

Degeneration of the American strategic mind

October 26, 2021 Dr. Peter Vincent Pry

“God protects idiots, drunkards, children, and the United States of America.”—Otto von Bismarck

We can only hope that the great German statesman’s observation still holds true during the Biden administration, when idiots, drunkards, and children appear to be in charge of deterring Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran from starting a nuclear World War III.

Russian Propaganda Becomes U.S. Policy

In June, during the Geneva summit, President Biden walked right into the “arms control trap” laid for him by former KGB agent Vladimir Putin, beginning with their joint declaration that: “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.”

Putin knows that this feeds and empowers anti-nuclear fantasists within the Biden administration, in the Democrat Party political base and throughout the West, who thrive on such hollow declaratory nonsense. Wasn’t World War II a nuclear war, won by the United States?

Anti-nuclear activism is harmless to Russia, but undermines political support for modernizing the already obsolescent U.S. nuclear deterrent.

Dictator Putin and the Russian General Staff don’t believe a word of the Geneva pledge.

Russia and China Preparing to Win Nuclear War

Russia's military doctrine, approved by Putin, relies more heavily on nuclear weapons and striking first than did the USSR. Russian strategic forces exercises regularly simulate nuclear first strikes against the U.S. and NATO, including actual launches of ICBMs and SLBMs—"the button" personally pushed by Putin.

Russia's vast and growing array of strategic capabilities far exceeds the requirements of deterrence and is clearly designed for nuclear blackmail and aggression:

- Nuclear super-weapons like the Satan II heavy ICBM can carry 15 MIRVed warheads while the Poseidon autonomous torpedo can deliver a 100-megaton warhead, the most powerful nuclear weapon ever deployed;
- Hypersonic warheads can fly under radar, evade missile defenses, and are ideally suited for surprise attack;
- Thousands of SAMs, armed with nuclear and conventional warheads, including the new S-500, provide Russia with the world's most robust air and missile defenses, by far.
- Hundreds of deep underground shelters capable of protecting hundreds of thousands of political-military elites, and thousands of shelters for millions of civilians and military, is not consistent with the sentiment that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."

China too is engaged in unprecedented nuclear arms racing, while U.S. nuclear deterrent modernization crawls along at turtle pace. Most new U.S. nuclear missiles, submarines, and bombers are not scheduled until after 2030.

China is building 350-400 new missile silos, probably for their DF-41 ICBM armed with 10 MIRVed warheads. In a few years, China could have 4,000 warheads on the DF-41 alone. This would give China a 10-to-1 advantage in ICBM warheads and nearly a 3-to-1 advantage over the 1,400 nuclear weapons deployed on all U.S. ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers.

Moscow and Beijing are seemingly in competition with each other to see who can build up the greatest nuclear war-winning advantage over Washington.

Strategic Stability Dialogue

At Geneva, President Biden apparently decided not to give "Peace Through Strength" a chance by warning Putin that America's nuclear deterrent will be "second to none." Instead, Biden turned Geneva into a nuclear Munich, in effect

promising “Peace for our time” through the strategic hocus pocus that is nuclear arms control—the opiate of State Department negotiators and anti-nuclear true believers.

Biden and Putin during their June summit agreed that: “the United States and Russia will embark together on an integrated bilateral Strategic Stability Dialogue in the near future that will be deliberate and robust. Through this Dialogue, we seek to lay the groundwork for future arms control and risk reduction measures.”

Never mind that Russia has gained nuclear superiority over the United States by violating virtually every arms control treaty and commitment, including:

- Cheating on the Presidential Nuclear Initiative so Russia has an at least 10-to-1 advantage over the U.S. in tactical nuclear weapons;
- Cheating on the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, so Russia has a new generation of INF missiles for theater nuclear war and threatening NATO, while the U.S. has none;
- Cheating on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) so Russia has modern advanced generation nuclear weapons, including for specialized effects like Super-EMP, neutrons, x-rays, “clean” nuclear weapons that produce no radioactive fallout, ultra-low-yield and selectable-yield warheads, while the U.S. has not developed or tested a new nuclear weapon in 30 years;
- Probably cheating on the New START Treaty, according to experts like Dr. Mark Schneider, who make a compelling case that Russia has a 2-to-1 advantage over the U.S. in strategic nuclear weapons.

Despite Albert Einstein’s admonition that: “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results,” the Biden administration’s Strategic Stability Dialogue will seek to counter the growing nuclear threat from Russia through arms control.

Wendy Sherman

Wendy Sherman, Biden’s Deputy Secretary of State, will be leading the Strategic Stability Dialogue for the U.S. side.

Sherman, during the Clinton Administration, negotiated the failed Agreed Framework with North Korea that helped Pyongyang, after 8 years of cheating, to

become irreversibly a nuclear weapons state. Sherman, during the Obama Administration, negotiated the Iran nuclear deal, the infamous Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), that helped advance both Iran's nuclear weapon and missile programs, as well as Iranian support for international terrorism.

Sherman, prior to joining the Clinton State Department, was a social worker, head of Maryland's child welfare office, and director of EMILY's List, a political action committee dedicated to electing women candidates who support abortion. She is now entrusted with negotiating nuclear "Peace for our time" when the U.S. deterrent is outmatched by Russia, being eclipsed by China, aging toward obsolescence, and there is absolutely no margin for error.

One more bad treaty could lead the U.S. to nuclear annihilation.

Anti-nuclear activists in the Union of Concerned Scientists, Federation of American Scientists, the Arms Control Association, among Democrat leaders in the Senate and House, like Senator Elizabeth Warren and Rep. Adam Smith, and within the Biden administration itself, have plenty of bad ideas that would undermine and perhaps be the final blow to the increasingly precarious balance of nuclear power that has deterred World War III.

Representative of the kind of bad ideas Wendy Sherman is probably discussing with Moscow is Robert Goldston's article "Bilateral Strategic Stability: What the United States Should Discuss with Russia, And China" (Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 14 October 2021):

Limits on Ballistic Missile Defense

According to Goldston, parroting Russian propaganda: "Paradoxically, U.S. attempts at ballistic missile defense have made the United States—and the whole world—less safe. Russia is concerned that an extensive U.S. exo-atmospheric ballistic missile defense system might ultimately be effective, so it is developing hypersonic delivery systems to skim warheads along the top of the atmosphere, long-range nuclear torpedoes to carry high-yield warheads into ports...long-range nuclear powered cruise missiles...and massive, liquid-fueled, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of carrying many nuclear warheads..."

Goldston shamelessly regurgitates Russian and Chinese disinformation, as does virtually everyone among Western anti-nuclear activists—blaming America’s modest efforts to defend itself for the massive build-up of offensive nuclear capabilities by Russia and China.

Never mind that U.S. National Missile Defenses comprise merely 44 GBI anti-missiles, while Russia has some 10,000 SAM/ABMs, the world’s strongest air and missile defenses. The ghost of President Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) is supposedly scaring Moscow and Beijing into building nuclear first strike overkill capabilities against the United States, so they can theoretically, and maybe in reality, win a nuclear war several times over.

Goldston even blames President Reagan and SDI for blowing an opportunity for world nuclear disarmament: “President Reagan’s attachment to ballistic missile defense, aka the Strategic Defense Initiative or Star Wars, derailed the opportunity at the Reykjavik summit in 1986 for a world-changing agreement with Secretary General Gorbachev on the elimination of nuclear weapons.” Pure fantasy.

Space-based missile defenses as envisioned by SDI may be the world’s last best hope for making offensive nuclear missiles obsolete and preventing a global thermonuclear holocaust. The U.S. is so far behind Russia and China in the nuclear arms race that we may never catch-up and be able to credibly enforce traditional nuclear deterrence.

Arms racing in space-based missile defenses would be a world-changing military-technological revolution for peace, reducing the credibility of nuclear surprise attack and nuclear warfighting, making all nations safer, and would replace the mega-deaths principle of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) with the life-preserving principle of Strategic Assured National Existence (SANE).

Alas, the Clinton administration boastfully “took the stars out of Star Wars” and killed SDI in 1993. Yet Russia and China allegedly still live in fear of its revival.

So don’t be surprised if Wendy Sherman promises Moscow a freeze on U.S. ballistic missile defenses and a ban on resuscitating anything like SDI.

Elimination of Silo-Based Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles

Goldston wants Wendy Sherman to propose to the Russians a ban on silo-based ICBMs, which is the only kind of ICBM possessed by the United States. So the proposal would amount to a unilateral ban on all U.S. ICBMs.

Russia, China, and North Korea all have mobile ICBMs—which would not be touched by a ban on silo-based ICBMs.

Anti-nuclear radicals and their allies in Congress want to ban U.S. ICBMs unilaterally anyway. By trading away all U.S. ICBMs for some Russian ICBMs, they may be able to close the deal with moderate Democrats and the Biden administration who are politically uncomfortable with giving up all U.S. ICBMs for nothing.

Moscow can probably negotiate with Wendy Sherman to trade U.S. ICBMs for nothing, or almost nothing.

For example, since U.S. ICBMs carry only one warhead, Russia could propose eliminating all 400 U.S. ICBMs in exchange for Russia eliminating 40 Satan I ICBMs, that carry 400 MIRVed warheads. Russia is planning to replace the Satan I with the Satan II anyway, so Russia would give up nothing.

Alternatively, Russia could agree in principle to a ban on silo-based ICBMs, providing the U.S. agrees to ban its ICBMs first, as a show of good faith. Then Moscow could renege on its promise to ban Russian silo-based ICBMs. This is how arms control usually works, and not just under the Biden Administration.

Prohibition of Intermediate-Range Nuclear-Armed Missiles

Goldston's bright idea is to have Wendy Sherman get the Russians to agree again to the INF Treaty, which Moscow has been violating for years (see above).

The practical effect of this clever stratagem, since the U.S. scrupulously honors its treaty obligations, would be to stop all U.S. research, development and deployment of intermediate-range missiles.

China would continue growing its arsenal of intermediate-range missiles, and so would Russia despite the "ban." The U.S. State Department is always slow to discover and admit violations of arms control treaties, which are State's bread and butter. Russia violated the INF Treaty for over 10 years before the U.S. withdrew because of Moscow's cheating.

A renewal of the INF Treaty would give Russia a “clean slate” with the State Department, give Moscow a new opportunity to better hide its cheating, and start the long clock ticking toward another decade of Russia building illegal intermediate-range missiles before State admits the violation.

A Common Nuclear Declaratory Policy

Goldston wants Wendy Sherman to come back from Geneva triumphantly brandishing more joint statements like “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” Such propaganda gives aid and comfort to anti-nuclear activists and undermines political support for U.S. and NATO nuclear modernization programs. So Moscow may well agree to any lie that empowers the Goldstons and Wendy Shermans.

According to Goldston: “The most stabilizing nuclear declaratory policy would flow from the verified elimination of nuclear weapons...If there are no nuclear weapons, there can be no nuclear war.” But even Goldston acknowledges this may be unrealistic.

Goldston has higher hopes for a nuclear “No First Use” pledge: “The second most stabilizing nuclear declaratory policy is one of ‘no first use.’ If no one uses nuclear arms first, again there can be no nuclear war.” Absurdly, Goldston wants Washington to convince U.S. allies that extended nuclear deterrence is not credible and they should not want the U.S. to defend them with nuclear weapons—which would destroy the foundations of nonproliferation, world peace, and U.S. leadership of the Free World.

The New Anti-intellectual Reality

Laughably absurd all this may seem, but it is what passes for serious strategic thinking among Democrats and in the political base of the Biden administration. “Wokeness” trumps strategic expertise and all opinions matter as long as they are “woke.”

Strategic Stability Dialogue with Russia may well determine the future U.S. nuclear posture, to be reassessed in the new Nuclear Posture Review, due January 2022. In the driver’s seat is not Herman Kahn, Albert Wohlstetter, Paul Nitze, or Henry Kissinger—but Wendy Sherman.

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