between their force postures is likely to emerge.

These imposing differences bar the way to easy cooperation between U.S. and Russian forces. Nonetheless, the two countries share common interests in world affairs, and their military forces will be performing a similar set of missions, sometimes together. They face incentives to cooperate when their interests intersect and the opportunity for collaboration presents itself. Pursuit of a pragmatic partnership relation between their forces, anchored on developing better mutual capabilities for new missions, thus seems sensible and desirable. This will be

the case, provided larger strategic affairs allow the two countries to continue cooperating in political and diplomatic terms.

Today, mutual partnership activities between the United States and Russia are already underway in limited but important ways. If these efforts are well planned and carefully nourished, they can grow in future years in ways that serve the interests of both countries and the larger cause of international stability. But the way that this partnership activity is being carried out likely will have to change, so that the ability to perform new missions, rather than dialogue for its own sake, becomes the principal measure of merit.

NUCLEAR

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When observers think about comparing U.S. and Russian military forces, they commonly focus—at least initially and often exclusively—on nuclear forces. The reason is obvious. Owing to the Cold War’s legacy, the United States and Russia remain nuclear super powers. They still possess the capacity to inflict immense damage upon each other and other countries as well. Fostering nuclear stability between them remains a worthy goal. Yet the centrality of the U.S.-Russian nuclear relationship, and above all its danger are undeniably declining. The super power nuclear arms race is no longer a big concern, and much of the stabilizing that needs to be done is already being accomplished. The consequence is that if the U.S.-Russian military dialogue is to remain alive and grow, it can no longer be focused mostly on their bilateral nuclear interactions. In this arena, there likely will be fewer things to worry about, negotiate over, and reach agreement on. The bottom line is that the strategic nuclear issue is losing its steam as both a source of deep political conflict and a key focal point of hopes for major future progress.

A look at the military details shows that today, the U.S. and Russian nuclear force postures are similar in size and general configuration. Both countries still have triad postures of ICBMs, SLBMs, and strategic bombers. The two countries have similar numbers of launchers and warheads, a situation codified in existing arms control agreements. Moreover, their nuclear strategies are inherently similar, for both strategies are focused on deterrence, stability, survivability, and flexibility rather than on actually fighting and winning nuclear wars. What no longer exists is the pattern of intense nuclear competition that animated the Cold War, during which the dynamics of rivalry and technology led both countries to build large nuclear postures pointed at each other in ways that left stability permanently unsure. Then, both countries sought deterrence and stability by creating postures capable of launching powerful second-strike responses, and by rapidly modernizing their forces to offset the gains of the other. In today’s setting, neither country is attempting to modernize its nuclear posture in major ways—a sharp departure from the Cold War years when rapid modernization was the consistent pattern. Indeed, both countries are primarily focused on determining how to configure smaller nuclear postures for limited roles in the post-Cold War world. They are both downsizing, de-emphasizing first-strike capabilities, no longer targeting their nuclear forces against each other, and cooperating to help ensure that Russia’s forces remain safe and secure, under national control.

	United States	Russia
ICBMs	550	756
SLBMs	432	412
Heavy bombers	115	85
Total launchers/ warheads	1,097/6,000-6,500	1,253/6,000-6,500

* Author's estimates based on DOD publications and IISS data.

Future prospects for cooperation will depend heavily upon the overall U.S.-Russian political relationship. Whether the Russian Duma endorses the START II Treaty will have a bearing not only on the implementation of this agreement, but also on prospects for START III negotiations. The attitude of the U.S. government also figures into the equation. Politics aside, however, four military factors seemingly set the stage for continued negotiations and agreements in important but limited ways.

- The United States and Russia are no longer military adversaries. During the Cold War, the U.S.-Soviet military rivalry was the principal stimulant of the nuclear arms race. With this rivalry gone, neither country has a major reason to compete against the other in the nuclear arena. The effect has been to greatly reduce their military requirements for deploying large nuclear forces. Indeed, they now have a military incentive to continue cooperating in order to pare away nuclear assets whose original purpose—detering or trumping each other—has vanished.
- Both countries face the reality that whereas nuclear forces brought them prestige and power during the bipolar Cold War, a different situation has evolved in today's world. Although the need for nuclear deterrence remains valid, nuclear forces no longer count for as much on the world scene. Economic strength is now the principal determinant of national health and power. National security goals are primarily being pursued through cooperative diplomacy and conventional military forces, not nuclear forces. In a period of constrained fiscal resources, neither country wants to waste large amounts of money on big nuclear forces that no longer are needed for international influence. Moreover, further progress on arms control can help buttress their arguments against nuclear proliferation around the world.
- U.S. and Russian nuclear technology has reached at least a temporary plateau. During the Cold War, the rapid pace of technological change constantly threatened to destabilize the nuclear balance in favor of one participant or the other. Both sides faced powerful incentives to modernize as fast as possible and both were reluctant to enter into negotiated accords that could leave them on the wrong side of the technology equation. Today, emerging technology no longer seems poised to create big changes in how offensive strategic nuclear forces are sized and designed. Neither side can hope to achieve a disarming capability against the other with foreseeable technology, and the quest for impenetrable defenses has fallen victim to technological and budgetary impediments. For both countries, nuclear modernization priorities have not vanished, but they have declined appreciably in importance.
- Both sides have an economic incentive to cooperate. For both, their principal strategic nuclear forces were deployed in the 1980s or even earlier; in future years, they will be approaching the end of their normal life cycles. As they become obsolescent in ways that elevate maintenance costs, retaining their capabilities will require replacing them with new weapon systems whose cost will not be cheap. The problem of unaffordable

modernization especially affects Russia, which lacks the investment funds to buy a new generation of missiles and bombers, and perhaps even to maintain the current weapons at proper readiness and safety standards. But it also affects the United States, whose Defense Department would prefer to invest scarce investment funds on new conventional weapons, rather than on nuclear weapons whose expense could eat heavily into conventional modernization and readiness. Both countries will be better off by agreeing to additional nuclear reductions that allow them to use their scarce defense funds to better advantage. Owing to these factors, two arenas—START negotiations and control of "loose nukes"—offer hopes for concrete progress in bilateral relations. As a result of arms control accords and associated downsizing, the nuclear force levels of both countries, especially warheads, are already far lower than during the Cold War. In the process, still-existing threats to stability, such as large MIRV payloads and big ICBMs, are being trimmed away. If the START II treaty is implemented, force levels will decline further, to 3,000-3,500 warheads apiece. START III goals are undergoing analysis, but both governments are talking of guidelines in terms of significantly lower levels, in the range of 2,000-2,500 warheads. If achieved, this development could help further stabilize U.S.-Russian military relations while saving both countries a useful amount of money.

In addition, further steps to keep Russian nuclear weapons and fissile materials out of the hands of arms merchants and terrorists could contribute importantly to stability in more ways than one. Considerable cooperation already has been undertaken in this vital arena. The two governments have recognized the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program as the vehicle for guiding U.S. efforts to deactivate strategic delivery systems not only in Russia but also in other such other FSU nations as Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. The CTR program aspires to retire unneeded weapon systems and to pursue enhanced safety, security, accounting, and centralized control of remaining weapons and fissile materials. Continued pursuit of this program will remain a priority for both the United States and Russia, whose own interests are served by U.S. help in funding and management.

Although controlling "loose nukes" will remain a viable enterprise, the likelihood and importance of achieving further major downsizing in their nuclear postures should not be overestimated. Troubled political relations could put the START talks into an enduring stall pattern. Beyond this, the mathematics of mutual deterrence and survivability dictate that each country will need to retain a fairly large and diverse posture. Both countries will continue taking care to ensure that negotiated reductions do not leave their force postures newly vulnerable to surprise attacks as new technologies are developed. Both countries seem likely to continue favoring a wide, flexible spectrum of targeting options, rather than a narrow spectrum that could lead to small forces. A related barrier to deep reductions is that although the two countries still embrace a triad philosophy, they have somewhat different approaches to force posturing. Whereas the United States relies heavily on SLBMs and bombers, Russia places greater emphasis on ICBMs as its mainstay. This difference creates pressures on negotiations to continue ratifying the triad and to leave room for all three legs to be fairly large. Both countries must also be concerned about the potential nuclear threats posed by other countries. As a consequence, complete nuclear disarmament by them is not in the cards anytime soon. Very deep cuts (e.g., down to 1,000 warheads apiece) might also be hard to achieve. But even if such reductions can be attained, would they herald a major peace-enhancing breakthrough in U.S.-Russian relations? Or would they merely be a marginal contribution to a nuclear relationship that already is basically stable, and whose future will be determined mostly by other issues?

The highest priority nuclear issue for the future is not the U.S.-Russian bilateral interaction. Rather, the central issue is: can the two countries cooperate in responding to the prospect of accelerating WMD proliferation in dangerous regions, and into the hands of rogue powers? China seems destined to become a more potent nuclear power in the coming years and decades. The recent nuclear explosions in South Asia were a shocking development, but at least India and Pakistan are not commonly regarded as rogues. A far more serious development would be if and when such roguish countries as Iraq, Iran, and North Korea gain access to WMD systems and delivery vehicles, including long-range missiles. A short time ago, this unsettling development seemed years off. It now seems a lot closer and is rapidly becoming a matter of growing urgency.

Rapid WMD proliferation could affect the security concerns of both countries not only in a political and strategic sense, but also in concrete military ways. U.S. military forces could be directly endangered, for they have potential military missions in the principal endangered areas, as well as security commitments to allies and friends. Russian forces also could be affected to the extent that the future results in them acquiring military missions in these areas. Beyond this, the homelands of both countries could be threatened. Russia and Europe are the most directly vulnerable, for their territory lies closer to proliferation zones. Eventually, the United States could become endangered as well, not only by terrorists carrying suitcase bombs, but by intercontinental missiles.

WMD proliferation could affect the nuclear force calculations of the United States and Russia. It seems unlikely to increase greatly the size of their already-large offensive postures, but it could affect their strike and targeting requirements. Equally important, it could propel both countries into pursuing ballistic missile defenses and other counterproliferation defenses. The existing theory of U.S.-Russian nuclear stability is anchored in the premise that large BMD systems are unnecessary and destabilizing. Yet, U.S. forces will require theater defense systems to protect them from local WMD strikes, and programs already are underway to develop the necessary assets. Eventually—perhaps sooner rather than later—the United States and Russia could face the need to build large homeland BMD defenses— not against each other, but against proliferating countries. If so, this development obviously could affect the U.S.-Russian military relationship. Can ways be found to modify their ABM treaty to provide for proliferation defense without undermining their mutual deterrence and stability? This issue is being examined in the START talks, and although progress is being made, the ultimate outcome is unclear for the reason that neither country has yet clarified its enduring approach to WMD defense in the coming era of accelerating proliferation.

The answers to these and related proliferation issues lie beyond the scope of this paper. Future cooperation between the United States and Russia seems likely to focus on continuing to implement the NPT Treaty, the Missile Technology Control Regime, the conventions on chemical and biological weapons, other international agreements, and support for the IAEA and other multilateral organizations. Beyond this, suffice it to note that although the START process remains important and offers hope for further progress, it no longer is as critical as once was the case. Indeed, the U.S.-Russian bilateral nuclear relationship is itself no longer the central issue in global security affairs. The truly hot nuclear and WMD issues lie elsewhere.

CONVENTIONAL

In the past, most observers of U.S.-Russian relations have been so preoccupied with nuclear issues that they have paid little attention to conventional force relationships. Regardless of

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whether this stance was appropriate during the Cold War, the times are changing. Whereas the nuclear relationship may be losing its centrality, conventional military relations are becoming more important. One reason is that U.S. and Russian military forces are now starting to cooperate in active ways, rather than menacingly staring at each other across a divided front in Central Europe. Another reason is that both countries will be using their conventional forces to help pursue their diplomatic agendas in key regions. In some places, the manner in which their forces interact, and work together, could have an important bearing on overall U.S.-Russian political relations and on their respective quests for regional stability.

Although NATO enlargement initially provoked concern in some quarters that a new Cold War might unfold, the emerging political situation in Central Europe suggests a different conclusion. Russia still opposes NATO enlargement in principle, but as long as its core interests are respected, its current policy seems unlikely to pursue a confrontation over the matter. The Founding Act and creation of the Permanent Joint Council are reasons for confidence that diplomacy can be used to fashion a stable outcome as NATO enlarges and parallel efforts are launched to create a stronger European security architecture in which Russia will play a contributing role. NATO's strategic policy calls for enlargement and also for a concerted effort to create a cooperative partnership with Russia in ways that leave Russia and other countries with their security intact.

The military realities in Central Europe also point toward a stable outcome. Russia no longer possesses the large military forces that could pose the threat of a major offensive against NATO and Europe. Such an offensive would require about 100 divisions and comparable air forces, far more than Russia likely will be capable of fielding, while also defending its borders elsewhere. Nor does NATO pose an offensive military threat to Russia. Today, NATO forces are about 30 percent smaller than during the Cold War, and they are primarily tailored to defend the Alliance's borders. Although efforts are underway to enhance NATO power projection capabilities for limited external missions, the forces being assembled are far smaller than those that would be needed to menace Russia, which remains fully capable of defending itself in strength.

Current NATO military manpower is about 2.4 million troops on active duty. This compares to Russia's posture of about 1.1 million troops and about 750,000 troops in the other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) states. Over one-half of NATO troops are deployed along southern NATO regions, where they lack any large-scale capacity to deploy elsewhere, much less threaten Russia. In Central Europe, NATO still has about 1.1 million troops—a similar number compared to Russia. These forces are mostly organized into multinational integrated formations that, counting France, total about 20 divisions and 1800 combat aircraft from several countries. Germany contributes about 330,000 troops to this total, and the United States, about 100,000. These forces remain designed mostly for nearby border defense missions. They are not nearly large enough for a sweeping offensive eastward, and in addition to their limited size, they lack the logistic support and mobility to contemplate such an operation.

The act of admitting Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary will add the forces of these three countries to the NATO ledger. Their current active military manpower is about 340,000 troops. But as these countries join NATO, they will be downsizing their postures by nearly 50 percent. Together, they likely will wind up deploying only about 10 to 12 divisions and 400 to 500 aircraft, none of which will have powerful offensive assets. Current NATO members will make commitments to reinforce new members in an emergency, but these commitments will

be small: a few divisions and air wings. Also, the CFE Treaty will regulate the forces that old and new NATO members can deploy in the CEE region. When the dust settles, the amount of forces deployed in this region, or readily deployable, will be smaller than now. Provided Russia refrains from menacing actions, the consequence will be greater military stability in this region—not less stability—in a manner that poses no military threat to Russia or other CIS countries.

This strategic setting in Europe provides the framework for comparing U.S. and Russian conventional forces. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union had far bigger conventional forces than did the United States. In order to achieve regional deterrence in Europe and elsewhere, the United States sought to embed its forces in big alliances that drew upon the contributions of many allies. Today, the situation is very different. Now that Russia has been shorn of the imposing USSR military strength, the force postures of the two countries are surprisingly similar in total size. This, at least, is what surface appearances suggest when such indicators as manpower levels, total combat formations, and weapons are examined. Moreover, both military postures are designed for regional wars and lesser contingencies, rather than worldwide conflict. Closer inspection, however, suggests a more complicated reality that belies the impression of similarity.

Today both countries field military postures that are smaller than during the Cold War, but Russia's downsizing—influenced by both the collapse of the USSR and its own reductions—has been especially large. During the Cold War, for example, the USSR army totaled nearly 220 mobilizable divisions. Russia's current army has only about one-fifth this number. Russia's current defense budget is estimated by IISS to be about \$65 billion annually, about 45 percent of the 1992 total. Its military procurement has slowed to a crawl. Whereas about 1,200 tanks and infantry fighting vehicles were bought in 1992, only about 355 were acquired in 1997. Production of combat aircraft has similarly fallen from 170 in 1992 to 35 in 1997. Even so, Russia still has the largest military forces and defense budgets of any country in Europe and Eurasia. U.S. forces are similar in total size and benefit from larger budgets, but 80 percent of them are stationed in the continental United States, and they have global missions that limit their presence in Europe to only 7 percent of their total.

One source of major dissimilarity is that the two countries are carrying out different military strategies. Because the United States is located in the Western Hemisphere, it relies upon overseas presence and a power projection strategy to help defend its vital interests in such key regions as Europe, the Persian Gulf, and Northeast Asia. This strategy begets a distinctly American force posture that emphasizes carrier-based naval forces, deployable tactical air forces, and expeditionary ground forces. By contrast, Russia is no longer a global super power, but instead a regional power. Its geo-strategic focus is concentrated in the Eurasian landmass, around its borders, and across the territory of the former Soviet Union. This strategy produces a distinctly Russian military posture that emphasizes larger ground forces with proportionately fewer air and naval forces than fielded by the United States. Russian forces, moreover, are intended primarily for local regional operations and thus have fewer mobility assets and projection capabilities than possessed by the United States. The U.S. military posture thus can deploy and operate at long distances, but the Russian military posture cannot do so to nearly such a degree.

In addition, U.S. and Russian forces have quite different structures when the details are examined. Compared to Russian forces, U.S. Army divisions have more infantry troops and larger logistic support, but fewer armored vehicles and artillery tubes. U.S. air wings have

more aircraft, higher sortie rates, more flexible tactics, and the capacity to perform a wider range of missions. U.S. naval task forces typically place more emphasis on carrier-based air strikes and amphibious operations than do Russian task forces, but less emphasis on strategic bombers, missiles, and submarines. These differences in structure translate into dissimilar operating practices, which can produce a lack of compatibility and interoperability—a barrier to close cooperation.

Table
U.S. and Russian Conventional Forces, 1988*

	United States	Russia
Active Manpower	1,401,000	1,159,000
Mobilizable Division Equivalents	30	45
Combat Aircraft	2,725	2,514
Major Naval Combatants	224	143

* Author's estimates based on DOD publications and IISS data.

Another dissimilarity lies in the different readiness profiles of the two postures. By any measure, the U.S. military posture is endowed with the high readiness standards that are permitted by a defense budget of \$250 billion. Nearly all active-duty U.S. forces are fully manned by active professionals and volunteers. Despite recent shortfalls in a few places, they train at a high tempo, in both individual and unit training. They are well sustained with large logistic support assets and stocks. Maintenance and equipment availability is good. These factors make U.S. forces a potent fighting machine that can respond on short notice and defeat even well-armed opponents. By contrast, funding constraints and personnel turbulence plunged the Russian military into serious trouble in these areas. Today the Russian military faces major manpower shortages, inadequate training, poor facilities and stocks, major maintenance backlogs, and a host of similar problems that have eroded its morale and performance. This situation may eventually be reversed, but today, the bottom line is that the U.S. military is a high-quality force, but the Russia military is something considerably less.

A fourth dissimilarity arises because U.S. forces are well designed for joint and combined operations. In recent years, the U.S. emphasis on jointness—ground, air, and naval forces operating together—has increased dramatically. U.S. forces also have developed a good capacity for combined operations—working with the forces of other countries—because of their close relations with allies and partners in Europe, the Persian Gulf, and Asia. The Russian military does not have an equivalent tradition in joint operations. During the Cold War, it led the Warsaw Pact, but since this alliance was dismantled, Russian forces now operate only with their CIS neighbors, many of which are trying to distance themselves from Russia.

Quite apart from any inability to conduct joint and combined operations, the fact that Russia does not belong to the Western Alliance system places an obvious damper on the extent to which the two countries will pursue cooperation in their conventional forces. The consequence is that U.S.-Russian military cooperation must be taken as a special step, rather than as a natural outgrowth of normal Alliance exercises and planning mechanisms. Calls occasionally are heard for Russia to be welcomed into NATO at some future juncture, but this development seems unlikely to transpire for a host of powerful reasons. Nor is it likely that Russia will join existing U.S.-allied security relationships in Asia. Even so, military partnership relations are now being pursued in Europe and may grow, and this practice plausibly could spread to Asia and other regions. To the extent this is the case, it could broaden the scope for U.S.-Russian cooperative ties.

A sixth dissimilarity arises from different modernization prospects. Today both military postures benefit from large numbers of modern weapons bought during the 1980s, at the height of the Cold War. In recent years, however, a major separation of fortunes has occurred. Despite some spending shortfalls, the U.S. military has maintained a steady procurement effort of about \$40 billion annually. This funding has permitted it to buy some new platforms, while also procuring the new sensors and smart munitions that are key to modern, high technology warfare. By contrast, the Russian defense procurement budget has shrunk to almost nothing. Few new platforms are being bought, and the same applies to sensors and munitions. As a consequence, a difference in weapons quality already exists, and it is likely to widen in the future. Within a few years, the U.S. military will begin a wholesale modernization effort in order to replace the aging platforms from the 1980s. This effort will begin with tactical air forces, and then spread to ground and naval forces. By 2010, it will be well underway and completed a few years later. By contrast, Russian procurement seems destined to continue proceeding at a snail's pace. Modernization likely will not be completed before 2025. The effect will be a steadily widening gap in the weapons and associated performance characteristics of the two postures.

This difference will be exacerbated by another major trend. As U.S. forces enter the information era, they will be acquiring new doctrines that promise to greatly alter their operations and elevate their combat capability. In U.S. circles, this development is being called the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). As revealed in Joint Vision 2010, the new operating concepts are to be "dominant maneuver," "precision engagement," "focused logistics," and "full-dimensional protection." The full implications are only beginning to be understood through field experiments, but the likelihood is that by 2010, U.S. forces will make far greater use of information warfare, deep strikes, real-time targeting, and fast maneuvers than now. The Russian military doubtless will be pursuing doctrinal and operational changes of its own. But its slower pace of technological innovation likely will dictate a less sweeping conversion than experienced by U.S. forces. The inevitable consequence will be an even further widening of the qualitative performance gap between U.S. and Russian forces.

The dominant reality is that these two postures are already quite different in qualitative characteristics and likely will become even more disparate as the future unfolds. This prospect seemingly narrows the scope for cooperation between them. Yet hope for cooperation comes from a different and important direction. The strategic interests of the United States and Russia seem likely to intersect in important places. Moreover, the specific military missions of their two postures may prove to be fairly similar in the coming years. Both postures likely will be focused on peacetime shaping missions, peace support operations, limited crisis

engagements, and regional conflicts against adversaries employing asymmetric strategies. Circumstances could require U.S. and Russian forces to work together in some contingencies, as already has happened in Bosnia. Different physical characteristics thus may pull these postures apart, but the prospect of similar missions creates reasons for them to consider opportunities for cooperating together in order to learn from each other and to profit in mutual ways.

PROSPECTS FOR COOPERATION IN CONVENTIONAL FORCES

Clearly prospects for cooperation in the conventional arena will depend heavily upon overall U.S.-Russian political relations. To the extent that the United States and Russia pursue common security agendas in key regions, prospects will improve. To the extent they drift into opposition or rivalry, the reverse will be the case. Recent trends have mixed implications on this score. Whereas some Russians are coming to see U.S. policy as driven by a hegemonic agenda, some in the United States are increasingly perceiving Russian policy as being driven by narrow state interests and a spoiler mentality. To date, their differences are less transparent in Europe but more obvious in the Middle East and Persian Gulf, where the dangers to global stability seem greatest. Nonetheless, both governments maintain that the partnership ideal still animates their relations, and barring some unanticipated wholesale rupture, both likely will remain openminded about cooperating when the opportunity presents itself.

As the Cold War was ending, the primary forum for U.S.-Russian cooperation on conventional forces was the CFE negotiation. Beyond question, the CFE Treaty played a major role in ending the NATO-Warsaw pact military confrontation in Europe and fostering hope for a new era of military stability. Its principal mechanisms were to foster steep cuts in Warsaw Pact forces and modest cuts in NATO forces in ways that left both blocs with defensive force postures at equal numerical levels. The CFE Treaty remains alive today, and its many subceilings are being modified to help encourage stability across Europe's complex maize of differing strategic zones. Although the CFE Treaty doubtless will be retained, however, its core strategic concepts are not well aligned with the new era of strategic and military affairs unfolding in Europe, where the two rival blocs have been replaced by a more complex and fluid security structure. Perhaps a new arms control agenda can be established to help deal with the different problems and opportunities ahead. Even so, arms control negotiations—in the form of further major force reductions—seem unlikely to be the focal point of future cooperative enterprises either in Europe, or for the U.S.-Russian relationship.

In theory, the goal of U.S.-Russian cooperative activities could be to transfer U.S. military knowledge, practices, and doctrines for major military operations to the Russian military. The reality that there will always be constraints on passing U.S. military expertise to countries that do not belong to the Western Alliance system will inhibit this step. An equal impediment is whether the Russian military wants to mimic U.S. forces, regards American doctrine as appropriate to Russia's situation, and is able to absorb U.S. practices. Today, U.S. and Russian weapons and doctrine may be sufficiently similar to permit such a transfer. But as the RMA takes hold in U.S. forces, the scope of potential activities may diminish.

The most obvious area for greater cooperation lies in further developing the PFP relations now being pursued in Europe. Under the PFP rubric, Russian forces are now cooperating not only with NATO forces on a multilaterally but also with U.S. forces on a bilaterally. This activity has been conducted across a spectrum of events: seminars and conferences, visitations, and limited exercises. It likely will grow in the coming years, but the central issue is: exactly what is being accomplished? A common hope is that greater dialogue will reduce

the fears and misperceptions that allegedly divide the two military establishments. Perhaps this will be the case, but greater military awareness likely will be beneficial only if the two countries remain in accord on larger security issues. After all, the German and Russian militaries trained together in the 1920s, but fought against each other when their countries went to war in 1940. A more tangible benefit could be that the two militaries develop a better capacity to perform together such practical tasks as humanitarian aid, disaster relief, and hostage rescue, although these will be minor accomplishments in the larger scheme of things.

A key to determining prospects for more serious cooperation will be the extent to which U.S. and Russian forces are required to perform common military missions in major situations. Peace support operations (PSO) are the most likely candidate for expanded combined missions. The Bosnia experience of IFOR and SFOR suggests that such contingencies may arise with growing frequency, and that U.S. and Russian forces can work effectively together in this setting. This success may lead both governments to consider launching similar endeavors more often, when circumstances merit this step. Yet the Bosnia intervention has not resulted in U.S. and Russian forces being required to operate together in combat. Until this capability is demonstrated, the U.S. and Russian militaries likely will be hesitant to join together in PSO missions that could deteriorate into serious shooting.

The ultimate determinant of future prospects will be whether the two governments decide that their forces should become prepared to operate together in conducting major crisis interventions and waging regional wars. Surface appearances suggest that such operations are not very likely. The core reason is that U.S. and Russian vital interests mostly arise in different geographic places, and their forces are likely to be operating there, not at the same spots. Yet, it also is true that old distinctions are breaking down in the new, rapidly changing international system. Perhaps events could transpire in ways that thrust U.S. and Russian forces together, fighting against a common enemy. The key point is that these forces will not even have the option of operating effectively together in such conflicts unless they first learn how to do so.

In the final analysis, prospects for cooperation across the entire spectrum of military missions will vary as a function of the different geographic regions being considered. In Europe, the two governments will face the imperative of being able to conduct PSO missions in the Balkans, while taking steps to ensure that NATO enlargement and Russia's actions in Belarus do not result in a new military confrontation in Central Europe. In Eurasia and the Caucasus, Russia likely will resist any regular Western military presence around its borders. If local instability results in the need for major PSO missions that overwhelm the ability of the Russian military to respond, this calculus could change, and the United States might want to help. In the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, the United States and its allies are unlikely to perceive any major need for Russian military help, and Russia is not likely to want to provide it. Again, this calculus could be altered by the growing threat of WMD proliferation, especially if the United States and Russia must act together to defend against threats to their vital interests. In Asia, the Cold War's legacy currently bars the way to mutual collaboration. Yet as the future unfolds, the need for collective action in order to stabilize a murky geopolitical setting plausibly could create incentives for cooperation between Russia, the United States, its allies, and other partners.

OPTIONS

Two major points stand out from this analysis. First, although growing U.S.-Russian military cooperation should not be regarded as the wave of the future or the key to global tranquility, a

case can be made for pursuing new forms of it, at least in limited doses, if political traffic will bear this step. Second, prospects for this cooperation will depend not only on the mutual missions that should be performed, but also on the larger U.S.-Russian political relationship and on the physical capacity of their force structures to be melded together for combined operations. Desirability and feasibility thus should both play important roles in the decision process about where to steer the U.S.-Russian military cooperation. The desire to build a partnership makes sense on paper, but making it meaningful requires that it be focused on the right goals and that it overcomes powerful barriers to actually get the job done.

With these points in mind, four broad options for guiding the future can be considered. They span the spectrum from nothing to everything, while identifying choices at the center, in the middle ground. Deciding upon them is a matter of weighing their attractions and liabilities, and of balancing the barriers to cooperation with the incentives for pursuing it.

- The first option, at the extreme "nothing" end of the spectrum, is that of minimizing U.S.-Russian military cooperation and abandoning the idea of a meaningful partnership. It would entail downgrading the START negotiations, doing little about WMD proliferation, and tapering off Russia's participation in the PFP program and ties with U.S. forces. This option makes sense if logic indicates that little is to be gained beyond what already has been achieved, and that barriers to productive activity are simply too large to be overcome. This option also would be a logical byproduct if Russia and the United States are deemed to be on such divergent political paths that meaningful military cooperation between them will be impossible.
- The second option is that of maintaining the current cooperation, which amounts to a limited partnership. It would keep things as they are today in strategic arms control negotiations, other WMD matters, and limited forms of conventional military cooperation through PFP and selective PSO missions. This option makes sense if the decision is reached that the current cooperation will suffice for both countries' needs, that more cooperation is not essential, and that the traffic will bear nothing more.
- The third option is pragmatic pursuit of an enhanced, focused partnership. It would seek to expand cooperation selectively, in order to develop common capabilities for new combined missions that may have to be performed in the coming years. While it might de-emphasize START negotiations, or at least not intensify them, it would seek greater collaboration in the WMD proliferation arena. It also would pursue greater cooperation in conventional forces so that if the need arises for demanding PSO missions or more intense operations, the capability to perform them will exist, rather than their being improvised.
- The fourth option lies at the "everything" end of the spectrum. It is that of seeking a major expansion of the U.S.-Russian military relationship. It would seek to intensify the START negotiations, greatly expand cooperation in the WMD proliferation arena, and develop major capabilities for combined conventional operations. Its guiding premise is that the United States and Russia should seek to become major military partners, that this step is feasible, and that it will yield productive results meriting the effort.

These options oversimplify a more complex reality, but they help identify the wide spectrum of strategic choices confronting the United States and Russia as they attempt to define what the idea of a military partnership between them should mean in the coming years. This paper's judgment is that option 3, an enlarged but pragmatic partnership focused on new missions, is the best choice. The reason is simple. Clearly the idea of a U.S.-Russian military

partnership makes sense for both countries. Abandoning it altogether would unnecessarily damage overall political relations at a time of mounting strain. Seeking to expand it beyond realistic limits comes across as equally unwise and fruitless. The current partnership has served reasonably well thus far, but it is not well aligned with the new challenges ahead. Option 3 offers the promise of not only keeping a necessary enterprise alive, but also getting more out of it strategic terms. It seems to make sense on paper, but this is a judgment for the two countries to make. What can be said is that the issue of U.S.-Russian military cooperation seems likely to be a continuing factor in the strategic equation, but most likely in different ways from the past.