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THE US-RUSSIA RELATIONSHIP: TRANSCENDING MUTUAL DETERRENCE

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. PIFER: Okay, good afternoon. Let me welcome you all to the Brookings Institution. I'm Steven Pifer, I'm a senior fellow here and I direct the Arms Control Initiative and I will be moderating today's panel that talks about transcending mutual deterrence in US-Russia relations.

For 30 years in the Cold War, mutual deterrence, mutual assured destruction really was a central element of the US-Soviet relationship. And that reflected the fact that in the United States and the Soviet Union, you had two countries that were opposed ideologically, politically, militarily and economically. And in order to deter one another, the United States and the Soviet Union each built thousands, then tens of thousands of nuclear weapons.

At its high point the US nuclear arsenal included more than 30,000 nuclear weapons and the Soviet Union at its high point included a like number. All designed to deter the other and if necessary, if deterrence broke down, to fight a nuclear conflict.

Today we're more than 25 years past the end of the Cold War and we are more than 20 years past the end of the Soviet Union but it's hard to escape the conclusion that mutual deterrence still is a key element of the relationship between the United States and Russia. To be sure, the numbers are much lower today than they were during the Cold

War.

In the 1980s the United States and the Soviet Union each had between 8 and 10,000 nuclear warheads and under the New Start Treaty, the United States and Russia are each going down to 1,550. But when you look at that number of weapons, it's awfully hard to conclude that the United States needs that level of weapons unless it sees in Russia a potentially adversary to be deterred.

And for Russia it's awfully hard to see a Russian requirement for 1,550 deployed strategic weapons unless it sees, in the United States, a potential adversary to be deterred. So mutual assured destruction still lives in the US-Russia relationship.

Today's panel, we're going to talk a bit about why that's the case. But also more importantly, talking about how you could move beyond mutual deterrence in the US-Russia relationship. And we're also doing this in the connection with a release of a paper which I hope everyone has copies of on transcending mutual deterrence in the US-Russia relationship. This is a joint product of the Belfer Center at Harvard and the Institute for US and Canadian Studies in Moscow.

We have actually two of the authors, with a third author I am told en route, to talk about the report. You have their bios in the handout so I'm not going to give a lengthy introduction. But our first speaker is

going to be William Tobey who's a senior fellow at the Belfer Center but also has long experience in the U.S. government. Second speaker who is showing up just right on time now is Gary Samore who is the executive director for research at Belfer but also is a nonresident senior fellow here at Brookings and also with long experience in the US government. And then our third speaker will be Major General Pavel Zolotarev who is deputy director of the Institute for US and Canadian Studies in Moscow, also with a distinguished career in both the Soviet and the Russian militaries.

Now, before I turn it over to the panel, we're also privileged today to have with us, Sergey Rogov who is the director of the Institute for US and Canadian Studies in Moscow. And I'd like to invite him to offer a few comments before we kick off the panel. Sergey?

MR. ROGOV: Thank you, Steve. As the director of the Institute of USA and Canadian Studies of Russian economic sciences I can assure that we at the Institute are doing what we can to help to overcome the legacy of the Cold War.

Unfortunately, the mutual assured destruction or mutual nuclear deterrence, a model of interaction in the strategic security field which we developed during the Cold War survived the end of the Cold War. And we could see that from every time when our relations improve

we get into trouble because of the remaining elements of mutual assured destruction which we think are incompatible with the model of the strategic partnership and preparation.

What kind of partnership and preparation we can have when we still keep thousands of nuclear warheads on high alert to launch against each other at any given moment? Why we're debating and arguing about ballistic missile defense if not for the reason that ballistic missile defense contradicts one of the major principles of mutual assured destruction. And I'm very happy that the team of experts from our Institute and from the Belfer Center really made a very serious effort to find solutions to this problem.

Simply speaking, we know how we created mutually assured destruction. How to dismantle mutual assured destruction turns out to be a very difficult task and I'm very glad that this group of Russian and American scholars is going to present today, well, the very thoughtful ideas on what steps are necessary to undo mutual assured destruction model. Thank you.

MR. PIFER: Thank you, Sergey. Will, I think you're the first speaker so please.

MR. TOBEY: Thank you, Steve and thank you, Sergey. I appreciate the opportunity to be here. It's a real pleasure and I'm

heartened by the fact that so many people have chosen to attend.

Our analysis of mutual deterrence between the United States and Russia really is a story of paradoxes; paradoxical problem and perhaps even paradoxical solutions. Even as the United States and Russian relationship warms and chills, it's important to focus on enduring strategic interests. Mutual deterrence remains the centerpiece of the relationship and this really is a paradox.

Why has mutual deterrence central to the US-Russian relationship even as the sources of potential conflict have diminished? The historical causes of war fall into three categories; territorial disputes, competition for resources and conflicting ideologies including religion. Each of these is largely absent in the contemporary US-Russian relationship. Russia and the United States have no common border. With respect to natural resources, Russia is largely a seller and the United States is largely a buyer although the recent U.S. energy boom could lead to North American energy self-sufficiency in the foreseeable future.

While conflicting ideologies dominated the US-Soviet relationship and the United States and Russia often disagree on foreign policy questions, neither the United States nor Russia is driven by an ideology seeking the destruction of the other. Mutual deterrence persists today because the scar tissue of the Cold War, suspicion and mistrust

remains unhealed.

The conflicts between capitalism and communism which once drove both countries to create mutual deterrence no longer exist but the doctrine continues. The paradox deepens because the conventional forced balance is considerably more stable than it was during the Cold War. Once NATO and the Warsaw Pact forces were positioned, trained and equipped to conduct large scale operations against each other on short notice. This is no longer the case. The group of Soviet forces in Germany no longer exists. And the United States has removed its last tank formations from Europe.

Several reasons explain the continued persistence of deterrence. Differences on regional and international issues are real. Russia's goal of surrounding itself with friendly partly dominated states conflicts with U.S. policies promoting democracy, sovereignty and independence among those states. Differences between the United States and Russia over the appropriate response to human rights and non-proliferation crises are further recurring points of friction.

Of course, Syria is only the latest example. While real, these differences do not constitute irreconcilable conflicts between core US and Russian security interests of the kind that would necessarily entail nuclear deterrence. Risk aversion and institutional momentum also cause

deterrence to persist.

Thus the US-Russian relationship of mutual deterrence is path dependent. Were it not for the very significant scars of the Cold War it is unlikely that either nation would choose the relationship that now exists. The simple fact of the ability to inflict massive on another country is not sufficient to make deterrence a central feature of the relationship between those countries.

Now, some of you and especially the less generous might observe, well, that's all well and good but anyone who gave the matter a half an hour's thought, could have come to some of these conclusions. What's new? I would say there are two points especially that are new in the report that you have; one substantive and one methodological.

First, some of the most powerful means to change the nature of the relationship lie outside the strategic realm. These include political coordination, economic integration and intelligence cooperation on issues that present joint challenges to shared U.S. and Russian interests such as drug trafficking and nuclear terrorism. When Russia and the United States have a stake in each other's prosperity, the way, for example, the United States and France do, despite at times very different political objectives, deterrence will cease to be a central feature of the relationship.

On the methodological front I would posit that it might be

more useful to imagine the conditions that would make this the case and to work backward to create them than to continue to seek incremental progress on the current agenda. Thank you.

MR. PIFER: Gary?

MR. SAMORE: Thanks, Steve. Well, when I left the White House this report was mostly finished thanks to the good work of Will and his co-author Pavel. And when I read it, it really struck me, the main conclusions and insights really struck me as being essentially true from the four years that I was in the White House. For the President and his top advisors, the idea of a nuclear war between the US and Russia was seen as a very exceedingly low probability event. It certainly was not in the top 10 national security threats that faced the White House.

And yet, at the same time the US nuclear force structure, our posture, our doctrine is primarily dictated by what are seen as the necessary requirements to deter Russia. Or as we say euphemistically, to maintain strategic stability and I'm sure the same is true in Moscow. In fact, the New START Treaty which was one of the centerpieces of President Obama's first term is essentially a Cold War instrument even though the Cold War's been over for 20 years. It's a classic bilateral arms control treaty with verification and establishes a rough equivalency between the nuclear forces of the US and Russia.

Now, as the report says, this Cold War paradigm of mutually assured destruction is going to persist for a long time because it's so deeply ingrained in the security establishments of both countries. When President Obama announced in December, in June, that the US was prepared to reduce its deployed strategic forces by one-third, that was based essentially on a calculation of targeting against Russian targets with China being a secondary consideration. But once again, even though the Cold War doesn't exist and even thought the likelihood of a nuclear war between the US and Russia is extraordinarily unlikely, nonetheless the calculation of nuclear deterrents against Russia is what determined what levels the US is prepared to reduce to. And President Obama also said in typical Cold War fashion that he was hoping to negotiate these further reductions on a bilateral basis with Russia.

Now, unfortunately, we can talk about this in the Q and A, the prospect for another round of bilateral arms control I think in the near future is very low even though the paradigm of mutual deterrence is going to continue. So I want to come back to the point Will made that it seems to me one of the strongest conclusions of this report is that we should be looking for areas of cooperation in the political and the economic sphere outside of the strategic nuclear area. And over time that might create conditions where the thought of nuclear war between the US and Russia

becomes so remote that it no longer provides the basis for each side calculating their nuclear forces.

I mean if we had a relationship with Russia like we had with Britain or France, then we wouldn't take into consideration Russian nuclear forces and that would free the United States to make much further reductions in our forces and also the same for Russia. So let me just mention three areas where I think there is room for political cooperation.

One, I think the US-Russian agreement to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons program is a tremendous opportunity if it works and I think it's off to a pretty good start and if it actually turns out to be successful, it may set a pattern for future US-Russia cooperation in dealing with conflicts around the world.

Second, the new US-Iranian overture to negotiate a nuclear agreement will depend very heavily on Russian support, both because Russia is a key country in the P5 + 1 negotiations but because Russia has a lot of influence in Tehran. And I hope there's good cooperation between Washington and Moscow to try to negotiate a nuclear deal with the Iranians.

And third, we'll mention nuclear terrorism. That's another area. It's a natural area of cooperation between the US and Russia. We have the next nuclear security summit coming up in March of next year

and then a final meeting in Washington in 2016. And I think there are many areas for both the US and Russia to cooperate to make sure that terrorists don't get their hands on nuclear weapons or materials. Thank you.

MR. PIFER: Thanks, Gary. Okay. Now, let's have the perspective of one of the Russian co-authors. General?

GENERAL ZOLOTAREV: In 1990s, the beginning of 1990s, in Cambridge a very well-known Russian physicist Sergey Kapitsa wrote a book that was titled "How Many Years Has a Human Lived and Will Be Living on Earth." In this book, he created a mathematical model for the growth of population on Earth. And he came to a conclusion that the quadratic increase in population that we're experiencing right now is coming to an end and will reach its end about 2016. And after that some sort of stabilization will occur.

He also mentioned that the period that we're at right now is characterized by tightening of the time. There is more and more events that happen per period, per unit of time. And in fact, we cannot catch up with the changing events. And that includes politics.

Russian-American relations is a great example of that. We are now at a time where real security challenges are shared by our two countries. And it's been over 20 years that we have been unable to free

ourselves from the trap of the thinking and logic of Cold War. And a thought has been mentioned today that it would not be easy to overcome mutual deterrence and there needs to be a comprehensive approach in order to accomplish that.

Can we even imagine transcending a mutual deterrence between US and Russia if we are unable to overcome mutual nuclear deterrence? And are we able to transcend a mutual deterrence if nuclear deterrence continues to exist? One of the speakers mentioned today that the policy of deterrence will continue or should continue between US and Russia, is that true?

There will continue to be differences between us, that's natural. And the same way it happens in the family, it's bad when the spouses argue; it's also bad when they never argue. And life has shown, especially the latest events, that Russia and the US relate to each other as responsible partners. Russia was very clear in stating their disagreement when the operation in Iraq was planned in 2003. But it was not from the anti-American positions because that we could see that it would result in long term destabilizing of the situation in the region. And the way we acted was as a responsible partner to the United States.

And today, our differences about Syria and also the responsible attitude of Russia as a responsible partner, brought about

more positive results than there were during the Iraq War. And I think that our next step is to raise an issue about not supporting the policy of mutual deterrence between the United States and Russia. And for that we need to look at a number of problems that need to be solved comprehensively.

It is very appropriate that in the report, the time of 1930s and the time of Second World War is being mentioned. In the 1930s, United States and the Soviet Union were completely opposed as ideological enemies. And yet, they were able to find a way for economic cooperation. The United States basically laid the foundation for industrialization of the Soviet Union. That was beneficial to the United States and it was needed by Russia.

The United States was of great help to the Soviet Union during Second World War on lend-lease program. Today, our economic relations are at an unacceptably low level. We do have mutual economic interests which would allow Russia to modernize and that would also be beneficial to the United States. And it is most important to create this economic foundation in the relationship which would then allow us to overcome the mutual deterrence.

Inside mutual nuclear deterrence we need to look for ways, we cannot change the way that the armed forces operate. Those forces whose mission it is to support the readiness of the nuclear weapons. And

it is the plan that our strategic nuclear forces are aimed at each other. And that's why psychologically the military will always see the other side as an enemy.

This is a serious problem. And now, it works out that the nuclear arsenals that we created during the Cold War determined the political situation right now. Partially the approaches to solving this problem are presented in the report. I hope that this report will serve the future and will be of use. Thank you for your attention.

MR. PIFER: Well, thank you. Let me take the moderator's right of the first question and I think on the panel we heard about the utility, the importance of changing the political aspects, the economic aspects of the relationship between Washington and Moscow. But I wonder if I could ask the panelists to talk a little bit more about are there some specific things the militaries might begin to do to also make their contribution to changing? In terms of either altering force structures or doctrines and such?

MR. SAMORE: Will, why don't you?

MR. TOBEY: Sure. Well, actually, while we do address those matters in the report, Steve, I actually believe that the most important changes would be ones which would create in Washington and Moscow the perception that each has an interest in the other's success. If

those conditions persist, then nuclear deterrence begins to look less relevant.

There are some things that can be done but I would caution and so, actually, if we're thinking about which Undersecretary to send to Moscow or which Deputy Foreign Minister we'd like Moscow to be sent here, it's no knock on Rose Gottemoeller that I believe that it would be others from the Commerce Department or the Treasury Department or others from the State Department who would be focused on building this relationship.

All that said, we do address some things that the militaries can do and one would be for the professional militaries to examine the whole issue of decision time in the event of a nuclear crisis. Now, some have proposed measures that might amount to de-alerting or some other actions that could be perceived to increase stability. And while some of our authors thought those were a good idea, others were concerned that they could actually have perverse effects.

For example, the removal of warheads from missiles and placing them in central storage depots could actually make them inviting targets. Again, I would echo the comments of everyone, especially Gary so far, that the chances of nuclear war between Russia and the United States are so small that that's almost inconceivable. But we don't want to

be taking actions that would move away from strategic stability.

MR. SAMORE: Yes, just on that last point, let me say I think the most important factor in creating decision time is confidence that you have survivable nuclear forces. So that the President doesn't feel compelled to make a quick decision about using nuclear forces out of fear that a strike, a first strike would destroy a country's retaliatory capacity.

And I think the US already has a lot of confidence that it has survivable forces since our primary nuclear leg is in the submarine leg. And in any plausible scenario, we would have had an opportunity to put most of those submarines out at sea. So the President wouldn't feel compelled to use nuclear forces quickly.

In other words, the US forces are designed to ride out a first strike. That's, I think, less true in Russia because Russian forces are so heavily concentrated in silo based systems that are more vulnerable. And I think one of the concerns I have if we're talking about old-fashioned strategic stability is that the Russian side might be under greater pressure to use nuclear weapons early for fear that those silo based systems could be destroyed in a preemptive strike.

But as the Russians modernize and move toward more mobile systems, both on land and sea, I think that threat will begin to evaporate because the Russians will, like the US, have more forces that

are mobile and more forces that are secure and therefore less pressure on the leader to take early steps. So I think, to some extent, as Russian modernization takes place, that will reduce the risk of instability in terms of concern that nuclear forces would be wiped out early in a conflict. Although, as Will said, all of this is almost fantasy because it's hard to imagine any scenario where that would become a real issue for either Russia or the US.

GENERAL ZOLOTAREV: It is surprising, although there is nothing surprising about this, the minute we started talking about nuclear issues we immediately went to the logic of the Cold War. And we are already talking about the first strike and who is going to make the first strike and is there a possibility of retaliation, et cetera.

And again, I'm coming back to the point that unless we approach these problems from the economic and political standpoints, we will not be able to break the vicious circle of mutual deterrence. But I'd like to bring your attention to the following. A few years ago we worked on a joint project with our American colleagues where we were trying to model strategic stability as the result of deep reduction in strategic forces.

Even at this level and even more so if we were to continue the reduction of strategic nuclear forces, the side that were to do the first strike would be at the least advantageous position because the striking

party is forced to strike the nuclear arsenals. Unless it's remaining in order to strike the military and economic object. And the side who was the subject of attack, then of course their retaliation would be targeted towards cities and industrial objects.

And so, certain technical measures that would reduce the risk of a first strike based on the false alarm and also the technical steps that would improve stability, this would be something that we could work on. But then there is another factor that needs to be taken into account when we talk about the reduction of strategic forces. We need to take into account nuclear arsenals of other countries and first of all, China. And we also need to take into account the potential of high precision weapons.

MR. PIFER: Let's go ahead and open up the floor to questions. Please in the front. If you could identify yourself and your institution, please and try to put a question mark at the end of your --

MR. COLLINA: Tom Collina, Arms Control Association. Thank you all for being here and for doing this report which is quite interesting. I look forward to reading it. Two related questions both with a question mark.

Gary, you said that the prospects for another round of arms control with US and Russia is quite low. Why, in your opinion, is that given that other situations would argue that we should be ready for this?

And two, given that they're so low and given that we're trying to break out of this Cold War paradigm, why shouldn't the US move ahead on its own and say, hey, we're ready to do this, go down by one-third and challenge the Russians to follow suit and not wait for another long strung out arms control treaty? Thank you.

MR. SAMORE: Shall I take that? Well, I think, you know, the answer to the question is that the Russians are really not interested in further reductions unless their concerns about missile defense are addressed. And in particular, the Russians have made it clear that they want the US to commit preferably in a treaty or some other legally binding way to limits on missile defense. And I don't think that's politically possible in this country.

So in the absence of that kind of assurance, the Russians feel that any further reductions would make them even more vulnerable to US nuclear forces going back to the logic of the Cold War. And even if all of this stuff sort of seems like fantasy, it's what the militaries on both sides have to live with. So under those circumstances I just don't see any near term prospect for further reductions on a mutual basis.

To answer your second question, the President, in theory, based on the recommendations from his military, he could unilaterally reduce US strategic forces because he's been told by the military that we

have roughly one-third more than we need for nuclear deterrence. And again, my answer to that is I think politically the downside would far outweigh any advantages. There would be some diplomatic upside in terms of demonstrating US commitment to disarmament but the downside in terms of the political costs and the controversy that would result within this country, I just think that far outweighs any value.

President's got a lot of things on his plate. And I think having a fight over unilateral nuclear disarmament doesn't in my mind even come close to the top of his agenda.

MR. TOBEY: Could I offer just a very brief comment and I think one of the themes from the report is stop fixating on the numbers and instead focus on the enduring interests between the United States and Russia. And change that. And once there's a recognition that those interests are largely compatible, once they are, then the numbers problems become easier to resolve.

GENERAL ZOLOTAREV: I'd like to continue on William's remarks. So we've been talking about the nuclear weapons and the use of nuclear weapons but the threat from the conscious decision to use nuclear weapons is much less than the threat that comes from nuclear terrorism and cyber terrorism that could lead to the accidental use of nuclear weapons.

And as information systems develop, so does the capabilities of extremists in this regard. And we're still talking in the logic of the exchange of nuclear strikes against each other. Thank you.

MR. PIFER: Richard?

MR. WHITE: Richard White, Hudson Institute. A follow on from the previous customer, Gasparin Daltroff said that one of the Russian concerns is taking into account the Chinese forces and sometimes they also mention some other nuclear forces. I wasn't sure how important this was as a listing of the obstacles. You hear this periodically from Russian officials and Russian academics that the next arms control future reduction treaty has to include other countries besides Russia and the United States.

But some of the people I've talked with who are actually involved in the negotiations say this is not considered to be a high priority and could perhaps be deferred for the next round.

GENERAL ZOLOTAREV: There is quite a bit of difference between the expert assessment of China nuclear potential but there are certain assessments that consider Chinese nuclear potential as being quite high. And I believe that it should be taken into account seriously both by the United States and Russia. But we wouldn't be right if we only talked about China.

And if we don't insist on the multilateral approach to the reduction of strategic weapons then the threat of nuclear proliferation that exists today will in the very near future result in the significant increase of nuclear nations. This now goes beyond the bilateral relations between the United States and Russia. There is a very real threat of increasing the number of nuclear nations. And if we don't promote the multilateral approach to reduction of strategic weapons, we will end up with a very different outcome.

MR. ISAACS: John Isaacs, Council for a Livable World. Thank you for presenting today. As a previous group of joint chiefs said about another arms control agreement these seem to me to be modest but useful steps. And I certainly would support them but it seems to me the next three and a half years while Obama's still in office, even though Obama and Putin have a lot of disagreements and may both be slouching in the back of the room, that this should be -- both leaders of both countries should think of more dramatic steps they might take.

Because after 2016, who knows who'll be President. So are there opportunities for taking these steps but going beyond them in the next three and a half years?

MR. SAMORE: Well, I mean obviously, President Obama's indicated his willingness to take further steps and in particular a one-third

reduction. But as I said, I don't see any interest on the part of the Kremlin. Perhaps that will change. I mean one could make the case that as Russian modernizes and becomes more confident in the survivability of its forces; they could afford to have smaller forces.

But that shift from silo based to road mobile and new generation of submarines, unfortunately that's likely to take place over the course of a decade or two rather than the next couple of years. So at this moment, I don't see any interest on the part of President Putin in further reductions.

GENERAL ZOLOTAREV: I don't think this has to do with the modernization of the Russian rocket forces. And even in a couple of years this would be the problem that the United States would have to face as well. And the rockets that have been created cannot be used endlessly. They would need to be replaced and they would need to be replaced with something that's more modern.

The factors that are holding Russian's side back is the lack of predictability of what happens with the missile defense systems. The clear advantage that the United States has in the high precision weapons and many military analysts believe that the United States puts pressure on Russia to reduce their strategic nuclear weapons because the United States can do without one-third of nuclear weapons by relying on their

highly precise conventional weapons. So these are the decisive factors from the military's point of view.

MR. CHARAP: Thanks. Sam Charap, International Institute for Strategic Studies. Thank you very much for your presentation and for the interesting report. Several of you in speaking about the report and your comments have used the terms mutual deterrence and mutually assured destruction interchangeably. And I was wondering if you could clarify whether that was a rhetorical slip or whether it was intentional. And in general, can those two concepts be distinguished either in the context of the bilateral US-Russia dyad or as a general matter?

MR. TOBEY: I think the report generally uses the term mutual deterrence and that's the one I've tried to use. I personally shy away from mutually assured destruction because I don't think that's a doctrine frankly that either country holds.

MR. BLANEY: Harry Blaney from the Center for International Policy. One question and one thought. I essentially agree with the idea that we need to work with Russia to develop a mutually, if you would, agreed cooperative and perhaps self-sustaining program that will move us beyond the idea of the Cold War. I think that's probably most key but it seems to me that in addition to that, if we need to do more and soon, I share with these others.

It seems to me also that the Russian preoccupation with the missile defense issue somehow, in my view, in terms of the reality of the strategic situation is overblown and can be solved by both sides relatively quickly. And it is not really in truth a mechanism by which the Russians are in effect going to be more vulnerable than not. So I'd like to ask the General why it is fundamentally that we can't come to a soon agreement on that issue. If I am right at least that if we were to, let's say, continue with the limited view we have now on it, why we could not reach a mechanism by which the Russians with their modernization program, which is putting in a lot of money, could not feel quite confident and we could proceed with some serious lowering of our nuclear forces. Thank you.

GENERAL ZOLOTAREV: I have mentioned earlier about the connection with the issues of missile defense. And when the Russian side voices concerns with the fact that the issues in this area have not been resolved, then the conversation goes outside the issue of nuclear weapons. And the system of missile defense creates the possibility of conducting the so-called wars of six generations. So the wars that do not use nuclear weapons but use the high precision weapons.

And when the militaries see the significant increase in conventional forces, non-nuclear forces on the United States side and

they see a widening gap between conventional capabilities of Russia and the United States, that creates the obstacle or the limiting factor in moving forward in other areas. And the measures that are proposed in the report that have to do with missile defense, I believe are quite realistic and if they could be implemented by both sides that that could lead to the progress in the missile defense area.

MR. PIFER: Question in the back here.

MR. EDWARDSON: I'm Mendel Edwardson from Israel. I want to ask two questions. The same ones I asked this morning across the border at the Heritage Foundation. One relates to Russia the other relates to China. I have reason to believe that the rapprochement with Iran despite 30 years of experience to the contrary may really be of significance.

And I'm wondering, I asked the question this morning and I was told that Mr. Putin would be disadvantaged by a success in that area. And I'm wondering what people feel Mr. Putin will do as these discussions continue. That's question number one.

The second relates to the Russian speaking gentleman who mentioned the nuclear potential of China. And I'm wondering if people on the panel feel that the US American nice summits are real or they're superficial. Those are my two questions. One to Russia and one about

China.

MR. TOBEY: Pavel will go first on the Russia.

MR. SAMORE: Yes, I think so yes.

MR. PIFER: Yes, I think we'll start on the Russia -- I mean as I understood the Russia question is in fact there's traction in this opening with Iran. And you see a new change, a new direction to US-Iranian relations; does that somehow play out in a way that would be uncomfortable to President Putin?

GENERAL ZOLOTAREV: I think it is quite obvious that both for the US and for Russia it is unacceptable for Iran to turn into a nuclear country. And when I talk about the threat of nuclear proliferation that that would happen very fast if Iran were to become a nuclear state. And if the United States is able to have traction in the negotiations and take practical steps towards resolving this issue, this cannot possibly result in negative reaction from President Putin as a person and from Russia as a country.

So I think I answered the first question and I'm not sure I understood the second question.

MR. PIFER: Do you want to try that?

MR. SAMORE: I may need clarification on the second question.

MR. EDWARDSON: The gentleman from Russia talked

about the potential of China's nuclear capability which you don't hear too much about, at least I don't. And you have these summits taking place between Xi Jinping and President Obama. And there's an atmosphere of euphoria and something completely new that's never happened ever in history or any time or very rarely of these two great powers growing up together, one leveling off and the other rising very rapidly. And China has a great nuclear capability. I'm wondering how people feel. Do people take this seriously or is this superficial? I mean, how should we really look at this?

MR. TOBEY: Well, it's my understanding from time in government and also my understanding of the Obama Administration's experience that the Chinese are very reluctant to talk about nuclear weapons or any issues related to nuclear policy, nuclear weapons policy. So I don't think there are summits that have been experienced so far have really dealt with those issues at all.

MR. SAMORE: Well, let me just add I agree with Will. The Chinese have not been forthcoming in terms of discussing with us what their nuclear doctrine is. And in particular how they see the modernization that's taking place, the Chinese over many years now have been developing road mobile ICBMs and a new class of nuclear submarines which aren't working very well. But clearly they are trying to, as the

Russians are, they're trying to reduce their dependence on silo based systems in favor of systems that are more survivable because they're mobile.

My assessment of the Chinese buildup is that it's intended primarily to assure them that they have a secure second strike capability as opposed to trying to develop a war fighting capability as the US and Russia, as the US and the Soviet Union did during the Cold War. But that's just my assessment. The Chinese government is not forthcoming in terms of telling you exactly what their nuclear plans are.

MR. PIFER: Over here. Which you're seeing that we also have an issue maybe someday in trends of the mutual deterrence in the US-Chinese relationship, even though the numbers are very different?

MR. TOBEY: Yes.

MR. SAMORE: Yes.

MR. WIDGERS: Steve Widgers local researcher. There seems to be a perception in several quarters that I've run into that there's sort of a disconnect between the mutual deterrence aspect, we have Russia basically in a very strong position and then the level of diplomatic respect that the Russians feel that they get perhaps from the West or from the US in particular. The attitude toward the missile shield is a good example of this perhaps.

I think the Russians are puzzled their positions aren't taken more seriously given their actual military position in terms of deterrence. And some people think that this disconnect is actually a source of danger because if the West or the US were to put pressure on Russia, not taking into consideration the unlikely event that it might blow up into a war, which would destroy, you know, have this destructive effect.

So can we get a comment on that?

MR. TOBEY: As I understood the question, it was that given Russia's relative strength in nuclear weapons is there a danger that if the United States persists in programs such as missile defense, advanced conventional forces, that it provokes a very negative and perhaps a dangerous Russian reaction. Does that correctly capture?

MR. WIDGERS: Well, the issue is how a couple of years ago before the (inaudible) there was this feeling in (inaudible) Russia has been, you know, really on a factor on the world stage left over from the past. And it doesn't really correspond to the strength of the military there. If there's that disconnect could you give a situation which would say -- some very notable commentator in Canada makes this point.

GENERAL ZOLOTAREV: Even if there is no deterrence between two countries and I'm not talking about nuclear deterrence, I'm talking about just deterrence in general, the big gap between military

capabilities or military might of two countries is not helpful is assuring strategic stability. And the United States and Russia are two global powers who are interconnected. And if we were to imagine the significant gap between military might of both countries that will not be helpful in providing stability.

And so, the military policy of Russia is developed based on these thoughts and the position of the Russian military leaders. And we do not believe that if one country would be a significant leader as far as military technology is concerned or military might is concerned, we do not believe that that could be a good thing. And it would be best if we were to make sure that this doesn't happen.

MR. SAMORE: Just to add and I think sometimes in Washington in the US government there's a perception that the primary objective of Russian foreign policy is to make life difficult for the United States, to oppose the US at every turn. And that's why I stressed and the report stresses that when there are areas of genuine cooperation, whether it's disarming Syria or persuading Iran not to develop nuclear weapons or stopping terrorists from getting nuclear weapons, we should really try to emphasize those. Because that will help, I think, in the long to overcome the suspicions on both sides.

MR. PIFER: I'm actually going to build off of that question

with a question for all three panelists which is if you look at both the US and Russian militaries to some extent you can say they've been a bit on automatic pilot with regards to nuclear forces and one another. And I don't see how you justify the level of American strategic forces without talking about Russia. And I don't see how you justify the level of Russian strategic forces without talking about America.

But if you set that aside and you look at some other aspects of how the country's oriented, I think there's a difference which is that if you look at Russian policy and the national security strategy of Russia from 2010 it still does talk about concerns about threats or potential threats from the United States and from NATO. And it lists eight or 10 threats and the top three or four with NATO, NATO positioning forces close to Russian borders and such. I think if you talk to American military leaders, though, what you find is they actually -- I don't mean this in a disrespectful way to Russia but they actually don't think much about Russia now in the sense that they don't see it as a threat and the sort of things that preoccupy them are how do you manage the withdrawal from Afghanistan? What does Iran potentially mean in the future? How do you manage a rising China? And so, I'd be interested in the comments of the panel about that sort of disconnect in thinking. And I think some of the issues, as the General mentioned, when you talk about Russian concerns

about missile defense and about advanced conventional capabilities, at least as they're often explained in this town those are capabilities that are being developed not because of a concern about Russia, but in the case of missile defense, it's concerns about a limited attack from North Korea or Iran.

In terms of conventional capabilities, again, I think it's talking about a small capability to go to another place so there is that disconnect in terms of how the sides are thinking each other above and beyond the nuclear weapons programs and the nuclear weapons doctrines. So I'd be interested in comments. Gary?

MR. SAMORE: Sure. Well, Steve, I think you're exactly right. I mean the way I would put it is the Cold War hangover is much stronger in Moscow than it is in Washington. And I think part of the reason why sometimes it's difficult to manage US-Russian relations is because we're responding to what we see as threats that are essentially unrelated to Russia like the missile programs in Iran and North Korea and developing capabilities against those threats. But the Russian military is still, their view of the threats is very much focused on the United States.

And so, they often interpret our action as being directed against Russia even when it really isn't. And I know I've sat through many meetings with Russian officials as Steve and Will have and they are

absolutely convinced that missile defense that we're developing is directed against Russian capabilities. And they find it utterly unbelievable that we're spending money to defend against puny North Korea and Iran even though that really is the motivation of our missile defense program.

So there is a genuine disconnect there I think. I agree with that.

MR. TOBEY: With respect to NATO and Russian conventional forces, I think one of the points the report makes clear is that it's very implausible that either side would have the ability to seize and hold territory of the other. The Russian military had a tough time frankly with the Georgian Military and as I noted in my opening remarks the United States has removed the last of its tanks from Europe. So neither side's conventional forces are well configured to deal with -- to attack the other side which is all to the good and only adds to the paradox of this continued residue of suspicion.

With respect to missile defense, I think that illustrates one of the points of the report that we can spend a lot of time dealing with incremental changes. A few less nuclear weapons, some adjustment on missile defenses and maybe get some incremental outcomes. But the most important factors are really going to be ones that both drive and allow the countries to understand the enduring strategic interests. And if

those could be aligned such that each country sees an interest in the other's success, then the issues of deterrence and missile defense will tend to fade away.

GENERAL ZOLOTAREV: I would like to disagree about the Cold War hangover on the Russian side. The hangover was at the time when we thought that the world changed in such a way that Russia could see itself as part of NATO. I'd like to remind you that all Russian presidents' starting with Yeltsin gave a signal that we do not exclude such a possibility.

But the process of NATO expansion continued; the process that excluded Russia. So then the hangover was over and now there is a sober assessment of the situation. And we feel that the policy of deterrence towards Russia continues.

What kind of deterrence can one even talk about? We're not planning on building communism anywhere. We're not expanding our spheres of influence. Let's say the approach to tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and when we start a conversation when they say, yes, we are preparing to reduce the tactical weapons but you remove your weapons behind the Urals and then we'll remove ours. But the US nuclear weapons in Europe cannot possibly serve the goal of deterrence given the US conventional arsenal in Europe.

It could only theoretically serve the purpose of the military success in case the war happens. And Russia's position towards NATO is also quite sober. And we see and it's obvious that the economic basis of the relationship between Russia and European Union is such that it excludes possibility of any war.

But the military understands that NATO has to develop plans for war. The military, that's what they have to do. And it's natural that the enemy would be the countries that have a border with NATO but who are not part of NATO. And that forces the Russian general staff to also get involved in the same type of silly planning. And NATO potential continues to increase including because of the missile defense.

And so, such a reaction from Russia I would not classify as a hangover. Thank you.

MR. SEBELLACHI: Sarak Sebellachi and I'm a Syrian-American citizen. While I completely agree with the panelists in the sense that economic and political cooperation between the United States and Russia is essential in overcoming the nuclear deterrence status quo that is prevalent right now, and however, what are the real prospects of economic and political cooperations?

When on the political front if we take into account the Syrian situation, while a chemical weapons deal was struck between the United

States and Russia and a UN resolution was passed, I actually viewed that as more of a security cooperation between the Russians and the United States rather than a political one because it comes within the context of cooperating and combating nuclear and chemical terror.

Whereas on the political front, it seems like the Russian side is going to continue to provide arms to the Syrian regime. Whereas the United States is through the CIA will continue its covert or non-covert operations of training the opposition. And on the other hand on the economic front there is a clear attitude from the United States in terms of attempting to reduce the Russian's semi-monopoly of the European gas market through advocacy of the construction of numerous gas pipelines such as the TAP and TANAP pipeline from Azerbaijan.

So, in reality while I agree that the political and economic cooperation between the countries is paramount but in terms of approaching the situation from a realpolitik perspective, what are the prospects of those cooperations when the cooperation is not actually taking place on those two fronts? Thank you.

MR. TOBEY: Well, the prospects are, I think they're reasonable given enlightened policies on both sides. You mentioned correctly that the United States is concerned about Russia's gas exports to Europe and whether or not that involves additional political leverage over

European nations. The reality of the situation is that gas supplies will likely be very plentiful over the next several years. And that leverage will be diminished in any event.

It doesn't do any good for Russian to remain primarily a natural resources economy. The people of Russia are skilled and well-educated. And for them to move beyond an economy that's heavily dependent on oil and natural gas, they'll need to make investments in high technology. And those are the sorts of areas where there could be real economic cooperation and mutual interest.

MR. SAMORE: Just on the Syria question, I agree with you that US-Russia cooperation on chemical weapons may not translate into cooperation to find a political settlement in Syria even though in theory both sides have an interest, I have to say I'm very pessimistic at least for the time being that there's any basis on which the Assad government and the various opposition groups could actually negotiate a peaceful settlement. I'm afraid we're in for a fairly protracted period of civil war. And the question will be at some point in the future, assuming the military stalemate continues, will there be an opportunity for US-Russian cooperation to try to bring about a settlement.

But obviously we're not there yet and I'm sorry to say it's likely to be quite some time before we get there if ever.

GENERAL ZOLOTAREV: I'd like to talk about the Syrian question because as far as economic differences are concerned, even if they -- in the form that they exist, it's not a factor that determines the policy of deterrence. And the main disagreement on Syria is that Russia, what Russia tries to protect is Westphalian System which prohibits the interference into the internal affairs of another country, especially when it happens in the forms of support of creation of terrorist groups and illegal armed groups, et cetera.

And if the situation in Syria is such that the change of power is ripe and ready to happen, then the inner situation needs to be such that such transfer of power could happen peacefully. And I wouldn't make the task with chemical weapons simplified. It requires tremendous bilateral efforts from two countries, Russia and the United States.

What politicians have written down requires tremendous organizational steps from both sides. I'm concerned that in reality what we're talking about is about conducting a joint operation. So I wouldn't focus my attention so much on political disagreements in Syria. I would focus my attention on the need for specific steps in order to implement the agreements that have been made on Syria.

MR. PIFER: Okay, well, I think our time is just about up. Let me just close with two observations. One is I think in this panel and in this

report we have seen some suggestions as some ways that the United States and Russia might move beyond mutual deterrence. I think we've also, the second observation would be, we've seen is this is going to be very much a long term project. This is not going to be easy either in Washington or in Moscow.

But please join me in thanking our panelists.

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