

Putin and the Geopolitics of the New Cold War: Or, what happens when Cowboys don't shoot straight like they used to...

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The frank words of Russia's President Vladimir Putin to the assembled participants of the annual Munich Wehrkunde security conference have unleashed a storm of self-righteous protest from Western media and politicians. A visitor from another planet might have the impression that the Russian President had abruptly decided to launch a provocative confrontation policy with the West reminiscent of the 1943-1991 Cold War.

However, the details of the developments in NATO and the United States military policies since 1991 are anything but 'déjà vu all over again', to paraphrase the legendary New York Yankees catcher, Yogi Berra.

This time round we are already deep in a New Cold War, which literally threatens the future of life on this planet. The debacle in Iraq, or the prospect of a US tactical nuclear pre-emptive strike against Iran are ghastly enough. In comparison to what is at play in the US global military buildup against its most formidable remaining global rival, Russia, they loom relatively small. The US military policies since the end of the Soviet Union and emergence of the Republic of Russia in 1991 are in need of close examination in this context. Only then do Putin's frank remarks on February 10 at the Munich Conference on Security make sense.

Because of the misleading accounts of most of Putin's remarks in most western media, it's worth reading in full in English (go to www.securityconference.de for official English translation).

Putin spoke in general terms of Washington's vision of a 'unipolar' world, with 'one center of authority, one center of force, one center of decision-making, calling it a 'world in which there is one master, one sovereign. And at the end of the day this is pernicious not only for all those within this system, but also for the sovereign itself because it destroys itself from within.'

Then the Russian President got to the heart of the matter: 'Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force – military force – in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts. As a result we do not have sufficient strength to find a comprehensive solution to any one of these conflicts. Finding a political settlement also becomes impossible.'

Putin continued, 'We are seeing a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law. And independent legal norms are, as a matter of fact, coming increasingly closer to one state's legal system. One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. This is visible in the economic, political, cultural and educational policies it imposes on other nations. Well, who likes this? Who is happy about this?'

These direct words begin to touch on what Mr Putin is concerned about in US foreign and military policy since the end of the Cold War some 16 or so years back. But it is further in the text that he gets explicit about what military policies he is reacting to. Here is where the speech is worth clarification. Putin warns of the destabilizing effect of 'space weapons.'—'it is impossible to sanction the appearance of new, destabilising high-tech weapons...a new area of confrontation, especially in outer space. Star wars is no longer a fantasy – it is a reality...In Russia's opinion, the militarization of outer space could have unpredictable consequences for the international community, and provoke nothing less than the beginning of a nuclear (arms race-f.w.e.) era.'

He then declares, 'Plans to expand certain elements of the anti-missile defence system to Europe cannot help but disturb us. Who needs the next step of what would be, in this case, an inevitable arms race?'

What does he refer to here? Few are aware that while claiming it is doing so to protect itself against the risk of 'rogue state' nuclear missile attack from the likes of North Korea or perhaps one day Iran, the US recently announced it is building massive anti-missile defense installations in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Poland? Missile defense? What's this all about?

Missile Defense and a US Nuclear First Strike

On January 29 US Army Brigadier General Patrick J. O'Reilly, Deputy Director of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency, announced US plans to deploy anti-ballistic missile defense elements in Europe by 2011, which the Pentagon claims is aimed at protecting American and NATO installations from enemy threats coming from the Middle East, not Russia. Following Putin's Munich remarks, the US State Department issued a formal comment noting that the Bush Administration is 'puzzled by the repeated caustic comments about the envisaged system from Moscow.'

Oops...Better send that press release back to the Pentagon's Office of Deception Propaganda for rewrite. The Iran missile threat to NATO installations in Poland somehow isn't quite convincing. Why not ask long-time NATO member Turkey if the US can place its missile shield there, far closer to Iran? Or maybe Kuwait? Or Israel?

US policy since 1999 has called for building some form of active missile defense despite the end of the Cold War threat from Soviet ICBM or other missile launch. The National Missile Defense Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-38) says so: '*It is the policy of the United States to deploy as soon as is technologically possible an effective National Missile Defense system capable of defending the territory of the United States against limited ballistic missile attack (whether accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate) with funding subject to the annual authorization of appropriations and the annual appropriation of funds for National Missile Defense.*' Missile defense was one of Donald Rumsfeld's obsessions as Defense Secretary.

Why now?

What is increasingly clear, at least in Moscow and Beijing, is that Washington has a far larger grand strategy behind its seemingly irrational and arbitrary unilateral military moves.

For the Pentagon and the US policy establishment, regardless of political party, the Cold War with Russia never ended. It merely continued in disguised form. This has been the case with Presidents G.H.W. Bush, William Clinton and with George W. Bush.

Missile defense sounded plausible if the United States were vulnerable to attack by a tiny band of dedicated Islamic terrorists able to commandeer a Boeing aircraft with boxcutters. The only problem is missile defense is not aimed at rogue terrorists like Bin Laden's Al Qaeda, or states like North Korea or Iran.

From them the threat of a devastating nuclear strike on the territory of the United States is non-existent. The US Navy and Air Force bomber fleet today stands in full preparation to bomb, even nuke Iran back to the stone age only over suspicions she is trying to develop independent nuclear weapon technology. States like Iran have no capability to render America defenceless, without risking nuclear annihilation many times over.

Missile defense came out of the 1980's when Ronald Reagan proposed developing a system of satellites in space and radar bases around the globe, listening stations and interceptor missiles, to monitor and shoot down nuclear missiles before they hit their intended target.

It was dubbed Star Wars by its critics, but the Pentagon officially has spent more than \$130 billion on such a system since 1983. George W. Bush increased that significantly beginning 2002, to \$11 billion a year, double the level during the Clinton years. And another \$53 billion for the following five years has been budgeted.

Washington's obsession with Nuclear Primacy

What Washington did not say, but Putin has now alluded to in Munich, is that the US missile defense is not at all defensive. It is offensive, and how.

The possibility of providing a powerful state, one with the world's most awesome military machinery, a shield to protect it from limited attack, is aimed directly at Russia, the only other nuclear power with anywhere the capacity to launch a credible nuclear counterpunch.

Were the United States able to effectively shield itself from a potential Russian response to a US nuclear First Strike, the US would be able simply to dictate to the entire world on its terms, not only to Russia. That would be what military people term Nuclear Primacy. That is the real meaning of Putin's unusual speech. He isn't paranoid. He's being starkly realistic.

Since the end of the Cold War in 1989, it's now clear that the US Government has never for a moment stopped its pursuit of Nuclear Primacy. For Washington and the US elites, the Cold War never ended. They just forgot to tell us all.

The quest for global control of oil and energy pipelines, the quest to establish its military bases across Eurasia, its attempt to modernize and upgrade its nuclear submarine fleet, its Strategic B-52 bomber command, all make sense only when seen through the perspective of the relentless pursuit of US Nuclear Primacy.

The Bush Administration unilaterally abrogated the US-Russian ABM Treaty in December 2001. It's in a race to complete a global network of missile defense as the key to US nuclear primacy. With even a primitive missile defense shield, the US could attack Russian missile silos and submarine fleets with no fear of effective retaliation, as the few remaining Russian nuclear missiles would be unable to launch a convincing response enough to deter a US First Strike.

The ability of both sides—the Warsaw Pact and NATO—during the Cold War, to mutually annihilate one another, led to a nuclear stalemate dubbed by military strategists, MAD—mutual assured destruction. It was scary but in a bizarre sense, more stable than what we have today with a unilateral US pursuit of nuclear primacy. The prospect of mutual nuclear annihilation with no decisive advantage for either side, led to a world in which nuclear war had been 'unthinkable.'

Now, the US pursues the possibility of nuclear war as 'thinkable.' That's really mad.

The first nation with a nuclear missile shield would de facto have 'first strike ability.' Quite correctly, Lt. Colonel Robert Bowman, Director of the US Air Force missile defense program, recently called missile defense, 'the missing link to a First Strike.'

More alarming is the fact no one outside a handful of Pentagon planners or senior intelligence officials in Washington discusses the implications of Washington's pursuit of missile defense in Poland, Czech Republic or its drive for Nuclear Primacy.

It calls to mind 'Rebuilding America's Defenses,' the September 2000 report of the hawkish Project for the New American Century, where Dick Cheney and Don Rumsfeld were members. There they declared, 'The United States must develop and deploy global missile defenses to defend the American homeland and American allies, and **to provide a secure basis for US power projection around the world.**' (author's emphasis).

Before becoming Bush's Defense Secretary in January 2001, Rumsfeld headed a Presidential Commission advocating the development of missile defense for the United States.

So eager was the Bush-Cheney Administration to advance its missile defense plans, that the President and Defense Secretary ordered waiving usual operational testing requirements essential to determining whether the highly complex system of systems was effective.

The Rumsfeld missile defense program is strongly opposed within the military command. On March 26, 2004 no less than 49 US generals and admirals signed an Open Letter to the President, appealing for missile defense postponement.

As they noted, 'US technology, already deployed, can pinpoint the source of a ballistic missile launch. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that any state would dare to attack the US or allow a terrorist to do so from its territory with a missile armed with a weapon of mass destruction, thereby risking annihilation from a devastating US retaliatory strike.'

The 49 generals and admirals, including Admiral William J. Crowe, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, went on to argue to the President, 'As you have said, Mr. President, our highest priority is to prevent terrorists from acquiring and employing weapons of mass destruction. We agree. We therefore recommend, as the militarily responsible course of action, that you postpone operational deployment of the expensive and untested GMD (Ground-based Missile Defense) system and transfer the associated funding to accelerated programs to secure the multitude of facilities containing nuclear weapons and materials, and to protect our ports and borders against terrorists who may attempt to smuggle weapons of mass destruction into the United States.'

What the seasoned military veterans did not say was that Rumsfeld, Cheney, Bush and company had quite another agenda than rogue terror threats. They were after Full Spectrum Dominance, the New World Order, and the elimination, for once and all, of Russia as a potential rival for power.

The rush to deploy a missile defense shield is clearly not aimed at North Korea or terror attacks. It is aimed at Russia and much less so, the far smaller nuclear capacities of China. As the 49 generals and admirals noted in their letter to the President in 2004, the US already had more than sufficient nuclear warheads to hit a thousand bunkers or caves of a potential rogue state.

Kier Lieber and Daryl Press, two US military analysts, writing in the influential *Foreign Affairs* of the New York Council on Foreign Relations in March 2006, noted, 'If the United States' nuclear modernization were really aimed at rogue states or terrorists, the country's nuclear force would not need the additional thousand ground-burst warheads it will gain from the W-76 modernization program. The current and future US nuclear force, in other words, seems designed to carry out a pre-emptive disarming strike against Russia or China.'

Referring to the aggressive new Pentagon deployment plans for missile defense, Lieber and Press add, 'the sort of missile defenses that the United States might plausibly deploy would be valuable primarily in an offensive context, not a defensive one—as an adjunct to a US First Strike capability, not as a stand-alone shield. If the United States launched a nuclear attack against Russia (or China), the targeted country would be left with a tiny surviving arsenal—if any at all. At that point, even a relatively modest or inefficient missile defense system might well be enough to protect against any retaliatory strikes...'

This is the real agenda in Washington's Eurasian Great Game. Naturally, to state so openly would risk tipping Washington's hand before the noose had been irreversibly tightened around Moscow's metaphorical neck. So the State Department and Defense Secretary Gates try to make jokes about the recent Russian remarks, as though they were Putin's paranoid delusions.

This entire US program of missile defense and nuclear First Strike modernization is hair-raising enough as an idea. Under the Bush Administration, it has been made operational and airborne, hearkening back to the dangerous days of the Cold War with fleets of nuclear-armed B-52 bombers and Trident nuclear missile submarines on ready alert around the clock, a nuclear horror scenario.

Global Strike: Pentagon Conplan 8022

The march towards possible nuclear catastrophe by intent or by miscalculation, as a consequence of the bold new Washington policy, took on significant new gravity in June 2004, only weeks after the 49 generals and admirals took the highly unusual step of writing to their President.

That June, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld approved a Top Secret order for the Armed Forces of the United States to implement something called Conplan 8022, 'which provides the President a prompt, global strike capability.'

The term, Conplan, is Pentagon shorthand for Contingency Plan. What 'contingencies' are Pentagon planners preparing for? A pre-emptive conventional strike against tiny North Korea or even Iran? Or a full-force pre-emptive nuclear assault on the last formidable nuclear power not under the thumb of the US' Full Spectrum Dominance--Russia?

The two words, 'global strike', are also notable. It's Pentagon-speak to describe a specific pre-emptive attack which, for the first time since the earliest Cold War days, includes a nuclear option, counter to the traditional US military notion of nuclear weapons being only used in defense to deter attack.

Conplan 8022, as has been noted by some, is unlike traditional Pentagon war plans which have been essentially defensive responses to invasion or attack.

In concert with the aggressive pre-emptive 2002 Bush Doctrine, Bush's new Conplan 8022 is offensive. It could be triggered by the mere 'perception' of an imminent threat, and carried out by Presidential order, without Congress.

Given the details about false or faked 'perceptions' in the Pentagon and the Office of the Vice President about Iraq's threat of weapons of mass destruction in 2003, the new Conplan 8022 suggests a US President might order the missiles against any and every perceived threat or even potential, unproven threat.

In response to Rumsfeld's June 2004 order, General Richard Myers, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, signed the order to make Conplan 8022 operational. Selected nuclear-capable bombers, ICBMs, SSBNs, and 'information warfare' (sic) units have been deployed against unnamed high-value targets in 'adversary' countries.

Was Iran an adversary country, even though it had never attacked the United States? Was North Korea, even though it had never in five decades launched a direct attack on South Korea, let alone any one else? Is China an 'adversary' because it's simply becoming economically too influential?

Is Russia now an adversary because she refuses to lay back and accept being made what Brzezinski terms a 'vassal' state of the American Empire?

Because there has been zero open debate inside the United States about Conplan 8022, there has been virtually no discussion of any of these potentially nuclear-loaded questions.

What makes the June 2004 Rumsfeld order even more unsettling to a world which truly had hoped nuclear mushroom clouds had become a threat of the past, is that Conplan 8022 contains a significant nuclear attack component.

It's true that the overall number of nuclear weapons in the US military stockpile has been declining since the end of the Cold War. But not, it seems, because the US is moving the world back from the brink of nuclear war by miscalculation.

The new missile defense expansion to Poland and Czech Republic is better understood from the point of the remarkable expansion of NATO since 1991. As Putin noted, 'NATO has put its frontline forces on our borders... think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation with the modernisation of the Alliance itself or with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact?'

US bases encircle Russia

As Russian strategist and military expert, Yevgeny Primakov, a close adviser to Putin, recently noted, NATO was 'founded during the Cold War era as a regional organization to ensure the security of US allies in Europe.' He adds, 'NATO today is acting on the basis of an entirely different philosophy and doctrine, moving outside the European continent and conducting military operations far beyond its bounds. NATO...is rapidly expanding in contravention to earlier accords. The admission of new members to NATO is leading to the expansion of bases that host the U.S. military, air defense systems, as well as ABM components.'

Today, NATO member states include not only the Cold War core in Western Europe, commanded by an American. NATO also includes former Warsaw Pact or Soviet Union states Poland, Latvia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia, formerly of Yugoslavia. Candidates to join include the Republic of Georgia, Croatia, Albania and Macedonia. Ukraine's President, Victor Yushchenko, has tried aggressively to bring Ukraine into NATO. This is a clear message to Moscow, not surprisingly, one they don't seem to welcome with open arms.

New NATO structures have also been formed while old ones were abolished: The [NATO Response Force](#) (NRF) was launched at the [2002 Prague Summit](#). In 2003, just after the fall of Baghdad, a major restructuring of the NATO military commands began. The Headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic was abolished. A new command, [Allied Command Transformation](#) (ACT), was established in [Norfolk, Virginia](#). ACT is responsible for driving 'transformation' in NATO.

By 2007 Washington had signed an agreement with Japan to co-operate on missile defense development. She was deeply engaged in testing a missile defense system with Israel. She has now extended her European Missile Defense to Poland, where the Minister of Defense is a close friend and ally of Pentagon neo-conservative war-hawks, and to the Czech Republic. NATO has agreed to put the question of the Ukraine and Republic of Georgia's bids for NATO membership on a fast track. The Middle East, despite the debacle in Iraq, is being militarized with a permanent network of US bases from Qatar to Iraq and beyond.

On February 15, the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee approved a draft, the Orwellian-named NATO Freedom Consolidation Act of 2007 reaffirming US backing for the further enlargement of NATO, including support for Ukraine to join along with Georgia.

From the Russian point of view, NATO's eastward expansion since the end of the cold war has been in clear breach of an agreement between then-Soviet leader [Mikhail Gorbachev](#) and US President [George H.W. Bush](#) which allowed for a peaceful [unification of Germany](#). NATO's expansion policy is seen as a continuation of a Cold War attempt to surround and isolate Russia.

Nnew bases to guard 'democracy'?

An almost unnoticed consequence of Washington's policy since the bombing of Serbia in 1999, has been establishment of an extraordinary network of new US military bases, bases in parts of the world where it seems little justified as a US defensive precaution, given the threat, huge taxpayer expense, let alone other global military commitments.

In June 1999, following the bombing of Yugoslavia, US forces began construction of Camp Bondsteel, at the border between Kosovo and Macedonia. It was the lynchpin in what was to be a new global network of US bases.

Bondsteel put US air power within easy striking distance of the oil-rich Middle East and Caspian Sea, as well as Russia. Camp Bondsteel was at the time the largest US military base built since the Vietnam War, with nearly 7,000 troops. The base had been built by the largest US military construction company, Halliburton's KBR. Halliburton's CEO at the time was Dick Cheney.

Before the start of the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, the *Washington Post* matter-of-factly noted, 'With the Middle-East increasingly fragile, we will need bases and fly-over rights in the Balkans to protect Caspian Sea oil.'

Camp Bondsteel was but the first of a vast chain of US bases that have been built during this decade. The US military went on to build military bases in Hungary, Bosnia, Albania and Macedonia, in addition to Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo, then still legally part of Yugoslavia.

One of the most important and least mentioned new US bases was in Bulgaria, a former Soviet satellite and now new NATO member. In a conflict--and in Pentagon-speak there are only 'conflicts,' no longer wars, which involved issues of asking the US Congress to declare them officially, and provide just reason---the military would use Bezmer to 'surge' men and materiel toward the front lines. Where? In Russia?

The US has been building its bases in Afghanistan. It built three major US bases in the wake of its occupation of Afghanistan in winter of 2001, at Bagram Air Field north of Kabul, the US' main military logistics center; Kandahar Air Field, in southern Afghanistan and Shindand Air Field in the western province of Herat. Shindand, the largest US base in Afghanistan, was built some 100 kilometers from the border with Iran.

Afghanistan had historically been the heart of the British-Russia Great Game, the struggle for control of Central Asia during the 19th and early 20th Centuries. British strategy was to prevent Russia at all costs from controlling Afghanistan and thereby gaining a warm water port for its navy and threatening Britain's imperial crown jewel, India.

Afghanistan is also seen by Pentagon planners as highly strategic. It is a platform from which US military might could directly threaten Russia and China as well as Iran and other oil-rich Middle East lands. Little had changed in that respect over more than a century of wars.

Afghanistan is in an extremely vital location, straddling South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Afghanistan also lies along a proposed oil pipeline route from the Caspian Sea oil fields to the Indian Ocean, where the US oil company, Unocal, had been in negotiations, together with Cheney's Halliburton and with Enron, for exclusive pipeline rights to bring natural gas from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan and Pakistan to Enron's huge natural gas power plant at Dabhol near Mumbai.

At that same time, the Pentagon came to an agreement with the government of Kyrgystan in Central Asia, to build a strategically important base there, Manas Air Base at Bishkek's international airport. Manas is not only near to Afghanistan; it is also in easy striking distance to Caspian Sea oil and gas, as well as to the borders of both China and Russia.

As part of the price of accepting him as a US ally in the War on Terror rather than a foe, Washington extracted an agreement from Pakistan's military dictator, General Pervez Musharraf, to allow the airport at Jacobabad, about 400km north of Karachi, to be used by the US Air Force and NATO 'to support their campaign in Afghanistan.' Two other US bases were built at Dalbandin and Pasni.

This all is merely a small part of the vast web of US-controlled military bases Washington has been building globally since the so-called end of the Cold War.

It's becoming clear to much of the rest of the world that Washington might even itself be instigating or provoking wars or conflicts with nations across the world, not merely to control oil, though strategic control of global oil flows had been at the heart of the American Century since the 1920's. That's the real significance of what Vladimir Putin said in Munich. He told the world what it did not want to hear: The American 'Emperor's New Clothes did not exist. The Emperor was clothed in naked pursuit of global military control.

During the early 1990s, at the end of the Cold War, the Yeltsin government had asked Washington for a series of mutual reductions in the size of each superpower's nuclear missile and weapons arsenal. Russian nuclear stockpiles were ageing and Moscow saw little further need to remain armed to its nuclear teeth once the Cold War had ended.

Washington clearly saw in this a golden opportunity to go for nuclear primacy, for the first time since the 1950's, when Russia first developed Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile delivery capability for its growing nuclear weapons arsenal.

Nuclear primacy is an aggressive offensive policy. It means that one superpower, USA, would have the possibility to launch a full nuclear First Strike at Russia's nuclear sites and destroy enough targets in the first blow, that Russia would be crippled from making any effective retaliation.

With no credible threat of retaliation, Russia had no credible nuclear deterrent. It was at the mercy of the supreme power. Never before in history had the prospect of such ultimate power in the hands of one single nation seemed so near at hand.

This stealthy move by the Pentagon for Nuclear Primacy has, up until now, been carried out in utmost secrecy, disguised amid rhetoric of a USA-Russia 'Partnership for Peace.'

Rather than take advantage of the opportunity to climb down from the brink of nuclear annihilation following the end of the Cold War, Washington has turned instead to upgrading its nuclear arsenal, at the same time it was reducing its numbers.

While the rest of the world was still in shock over the events of September 11, 2001, the Bush Administration unilaterally moved to rip up its earlier treaty obligations with Russia to not build an anti-missile defense.

On December 13, 2001, President Bush announced that the United States Government was unilaterally abandoning the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia, and committing \$8 billion for the 2002 Budget to build a National Missile Defense system. It was pushed through Congress, promoted as a move to protect US territory from rogue terror attacks, from states including North Korea or Iraq.

The rogue argument was a fraud, a plausible cover story designed to sneak the policy reversal through without debate, in the wake of the September 11 shock.

The repeal of the ABM Treaty was little understood outside qualified military circles. In fact, it represented the most dangerous step by the United States towards nuclear war since the 1950's. Washington is going at a fast pace to the goal of total nuclear superiority globally, Nuclear Primacy.

Washington has dismantled its highly lethal MX missiles by 2005. But that's misleading. At the same time, it significantly improved its remaining ICBM's by installing the MX's high-yield nuclear warheads and advanced re-entry vehicles on its Minuteman ICBMs. The guidance system of the Minuteman has been upgraded to match that of the dismantled MX.

The Pentagon began replacing ageing ballistic missiles on its submarines with far more accurate Trident II D-5 missiles with new larger-yield nuclear warheads.

The Navy shifted more of its nuclear ballistic missile-launching SSBN submarines to the Pacific to patrol the blind spot of Russia's early warning radar net as well as patrolling near China's coast. The US Air Force completed refitting its B-52 bombers with nuclear-armed cruise missiles believed invisible to Russian air defense radar. New enhanced avionics on its B-2 stealth bombers gave them the ability to fly at extremely low altitudes avoiding radar detection as well.

A vast number of stockpiled weapons is not necessary to the new global power projection. Little-publicized new technology has enabled the US to deploy a 'leaner and meaner' nuclear strike force. A case in point is the Navy's successful program to upgrade the fuse on the W-76 nuclear warheads sitting atop most US submarine-launched missiles, which makes them able to hit very hard targets such as ICBM silos.

No one has ever presented credible evidence that Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah or any other organization on the US State Department's Terrorist Organization Black List possessed nuclear missiles in hardened underground silos. Aside from the US and perhaps Israel, only Russia and to a far smaller degree, China, have these in any number.

In 1991 at the presumed end of the Cold War, in a gesture to lower the danger of strategic nuclear miscalculation, the US Air Force was ordered to remove its fleet of nuclear bombers from Ready Alert status. After 2004 that too changed.

Conplan 8022 again put US Air Force long-range B-52 and other bombers on 'Alert' status. The Commander of the 8th Air Force stated at the time, that his nuclear bombers were 'essentially on alert to plan and execute Global Strikes' on behalf of the US Strategic Command or STRATCOM, based in Omaha, Nebraska.

Conplan 8022 included not only long-range nuclear and conventional weapons launched from the US, but also nuclear and other bombs deployed in Europe, Japan and other sites. It gave the US what the Pentagon termed Global Strike, the ability to hit any point on the earth or sky with devastating force, nuclear as well as conventional. Since the Rumsfeld June 2004 readiness order, the US Strategic Command has boasted it was ready to execute an attack anywhere on earth 'in half a day or less,' from the moment the President gave the order.

In the January 24, 2006 London *Financial Times*, the US Ambassador to NATO, Victoria Nuland, former adviser to Vice President Dick Cheney and wife of a leading Washington neo-conservative warhawk, declared that the US wanted a 'globally deployable military force' that would operate everywhere – from Africa to the Middle East and beyond.

It would include Japan and Australia as well as the NATO nations. Nuland added, 'It's a totally different animal (sic) whose ultimate role will be subject to US desires and adventures.' Subject to US desires and adventures? Those were hardly calming words given the record of Nuland's former boss in faking intelligence to justify wars in Iraq and elsewhere.

Now, with the deployment of even a crude missile defense, under Conplan 8022, the US would have what Pentagon planners called 'escalation dominance'—the ability to win a war at any level of violence, including nuclear war.

As some more sober minds argued, were Russia and China to respond to these US moves with even minimal self-protection measures, the risks of a global nuclear conflagration by miscalculation would climb to levels far beyond any seen even during the Cuba Missile Crisis or the danger days of the Cold War.

Mackinder's Nightmare

In a few brief years Washington has managed to create the nightmare of Britain's father of geopolitics, Sir Halford Mackinder, the horror scenario feared by Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger and other Cold War veterans of US foreign policy who have studied and understood the power calculus of Mackinder.

The vast resources-rich and population-rich Eurasian Heartland and landmass is building economic and military ties with one another for the first time in history, ties whose driving force is the increasingly aggressive Washington role in the world.

The driver of the emerging Eurasian geopolitical cooperation is obvious. China, with the world's largest population and an economy expanding at double digits, urgently needs secure alliance partners who could secure her energy security. Russia, an energy goliath, needs secure trade outlets independent of Washington control to develop and rebuild its tattered economy. These complimentary needs form the seed crystal of what Washington and US strategists define as a new Cold War, this one over energy, over oil and natural gas above all. Military might is the currency this time as in the earlier Cold War.

By 2006 Moscow and Beijing had clearly decided to upgrade their cooperation with their Eurasian neighbors. They both agreed to turn to a moribund loose organization that they had co-founded in 2001, in the wake of the 1998 Asia crisis, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization or SCO. The SCO had highly significant members, geopolitically seen. SCO included oil-rich Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as well as China and Russia. By 2006 Beijing and Moscow began to view the SCO as a nascent counterweight to increasingly arbitrary American power politics. The organization was discussing projects of energy cooperation and even military mutual defense.

The pressures of an increasingly desperate US foreign policy are forcing an unlikely 'coalition of the unwilling' across Eurasia. The potentials of such Eurasian cooperation between China, Kazakhstan, Iran are real enough and obvious. The missing link, however, is the military security that could make it invulnerable or nearly, to the sabre-rattling from Washington and NATO. Only one power on the face of the earth has the nuclear and military base and know-how able to provide that—Vladimir Putin's Russia.

The Russian Bear sharpens its nuclear teeth...

With NATO troops creeping up to Russia's borders on all sides, US nuclear B-52s and SSBN submarines being deployed to strategic sites on Russia's perimeter, Washington extending its new missile shield from Greenland to the UK, to Australia, Japan and now even Poland and the Czech Republic, it should be no surprise that the Russian Government is responding.

While Washington planners may have assumed that because the once-mighty Red Army was a shell of its former glory, that the state of Russian military preparedness since the end of the Cold War was laughable.

But Russia never let go of its one trump card—its strategic nuclear force.

During the entire economic chaos of the Yeltsin years, Russia never stopped producing state-of-the art military technology.

In May 2003, some months after George Bush unilaterally ripped up the bilateral Anti-Missile Defense Treaty with Moscow, invaded Afghanistan and bombed Baghdad into subjugation, Russia's President delivered a new message in his annual State of the Union Address to the Russian nation.

Putin spoke for the first time publicly of the need to modernize Russia's nuclear deterrent by creating new types of weapons, 'which will ensure the defense capability of Russia and its allies in the long term.'

In response to the abrogation by the Bush Administration of the ABM Treaty, and with it Start II, Russia predictably stopped withdrawing and destroying its SS-18 MIRVed missiles. Start II had called for full phase out of multiple warhead or MIRVed missiles, by both sides by 2007.

At that point Russia began to reconfigure its SS-18 MIRV missiles to extend their service life to 2016. Fully loaded SS-18 missiles had a range of 11,000 kilometers. In addition, it redeployed mobile rail-based SS-24 M1 nuclear missiles.

In its 2003 Budget, the Russian government made funding of its SS-27 or Topol-M single-warhead missiles a 'priority.' And the Defense Ministry resumed test launches of both SS-27 and Topol-M.

In December 2006, Putin told Russian journalists that deployment of the new Russian mobile Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missile system was crucial for Russia's national security. Without naming the obvious US threat, he declared, 'Maintaining a strategic balance will mean that our strategic deterrent forces should be able to guarantee the neutralization of any potential aggressor, no matter what modern weapons systems he possesses.'

It was unmistakable whom he had in mind, and it wasn't the Al Qaeda cave-dwellers of Tora Bora.

Russian Defense Minister, Sergei Ivanov, announced at the same time that the military would deploy another 69 silo-based and mobile Topol-M missile systems over the following decade. Just after his Munich speech Putin announced he had named his old KGB/FSB friend, Ivanov to be his First Deputy Prime Minister overseeing the entire military industry.

The Russian Defense Ministry reported that as of January 2006, Russia possessed 927 nuclear delivery vehicles and 4,279 nuclear warheads against 1,255 and 5,966 respectively for the United States. No two other powers on the face of the earth even came close to these massive overkill capacities. This was the ultimate reason all US foreign policy, military and economic, since the end of the Cold War had covertly had as endgame the complete deconstruction of Russia as a functioning state.

In April 2006, the Russian military tested the K65M-R missile, a new missile designed to penetrate US missile defense systems. It was part of testing and deploying a uniform warhead for both land and sea-based ballistic missiles. The new missile was hypersonic and capable of changing flight path.

Four months earlier, Russia successfully tested its Bulava ICBM, a naval version of the Topol-M. It was launched from one of its Typhoon-class ballistic missile submarines in the White Sea, travelling a thousand miles before hitting a dummy target successfully on the Kamchatka Peninsula. The Bulava missiles were to be installed on Russian Borey-class nuclear submarines beginning 2008.

During a personal inspection of the first regiment of Russian mobile Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missiles in December 2006, Putin told reporters the deployment of mobile Topol-M ICBMs were crucial for Russia's national security, stating, 'This is a significant step forward in improving our defense capabilities.'

'Maintaining a strategic balance,' he continued, 'will mean that our strategic deterrent forces should be able to guarantee the neutralization of any potential aggressor, no matter what modern weapons systems he possesses.'

Putin clearly did not have France in mind when he referred to the unnamed 'he.' President Putin had personally given French President Chirac a tour of one of Russia's missile facilities that January, where Putin explained the latest Russian missile advances. 'He knows what I am talking about,' Putin told reporters afterwards, referring to Chirac's grasp of the weapon's significance.

Putin also did not have North Korea, China, Pakistan or India in mind, nor Great Britain with its ageing nuclear capacity, not even Israel. The only power surrounding Russia with weapons of mass destruction was its old Cold War foe--the United States.

The Commander of Russia's Strategic Rocket Forces, General Nikolai Solovtsov, was more explicit. Commenting on the successful test of the K65M-R at Russia's Kapustin Yar missile test site last April, he declared that US plans for a missile defense system, 'could upset strategic stability. The planned scale of the United States' deployment of a...missile defense system is so considerable that the fear that it could have a negative effect on the parameters of Russia's nuclear deterrence potential is quite justified.' Put simply, he referred to the now open US quest for Full Spectrum Dominance—Nuclear Primacy.

A new Armageddon is in the making. The unilateral military agenda of Washington has predictably provoked a major effort by Russia to defend herself. The prospects of a global nuclear conflagration, by miscalculation, increase by the day. At what point might an American President, God forbid, decide to order a pre-emptive full-scale nuclear attack on Russia to prevent Russia from rebuilding a state of mutual deterrence?

The new Armageddon is not exactly the Armageddon which George Bush's Christian fanatics pray for as they dream of their Rapture. It is an Armageddon in which Russia and the United States would irradiate the planet and, perhaps, end human civilization in the process.

Ironically, oil, in the context of Washington's bungled Iraq war and soaring world oil prices after 2003, has enabled Russia to begin the arduous job of rebuilding its collapsed economy and its military capacities. Putin's Russia is no longer a begger-thy-neighbor former Superpower. It's using its oil weapon and rebuilding its nuclear ones.

Bush's America is a hollowed-out debt-ridden economy engaged on using its last card, its vast military power to prop up the dollar and its role as world sole Superpower.

Putin has obviously realized that his new-found 'partner-in-prayer', George W., has a large black spot hiding the secrets of his heart. It reminded of a popular country and western ballad from the late Tammy Wynette, 'Cowboys don't shoot straight like they used to. They look you in the eye and lie with their white hats on.' That's certainly the case with the famous cowboy of Crawford, Texas in his dealings with Vladimir Putin and the rest of the world.

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