

NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

Monterey, California



THESIS

RUSSIA'S SUBMARINE FORCE: DETERMINANTS AND PROSPECTS

by

John M. Tully

June 2001

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

David S. Yost
Mikhail Tsypkin

Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited

Form SF298 Citation Data

Report Date <i>("DD MON YYYY")</i> 15 Jun 2001	Report Type N/A	Dates Covered (from... to) <i>("DD MON YYYY")</i>
Title and Subtitle RUSSIA'S SUBMARINE FORCE: DETERMINANTS AND PROSPECTS		Contract or Grant Number
		Program Element Number
Authors		Project Number
		Task Number
		Work Unit Number
Performing Organization Name(s) and Address(es) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5138		Performing Organization Number(s)
Sponsoring/Monitoring Agency Name(s) and Address(es)		Monitoring Agency Acronym
		Monitoring Agency Report Number(s)
Distribution/Availability Statement Approved for public release, distribution unlimited		
Supplementary Notes		
Abstract		
Subject Terms		
Document Classification unclassified		Classification of SF298 unclassified
Classification of Abstract unclassified		Limitation of Abstract unlimited
Number of Pages 126		

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY		2. REPORT DATE June 2001	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE: Russia's Submarine Force: Determinants and Prospects			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) John M. Tully				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT This thesis analyzes the factors likely to shape the future of the Russian submarine force. It examines key events affecting this force since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and explores the determinants of these events. The Russian Federation inherited a huge submarine fleet from the Soviet Union. Due to the changing conditions in the world and in Russia, its future status is in doubt. The thesis begins by analyzing the development and roles of the Soviet submarine force. It then considers the four most significant factors that have affected the submarine force since 1991: 1) Russia's poor economic performance, 2) Russia's changing national security requirements, 3) competition from the other military services for a limited defense budget, and 4) changes within the military and society. The thesis concludes that the Russian submarine force is unlikely to undergo a major revival. The most probable scenario involves a smaller and less capable force. The most influential factors may be Russia's economic performance and the military reform plans of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS Navy, Nuclear Deterrence, Nuclear Weapons, Russia, SSBN, Submarine, Weapons of Mass Destruction			15. NUMBER OF PAGES	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL	

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited

RUSSIA'S SUBMARINE FORCE: DETERMINANTS AND PROSPECTS

John M. Tully
Lieutenant, United States Navy
B.S., U.S. Naval Academy, 1995

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
JUNE 2001**

Author: _____
John M. Tully

Approved by: _____
David S. Yost, Thesis Advisor

Mikhail Tsypkin, Second Reader

James Wirtz, Chairman
National Security Affairs Department

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the factors likely to shape the future of the Russian submarine force. It examines key events affecting this force since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and explores the determinants of these events. The Russian Federation inherited a huge submarine fleet from the Soviet Union. Due to the changing conditions in the world and in Russia, its future status is in doubt. The thesis begins by analyzing the development and roles of the Soviet submarine force. It then considers the four most significant factors that have affected the submarine force since 1991: 1) Russia's poor economic performance, 2) Russia's changing national security requirements, 3) competition from the other military services for a limited defense budget, and 4) changes within the military and society. The thesis concludes that the Russian submarine force is unlikely to undergo a major revival. The most probable scenario involves a smaller and less capable force. The most influential factors may be Russia's economic performance and the military reform plans of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
A.	DESCRIPTION OF THE THESIS:	1
B.	METHODOLOGY.....	4
C.	ORGANIZATION.....	4
II.	ROOTS.....	9
A.	EARLY HISTORY	9
B.	EARLY POST WAR PERIOD	10
C.	EXPANSION AND GORSHKOV	12
D.	GORBACHEV.....	17
E.	GORSHKOV REVISITED	18
F.	THE TRADITION	20
III.	FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANGE.....	23
A.	DOMESTIC CHANGES	23
1.	Democratization	23
2.	Democracy and Open Society.....	25
3.	Social and Leadership Conditions in the Navy.....	29
4.	Media.....	34
B.	INTERNATIONAL CHANGES.....	38
1.	Geography.....	38
a.	<i>Fleets</i>.....	39
b.	<i>Borders</i>.....	42
2.	World Naval Developments.....	42
C.	DOCTRINAL CHANGES.....	45
D.	THE BALKANS	48
E.	ECONOMIC ISSUES	50
1.	Budgets	50
2.	Direct Results of the Financial Crisis	54
3.	Recovery?	59
4.	Economic Side Effects.....	61
F.	THE EFFECTS	63
IV.	FUTURE MISSIONS AND POLICY TRENDS	67
A.	NUCLEAR DETERRENCE	67
1.	SSBN Force Structure Possibilities.....	77
B.	OTHER NAVAL MISSIONS.....	86
C.	NEW POLICIES	90
D.	NEW LEADERSHIP	93
V.	CONCLUSIONS	99
A.	THE IMPORTANT FACTORS	99
B.	THE WORST CASE.....	101

C.	THE BEST CASE	102
D.	THE LIKELY FUTURE	103
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST		107

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Active submarines by Year, 1984-2000.	64
Figure 2 Submarine Construction by Year, 1984-2000.	65
Figure 3 Submarine Force Composition, 1984 and 2000.	66
Figure 4 SSBN Force Levels Under Scenario A.....	79
Figure 5 SSBN Force Levels Under Scenario B.....	80
Figure 6 SSBN Force Levels Under Scenario C.....	81
Figure 7 SSBN Force Levels Under Scenario D.....	82
Figure 8 Warhead Levels on SSBNs Under All Scenarios.....	83

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Major Russian Newspapers, Radio, and Television Stations, Their Owners, and Politics. From: <i>The Economist</i> , 21 April 2001, 46.....	36
---	----

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile System
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
ELF	Extremely Low Frequency
FSB	Russian Federal Security Service (internal security)
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
MIRV	Multiple Independently-targetable Reentry Vehicle
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NKVD	Soviet Predecessor to the KGB
NTV	Russian Television Network
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RF	Russian Federation
SLBM	Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile
SRF	Strategic Rocket Forces
SS	Conventionally powered Submarine
SSB	Conventionally Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine
SSBN	Nuclear Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine
SSG	Conventionally Powered Cruise Missile Submarine
SSGN	Nuclear Powered Cruise Missile Submarine
SSN	Nuclear Powered Attack Submarine
SS-XX	NATO designation for Soviet/Russian surface to surface missiles (XX represents specific number, i.e. SS-27)
SS-N-XX	NATO designation for Soviet/Russian naval surface-to-surface missiles
START I/II	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Russian Federation inherited a large submarine force from the Soviet Union. Since the end of the Second World War, this force had served as the core of the Soviet Navy. With the development of nuclear propulsion and nuclear-armed submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), submarines rose to even higher prominence in the Soviet Navy. While it never achieved primacy in the Soviet hierarchy of military services, the navy—and particularly the naval nuclear deterrence forces—rose in importance under the leadership of Admiral Sergey Gorshkov, the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy from 1956 to 1985.

Following Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power in 1985, new policies came to the forefront in thinking about the Soviet state's defense. Critics could now openly question the philosophies of Marx and Lenin that had been the basis of the Soviet state and armed forces. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 caused further turmoil. These political difficulties combined with a collapsing economy to leave the submarine force in a precarious position.

This thesis analyzes the effects on the Russian submarine force of the changes that have taken place since the last years of the Soviet Union. It offers judgments as to which of the manifold changes were most important. This allows informed conclusions on the probable direction of the submarine forces.

The analysis shows that the following four factors were probably most important:

- Russia's poor economic performance since 1991.
- Russia's changing national security requirements.
- Competition from the other military services and other warfare communities within the Russian Navy.
- Changes in the social status of the military and within society.

Since 1991, the Russian economy has contracted significantly. This has had serious negative effects on the Russian submarine force. The poor performance of the economy has slowed the impressive construction rates of the Soviet Navy, and has had numerous other harmful effects, including wage arrears, reduced operational tempo, and significant difficulties in disposing of retired nuclear-powered submarines.

The geopolitical map of the world changed at the end of the Cold War. The Russian Navy could not claim the super power rivalry as a justification for its existence. While the chance of war still exists, global conflict with the United States and NATO is much less likely. At the Cold War's end, the Soviet Union dissolved into the Russian Federation and fourteen other newly independent states. These changes—combined with the Warsaw Pact's break-up—limited Russia's access to the open ocean.

In the 1990s, a series of conflicts erupted on Russia's periphery. These conflicts—mainly in the Balkans and the Caucasus—have presented Russia with serious security concerns. Russian leaders are also preoccupied with the threat of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia. The navy will be of little use in these conflicts. At the same time, NATO's Kosovo campaign of 1999 worried Moscow. The NATO enlargement process, U.S. plans for a limited missile defense system, and other issues may signal the beginning of greater tensions between the NATO alliance and Russia. The navy—and particularly the submarine force—may benefit if Russia sees NATO as its major security concern.

The changing world security environment has led Russia, like the United States, to change its security doctrine. In 2000, Russia issued a new National Security Concept,

Military Doctrine, and naval policy. Both the National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine appear to underscore Moscow's reliance on nuclear deterrence for the country's security, and this could be a positive sign for the submarine force's development. At the same time, both documents cite growing concern over ethnic separatism and instability to Russia's south, and this could be a negative sign for the submarine force's development.

Following this analysis, the thesis looks at the status of the submarine force, as well as its missions and concerns in the immediate future. The maritime strategic nuclear forces have been the focus of the navy for decades and this does not appear to be changing. The Russian SSBN force is, however, aging. Russia has not commissioned a new SSBN since 1990. At the same time, the missiles on Russia's newest SSBNs—those of the Typhoon-class—are reaching the end of their service lives. Russian President Vladimir Putin appointed Sergey Ivanov as Defense Minister in March 2001. This signals that Putin may be serious about military reform. The Russian Security Council—then under Ivanov's leadership—approved a still-secret military reform plan in 2001. Since Ivanov is now Defense Minister, it appears likely that reforms along the lines he approved will occur.

The thesis concludes that the Russian submarine force is unlikely either to disappear, or to undergo a revival. It is, however, probable that the force will continue with reduced numbers and capabilities. Limited training at sea will make the force more dangerous for its sailors and the environment, as well as less effective in combat. Two major factors will determine the final size and composition of the submarine force: what President Vladimir Putin and Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov determine is necessary, and the future trend of the Russian economy. While an improved Russian economy

would not necessarily guarantee a submarine force revival, a Putin decision to neglect the submarine force would guarantee its further decline. The future of the Russian submarine force as anything more than a hollow entity will require decisive action on the part of Putin and Ivanov.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE THESIS:

This thesis analyzes the factors likely to shape the future of the Russian submarine force. It examines key events affecting this force since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and explores the determinants of these events. The following four factors appear to be the most significant:

- Russia's poor economic performance since 1991.
- Russia's changing national security requirements.
- Competition from the other military services and other warfare communities within the Russian Navy.
- Changes in the social status of the military and within society itself.

The effects of these factors are assessed in the period since 1991, when the Russian state emerged from the ruins of the U.S.S.R. This analysis furnishes the basis for a forecast—or, at least, informed judgments—about what can be expected for the Russian submarine force in the foreseeable future.

This topic is relevant and important because the future of the Russian submarine force has direct implications for the U.S. Navy and U.S. national security. Russia inherited a huge submarine force from the Soviet Union. These vessels run the spectrum from the modern Project 941 and 971M Typhoon and Akula-class nuclear-powered submarines to diesel boats like the Whiskey-class—which would be familiar to a World War II submariner.¹ Some of these submarines have remained in active service. Most

¹ This paper uses North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nomenclature throughout. This will avoid the confusion that can result from contradictions between Russian/Soviet and NATO names. One example of this confusion is the NATO-named *Akula* attack submarine. The Russians have two names for this class of submarine, as with most others. The first is the project number, in this case 971. The second in this

have been formally withdrawn from service and are in the midst of (or awaiting) deactivation and dismantlement. Others have remained nominally in service, but are in such a state of disrepair that they are unlikely ever to put to sea again. It is the submarines on active duty that could present the greatest potential threat to U.S. national security. The decommissioned vessels are of concern, but mostly from environmental and proliferation viewpoints.

Russia's submarine fleet is varied. The largest vessels are the nuclear-powered ballistic missile carrying submarines (SSBNs). Recent estimates suggest that Russia has nineteen operational SSBNs. These account for 324 submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), which are capable of delivering 1,872 nuclear warheads. While operational tempo is lower than during the Cold War, one Russian SSBN on patrol has the capability to launch a devastating nuclear strike against the United States or other countries. Russia also has eleven additional non-operational SSBNs with 180 SLBMs. These are planned for dismantling but are accountable under the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START) and could theoretically still be deployed.² Indeed, the range of Russian SLBMs is such that they could strike targets in North America from ports in Russia.

In addition to strategic submarines, Russia maintains a sizable fleet of tactical submarines. These include eight operational Oscar II-class cruise missile submarines

case is the name *Bars*. The Russian Project 941, known in the West as *Typhoon*, is known as *Akula* in Russia.

² International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2000-2001* (London: Oxford University Press, 2000), 120.

(SSGNs). The *Kursk*, which sank in August 2000, was a member of this class. Each Oscar II-class submarine can carry 48 cruise missiles, as well as torpedoes. Oscar II-class submarines are optimized to attack surface warships. Russia also has a number of attack submarines (SSNs)—vessels designed to hunt and kill other submarines. In reality, SSNs are better described as “multi-purpose submarines.” In addition to their primary mission of attacking other submarines, they can counter surface warships and merchant ships. They also have the capability to carry land-attack cruise missiles. Russia’s most advanced submarines of this type are eight Akula-class attack SSNs. There are also several operational older Sierra and Victor III-class SSNs. Aside from nuclear-powered submarines, Russia has sixteen diesel-electric vessels, including 12 of the modern Kilo-class.³

The fate of the Russian submarine force matters for U.S. national security. If Moscow chose to challenge U.S. operations, a revived Russian submarine force could threaten America’s ability to respond to international crises. For example, Operation Allied Force in 1999, NATO’s intervention in the Kosovo crisis, involved a large number of U.S. Navy warships. Their operations in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic would have been more risky if Russian submarines had been nearby. The mere belief by U.S. (and other NATO) military commanders that a Russian submarine was in the area, even if it was not, would have forced significant changes in NATO operations.

A renewed Russian submarine presence around the globe could threaten United States interests in other ways. In times of crisis, Russia could threaten U.S. strategic

³ *Ibid.*, 121.

imports such as oil. Depending on Moscow's policies, the presence of a Russian submarine in or around the Persian Gulf would make continued enforcement of sanctions against Iraq much more difficult. A similar situation could arise with a Russian submarine presence in the Western Pacific and China Seas during a crisis over Taiwan. Renewed Russian SSN operations could also put American SSBNs at risk under certain circumstances. Similarly, in some circumstances operation of Russian SSBNs could be a concern for the safety of the United States. Knowing the direction of Russian naval developments, particularly the submarine force, will be critical to the future security of the United States.

B. METHODOLOGY

The thesis draws on both primary and secondary source material. Primary sources include official documents, including statements of military doctrine and articles articulating policy by Russian leaders. Addressing the societal concerns requires analysis of press reports and editorials. Western and other foreign analyses of issues enrich the arguments.

C. ORGANIZATION

Chapter II discusses developments in Russia's armed forces—and particularly in the navy and submarine fleet—since 1991. Sharp reductions in Russian naval activity have drastically changed the Russian navy's role in national security policy. This chapter

looks at what has happened to the forces, how they have operated, and the changing status of the submarine force.

The third chapter investigates the causes of these changes. The analysis includes changes in national security requirements, military and naval doctrine, and the changing international security environment. In 2000, Russia published a new National Security Concept, a Military Doctrine, and a new Naval Doctrine. These may have an important effect on the future of all branches of the military. Military reform, including types of units, command and control, and military structure, has been debated since the founding of the Russian state in 1991. Vladimir Putin pledged to reform the military as part of his 2000 election campaign. The direction of these reforms will affect the role and status of the submarine fleet. Russia sees escalating regional conflicts along its southern border as its most serious threat.⁴ Official doctrine views the war in Chechnya as a possible blueprint for future conflicts. These conflicts could start on Russian territory, or across the border, and spread within the Russian Federation. The Russian navy would be of limited use both in this geographical area and in this type of conflict, a circumstance that implies that the navy would be at a disadvantage in the competition for resources. These are just two of the critical issues facing the Russian Navy in Russia's new doctrine.

Russia's declining economic performance has affected the military. Budget cutbacks and funding shortfalls have had a significant effect on the military in general. Without an increased and more effectively apportioned budget, future doctrine may not

4 "Russia's National Security Concept," *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye* (hereafter *NVO*), 14 January 2000, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 16 January 2000, FTS 20000116000515.

matter. Reform in this area is underway, but without general economic improvement, it may be for naught. Insufficient funding has brought new submarine construction to a standstill. It has also affected operations. Submarines have been going to sea without sufficient spare parts or training. This may have already had disastrous consequences during the *Kursk* sinking. Without increased resources, more difficulties can be expected in the future.

Interservice competition has also affected the submarine force, and it is analyzed in this thesis. The public battles between Defense Minister Marshal Igor Sergeyev and Chief of the General Staff General Anatolyi Kvashnin in 1997-2001 reflect an aspect of this competition. To compensate for this problem Putin has made some changes to military organization, which he has presented as contributions to military reform.⁵ More changes will be necessary to completely overcome this difficulty.

Finally, the thesis investigates the role of civil society. During the Cold War the Soviet Navy was generally well regarded domestically, and the submarine force even more so. Since 1991 there have been problems. News of Russian environmental pollution revealed by Captain Aleksandr Nikitin, among others, and operational problems like the *Kursk* disaster have evidently lowered the navy's standing in the public eye.

Events since 1991 have also changed much about Russian society. Since the end of the Cold War, the government's record of candor in communicating with the Russian people has improved, but there are still problems. During the *Kursk* incident in August 2000, several events demonstrated how the government still has much to learn about

⁵ *Military Balance*, 109.

dealing with citizens in a democracy. The Federal Security Service (FSB, the successor to the KGB in counter-intelligence and internal security) agents followed family members who went north to be near the site of the accident. Press releases were contradictory. *Kursk* crewmen's next of kin often found out about the accident from television reports.⁶ Large numbers of Russians have an innate distrust of the government. The Kursk disaster removed any doubts about the public's reaction to this. During the crisis only about two percent of the population believed the military was being honest.⁷ The war in Chechnya has not helped the situation. Many Russians still support the war but opposition—particularly in the press—has been increasing. Any attempts to improve the capability of the military, including the submarine force, will have to consider these facts.

Chapter IV integrates and analyzes the combination of the factors involved in the developments since 1991. It offers informed judgments about identifiable trends, their implications for Russian capabilities, and their significance for U.S. naval forces and U.S. national security. This analysis furnishes a basis for a forecast of the prospects for the Russian submarine force.

6 Charles Digges, "Families of Sailors Angered by Silence," *The St Petersburg Times*, 18 August 2000; "Object Resembling Foreign Submarine Part found Near *Kursk*," *Interfax*, 21 August 2000; "Northern Fleet HQ Denies Foreign Sub Fragment Found Near *Kursk*," RIA Russian News Agency, 22 August 2000, reported by BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 23 August 2000. Both RIA and Interfax reports accessed through Lexis-Nexis 24 and 25 October 2000.

7 Vadim Solovyov, "Tragedy Multiplied by Lies," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 August 2000, 1, reported by Russica Information Inc, accessed through Lexis-Nexis 25 October 2000; Viktor Litovkin, "They are Trying to Sink Submarine Again," *Obshchaya Gazeta*, 24 August 2000, reported by Russica Information Inc, accessed through Lexis-Nexis 31 October 2000.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

II. ROOTS

Without a good understanding of where today's Russian Navy came from, it is impossible to understand what has happened, why it happened, or what is likely to happen in the future. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia inherited the majority of the Soviet Navy's ships, aircraft, and other assets. By this time, the Soviet Navy was a large and capable force with an ocean going combat capability. This had not always been the case.

A. EARLY HISTORY

World War II was the defining event for the Soviet armed forces. The Soviet regime glorified its victory in the war. At times, the justification of Soviet communism seemed to be its victory over Nazi fascism and Japanese militarism. The Soviet Navy went into the war in terrible shape. Stalin's purge of the navy officer corps was more thorough than in any other branch of the military. The damage was so great that by 1938 an officer of the NKVD (a fore-runner of the KGB) commanded the navy because there were no officers of sufficient seniority left.⁸ The navy had also suffered from a low priority for funds. The Red Army garnered most of the glory. It almost single handedly defeated the Nazi war machine. The navy, of course, did try to capture some glory in World War II. Articles in the post war period, up to the end of the Soviet regime, frequently mentioned the roles and successes of the navy during the war.

⁸ Peter Tsouras, "Soviet Naval Tradition," in Bruce W. Watson and Susan M. Watson, ed., *The Soviet Navy: Strengths and Liabilities* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 15.

The Soviet navy in World War II failed to achieve huge successes on the ocean. The Soviet Navy for the most part was not involved in fleet combat of the magnitude conducted by the navies of the United States, Great Britain, or Japan. Most of the Soviet naval successes were on a much smaller scale. The Soviet navy's most spectacular victories were fighting small coastal battles that would have been considered mere skirmishes in the Pacific war. Its greatest successes came in fighting riverine engagements, conducting small amphibious landings, and in providing naval artillery. In fact, the Commander in Chief of the Soviet Navy, Sergei Gorshkov, proudly proclaimed in 1974 that during the war four hundred thousand navy personnel fought on the land fronts. This left only around one hundred thousand to man ships and vessels and defend bases.⁹ It is admirable that Soviet naval forces played such a crucial role in the land campaigns, but this kind of contribution is not what a navy can build a sea-going tradition on.

B. EARLY POST WAR PERIOD

The most critical period to understand is the post-World War II era. From 1945 to the end of the Cold War in 1989-1991, the Soviet Navy underwent numerous changes. Following World War II, the Soviet Union endeavored to build a larger and stronger navy. Soviet leadership did not initially intend, however, to build a navy to challenge the U.S. Navy on the high seas. In the early post war period (up to the establishment of the Strategic Rocket Forces in 1959), the Red Army dominated all facets of Soviet military

⁹ Tsouras, "Soviet Naval Tradition," 10, 16.

planning, while the navy suffered from the results of World War II. Military planners assigned the navy a purely defensive role. In their eyes, it should consist of small coastal combatants and submarines. Using these assets, the navy would defend the sea approaches to the state. Its sole offensive role would be limited to supporting army advances.¹⁰ To fulfill this mission the navy operated a fleet of small vessels: torpedo boats, patrol craft, and coastal submarines. Defensive operations would integrate navy vessels with shore-based aircraft and artillery fire.

Soviet reliance on submarines began in this immediate post-war period. The naval actions of the Second World War taught Soviet leaders two important lessons. First, it convinced them that despite advances in antisubmarine warfare, submarines offered “a branch of the forces capable of solving important tasks in the oceans. They became the main combat power of the fleet.” They also benefited from the fact that they

made it possible in a very short time to increase sharply the strike possibilities of our fleet, to form a considerable counter-balance to the main forces of the fleet of the enemy in the oceanic theatres, and, at the cost of fewer resources and less time, to multiply the growth of sea power of our country, thereby depriving an enemy of the advantages which could accrue to him in the event of war against the Soviet Union and the countries of the socialist community.¹¹

Early post-war construction focused on small submarines. The vast majority were Whiskey-class boats. Between 1951 and 1958, the Soviets built 230 Whiskey-class submarines. A shore targeting station would direct these vessels in their defense of the

¹⁰ Andrei A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought: 1917-1991* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center of Science and International Affairs, 1998), 171-2.

¹¹ Sergei G. Gorshkov, *The Sea Power of the State*, English edition (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979), 190.

sea approaches to the Soviet Union. The larger Zulu-class and smaller Quebec-class submarines augmented the Whiskey-class. The thirty-two Zulu-class submarines operated further out at sea and coordinated with shore-based aircraft to provide targeting information to the shore centers. The approximately thirty Quebec-class submarines operated in the coastal waters.¹²

C. EXPANSION AND GORSHKOV

Following Stalin's death in 1953, this approach to the development of the Soviet fleet continued. Nikita Khrushchev took this approach a step further. He believed that the development of nuclear-powered submarines and cruise missiles had relegated the aircraft carrier to the ash heap of history. Khrushchev believed that by concentrating on these developments the Soviet Union could negate the U.S. sea power advantage.¹³

The interest in cruise missiles led to further Soviet naval development. The Soviet Government constructed larger vessels—both submarines and surface ships. With these new warships, the navy's mission expanded as well. Beginning in the late 1950s, the Soviet Navy undertook its most important role: nuclear deterrence. By 1963, the Soviets had three types of submarines capable of launching ballistic missiles in service—the Zulu V, the Golf, and the nuclear-powered Hotel—and two nuclear cruise missile-

¹² John Jordan, "Future Trends in Soviet Submarine Development," in Bruce W. Watson and Peter M. Dunn, ed., *The Future of the Soviet Navy: An Assessment to the Year 2000* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 1-2.

¹³Sergei G. Gorshkov, "Soviet Naval Art," *Morskoi Sbornik*, No.2, 1967, translated, abridged, and reprinted in *Soviet Military Review*, July 1967; Jordan, 1, 3.

launching classes—the Whiskey Long Bin and Echo I. The navy could now strike land targets at distances as great as 450 kilometers. The navy’s focus was shifting to operations further from the coast.¹⁴

The further to sea the navy went, the more ships it needed, and the larger they needed to be. In the late 1950s the Soviet Navy expanded greatly from its previous size and role. From 1955 through 1964 the Soviets built fifty-five nuclear submarines in four separate classes.¹⁵ Construction began in 1955 on the first ocean-going attack submarines—the Novembers. The navy’s mission expanded to combating the U.S. Navy on the open ocean. The Echo I and Whiskey Long Bin class submarines deployed with anti-ship cruise missiles to fulfill this role. The Echo II-class SSG (diesel-powered cruise missile submarine) and the Juliett-class SSGN (nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine) soon joined the older classes.

The first generation of Soviet nuclear-powered submarines—November, Hotel, and Echo-classes—were large, slow and noisy compared to American designs of that era.¹⁶ In 1967, the Soviets began construction of the second generation of nuclear

¹⁴ Jordan, 3-4.

¹⁵ Thomas Nilsen, Igor Kudrik, and Alexandr Nikitin, *Bellona Report Number 2*, The Bellona Foundation, 8 March 1997, [http] Available online: www.bellona.no/imaker?id=10090 [Accessed 25 May 2000], section 2.2.1.

¹⁶ The November-class was roughly contemporary with the U.S. Skipjack-class. The November was 352 feet long, had 26.1-foot beam, drew 21.1 feet, and displaced 4,069 tons submerged. Skipjack-class submarines were 251 feet long, 31.8 feet wide, drew 27 feet, and displaced 3,515 tons submerged. In addition, U.S. designs were safer: four of the fourteen November-class boats were lost due to reactor accidents. For comparison, only one of the six Skipjack-class submarines was lost due to an accident, and only two U.S. nuclear subs (the Skipjack-class *Scorpion* and the Permit-class *Thresher*) have been lost—neither due to nuclear problems. Warships of the World,

submarines, including the Yankee-class ballistic missile carrying submarines (SSBN). These submarines featured significant improvements over the older Hotel boats. The Yankees were much larger, and carried missiles with a significantly longer range, sixteen hundred nautical miles, compared to about seven hundred nautical miles on earlier missiles.

Admiral Sergei Georgievich Gorshkov was the architect of this expansion. From in 1956 to 1985, Gorshkov led the navy's expanding role, numbers, and influence. Over time, the Soviet Navy saw its role change. The Soviet authorities had decided to challenge Western domination of the world ocean.

Gorshkov justified the naval expansion using Marxist-Leninist thought. Lenin viewed world relations in terms of five conflicts:

- Germany against Europe
- The United States against Europe
- The United States against Japan
- Emerging nations against their old colonial masters
- The Soviet Union against the United States

Lenin forecast that Germany would rebel against the rest of Europe because of the peace terms imposed upon it by the Treaty of Versailles. The United States would, Lenin predicted, struggle against Europe because the European powers were weaker, but had

“Specifications: *Leninskiy Komsomol* Class Nuclear Attack Submarines,” (Warships1), [http] Available online: www.warships1.com/RUSsn10_November_specs.htm, accessed 22 March 2001; Warships of the World, “Specifications: Skipjack Class Nuclear Attack Submarines,” (Warships1), [http] Available online: www.warships1.com/ships-US/USsn585_Skipjack_specs.htm, [Accessed 22 March 2001].

colonial empires, while the United States was stronger, but had no colonies. Lenin also predicted that the United States and Japan would struggle for domination of the Pacific.¹⁷

According to Soviet ideology, the outcome of the Second World War left only two conflicts—the emerging nations against their old colonial masters, and the Soviet Union against the United States. Gorshkov used these conflicts as arguments for an expansion of Soviet naval power. Both conflicts placed the United States in the role of the aggressor. Gorshkov developed two distinct roles for the navy: operations in peace, and operations in war. In peace, the navy would show the Soviet flag around the world, and support developing states' battles against colonial oppressors in wars of national liberation. In war, the navy would defend the motherland against armed attack.

In Gorshkov's view, navies were the centerpieces of the power of "imperialist states:"

The imperialist states use their sea power primarily as an instrument of aggressive policy for subjugating and holding down countries and peoples, as a means of exacerbating the international situation and unleashing wars and military conflicts in different parts of the world. The military theoreticians and ideologists of imperialism, for example in the USA, view sea power not only as a most crucial means of threatening socialism but also as a force capable of holding in check their allies in aggressive military blocs and ensuring in these blocs their dominant position and the overriding influence of the American monopolies.¹⁸

¹⁷ Bruce W. Watson, "The Evolution of Soviet Naval Strategy," in Bruce W. Watson and Peter M. Dunn, ed., *The Future of the Soviet Navy: An Assessment to the Year 2000* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 115-6.

¹⁸ Gorshkov, *The Sea Power of the State*, 2.

It followed that by attacking and destroying their navies, in the event of a war “unleashed by the imperialists” (as the ideology depicted it), the Soviet Union could break up “aggressive military blocs,” and build a socialist paradise.

The reasons the Soviet Union needed a strong navy were obvious to Gorshkov. The main NATO powers—especially Britain, France, and the United States—all were maritime states. The “imperialist” powers made frequent use of their naval supremacy in what Soviet ideology considered wars of imperialist expansion. By building a strong sea-going navy the Soviet Union could challenge the West, and possibly undermine its power completely. Gorshkov could use this argument to demonstrate to the Soviet leadership the ideological basis for raising the prestige and importance of the navy.

The development of carrier-based strike aircraft and amphibious forces had started to change the role of the navy. No longer was defeating the enemy’s fleet the main mission. It was now attacking his homeland. The development of ballistic missile-launching submarines completed the change. These vessels could strike directly into the homeland of any enemy.¹⁹

Throughout his long tenure as Commander-in-Chief of the Navy Gorshkov succeeded in increasing the size, combat power, and influence of the Soviet Navy. Soviet ships routinely deployed around the world. They operated in the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. They conducted large exercises in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, as

¹⁹ Gorshkov, *The Sea Power of the State*, 121; Watson, “The Evolution of Soviet Naval Strategy,” 120-121.

well as global exercises. The navy's response to real crises increased as well, with Soviet warships deployed to world hotspots.²⁰

Throughout the period from the late 1950s to the late 1980s, submarines were the centerpieces of the Soviet Navy. They had the combat power to strike at NATO carrier groups, as well as to deliver devastating strikes against an enemy's territory.

D. GORBACHEV

From the late 1960s until the early 1980s, the standing of the Soviet Navy was on the rise. Historically, the Red Army had always been the dominant service. During the Second World War, the army withstood the worst of the combat. It was almost solely responsible for the defeat of Nazi Germany. The Ground Forces remained the focus until the development of the Strategic Rocket Forces in 1959. The navy stood at the bottom of the pecking order for Soviet military institutions, behind the Strategic Rocket Forces, the Army, the Air Defense Forces, and the Air Force.²¹ Gorshkov's reforms went a long way to change how the nation and the regime viewed the navy. Under his leadership, the navy became more important to the state's leaders, although it never approached the stature of

²⁰ The Soviets mustered very little naval response to crises in the early Cold War (Suez in 1956 and Lebanon in 1958). Their responses to the Jordanian crisis of 1970, the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, and the Yom Kippur war of 1973 were almost exclusively naval. Naval forces participated in later crises including: Cyprus in 1974; Angola in 1975; Lebanon in 1976; Ethiopia in 1977, and Vietnam in 1979. Watson, "The Evolution of Soviet Naval Strategy," 117-118.

²¹ Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott, *The Armed Forces of the USSR* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 159, 167.

the Strategic Rocket Forces or the Ground Forces. This trend changed with the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev.

E. GORSHKOV REVISITED

The very way in which Sergei Gorshkov justified his vision of the fleet came back to haunt it. One of Gorshkov's levers for building a large ocean going fleet was the struggle against "imperialism," as viewed through the lens of Marxism-Leninism. He wrote that the capitalist powers used their fleets to influence world events and to conduct aggressive wars of expansion. Building a large ocean going fleet would allow the Soviet Union to challenge the West in these wars.

The assumptions of the Soviet worldview began to crack well before the end of the Soviet Union. According to Gorbachev's new vision, security for the Soviet Union required all the other states of the world to be secure as well. The days of hostile powers encircling the Soviet Union were over. Gorbachev traveled to France in 1985 and addressed the French Communist Party in a speech that "downplayed the Soviet Union as a supporter of revolution."²²

This new vision shot a hole in the *raison d'être* of the Soviet Navy. One of the damning pieces of academic work came from the Institute for World Economics and International Relations (IMEMO). In an influential study in 1989, Georgii Kunadze noted that the Soviet Union had no security interests in the Third World. There was no

²² William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 106.

security threat to the Soviet Union from the Third World and any money spent was just an economic burden.

Taking a sober nonideological view of the Third World, he [Kunadze] argued, would reveal not only that there were no Soviet security interests in those regions but also that Soviet involvement there had created a heavy economic burden while producing no gains. On this point the Soviet Navy drew Kunadze's biting criticism. Only Soviet ideological ambitions in the Third World justified its size. By dropping ideological lenses, one could see that the navy ought to be radically reduced. Only in Europe was there a Soviet interest beyond its borders deserving a military commitment.²³

Kunadze was not alone. Sergei Blagovolin went even further. He stated that Gorshkov's expansion of the navy in an attempt to build a power projection force had backfired. This plan only gave the United States and other NATO powers an excuse to build up their navies. This created a naval arms race that only further burdened the Soviet economy.²⁴

Alexei Arbatov, then an analyst at the Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada (ISKAN), said the Soviet Union should never use force in the Third World, or intervene in conflicts there. In Arbatov's view, the Soviet Union had no use for such a large nuclear weapons inventory. He argued that the SSBNs should only be a supplement to land-based inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). The SSBN force should be much smaller than the land-based ICBM force.²⁵

This new approach was a direct threat to the Russian Navy that was to follow its Soviet predecessor; it was particularly menacing for the submarine force. While many of

²³ Odom, 154-5.

²⁴ Odom, 157.

the new thinkers believed that there should still be a navy and submarine force, in their eyes the current force was more than Russia needed. Theories on the Russian Navy's missions were coming full circle to the immediate post-World War II era: coastal defense and support of the army, with nuclear deterrence as an added mission.

F. THE TRADITION

In summary, with the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the Russian navy inherited the double-edged sword of Soviet and Russian naval traditions. This gave the Russian navy a quantitatively large force. It had the capability to exert Russian influence around the globe, as it had been doing for the Soviet Union since the 1960s. The Soviet Navy had an extensive record of operations.

Russia inherited the negative aspects of the Soviet naval experience as well. The Soviet Union never fully accepted its role as a naval power. Even twenty years into the Gorshkov force structure build-ups, critics were still raising questions. What else would require the Commander-in-Chief to author several articles in *Morskoy Sbornik*, supporting the development of the Soviet Navy? Gorshkov soon followed with his book, *Sea Power of the State*. The most logical explanation is that the Soviet leadership still had not accepted Gorshkov's expanded role for the Soviet Navy.²⁶

What Gorshkov may have realized is what others have postulated about the Soviet/Russian naval tradition:

²⁵ Odom, 162-3.

²⁶ Tsouras, "Soviet Naval Tradition," 4.

The fundamental question posed to Russian-Soviet leaders has been whether the security of the state would be in mortal risk if the navy were to fail or be confined to a traditional coastal defense role. In moments of acute crisis, the answer has been always no.²⁷

Under Soviet and Russian rule, the navy has faced the constraints of geography. Alfred Thayer Mahan stated that the first element of sea power is geography.²⁸ Russia is not a particularly maritime state. While it does have long coastlines, most are unnavigable. Its access to the open ocean is limited.

For these historical reasons, to say nothing of economic constraints, there can be no guarantee that Russia will keep its submarine force. The Russian Navy has withered in the past. Following the death of Peter the Great—Father of the Russian Navy—Russian naval power collapsed. During this period, ships were forbidden to sail unless they were transporting royalty. Collapses in prestige have followed the failures of the Russian Navy in the Crimean War, the Russo-Japanese War, and World War I. In these failures, Peter Tsouras has noted,

naval resources and strategy were completely subordinated to traditional military requirements, and the navy's leaders were either given no latitude for aggressive naval action or failed to make use of opportunities...poor training and a perceptible lack of confidence were evident in all ranks. Outstanding senior leadership was confined to a few talented men whose loss had decisive and negative effects on operations.²⁹

There is no guarantee neglect will not be the path chosen now. Russia has always held that land-based forces are more critical to national survival than maritime forces.

²⁷ Tsouras, "Soviet Naval Tradition," 10.

²⁸ Alfred T. Mahan, *The Influence of Seapower Upon History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 33.

²⁹ Tsouras, "Soviet Naval Tradition," 7-10.

Historically, most threats have originated along the country's continental frontiers. The navy has never been critical to the defense of Russia.³⁰ Tradition holds the army in much higher stead. Today's security threats reinforce this pattern. Russian leaders will have to make a conscious decision to maintain a strong navy and submarine force, and there is no guarantee they will do so.

³⁰ The only possible exceptions to this are the convoy supplies provided by the Western allies during World War II, and the deterrence role played by SSBNs during the Cold War.

III. FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANGE

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian submarine force has changed a great deal. Numbers have dropped. Operations have been less frequent and smaller in scale. The factors that have contributed to these changes are manifold. They range from the continuing development of democracy in Russia to changes in the world economic and political-military order. This chapter discusses the most important factors and their apparent impact.

The Russian state today is very different from the Soviet Union. The differences are more than just geographic. The political system is different. Civil society is different. All these factors are important. Each has affected the submarine force, and their impact continues today.

A. DOMESTIC CHANGES

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the situation inside Russia has changed dramatically. The type of government has changed. The common citizen has gained more access to information. The relationship between the people and the government has changed. These changes have combined to have effects on the Russian submarine force.

1. Democratization

Russian society has gained greater freedom of expression and freedom of assembly since the end of the Soviet Union. This has forced changes on the Russian government and military. Russian politicians are now facing a problem that has

confounded democratic leaders for ages: the “Not in My Backyard” phenomenon. Often, citizens and the government will agree that some work needs to be done. It is, however, far more difficult to find the right location to do that work. In the Soviet Union, this was not an issue. The central government could embark upon any program it desired. There was no worry about public dissent. There were no means for the local citizens to become involved. There was no need to fear this anyway because the central government controlled the distribution of information. As Russian leaders are finding out now, this is no longer the case.

One example of this phenomenon occurred recently at Gadzhiyevo, a closed military city on the Kola Peninsula. This city supports a naval shipyard that decommissions submarines, removes their nuclear fuel, and cuts up their hulls. The base also serves as the homeport for active duty Delta IV-class SSBNs and Akula-class SSNs.³¹ The navy plans to build a radioactive waste dump on the city’s outskirts. A large number of the city’s citizens oppose the dump. Unlike under Soviet rule, however, local citizens have organized against it. Two former Soviet Navy officers are leading the city’s challenge against the government. Yevgeny Burakov and Vladimir Mustyan were both political officers in the Soviet Navy. Their arguments are classic examples of the “Not in My Backyard” phenomenon: “This waste site has nothing to do with protecting the country. And that is why it should be placed as far away as possible from any populated area.”³²

³¹ Nilsen, *Bellona Report Number 2*, section 4.6.

³² Patrick E. Tyler, “Russia’s North: Politics and Nuclear Junk are Hot,” *The New York Times*, 23 Feb 2000, 8.

2. Democracy and Open Society

The Federal Security Service (FSB, successor to the KGB in counter-intelligence and internal security) has continued to operate as it did under the Soviet Union. While attempting to monitor the political unrest in Gadzhiyevo and other Kola Peninsula closed cities (events discussed above), security services personnel blocked the research efforts by reporters. Although the cities are “closed” to the public, these journalists were not attempting to enter the cities. They were trying to arrange interviews with local leaders on roads outside the area. The situation is no different in the Pacific Fleet. The government has blocked foreign contractor employees from entering cities they needed to enter to do their jobs.³³

This type of response has continued following the *Kursk* disaster. The *Kursk*—an Oscar II-class cruise missile submarine—was lost in August 2000. The exact cause of the disaster is still unknown. Most Western experts believe an internal explosion set off a chain of events that caused the *Kursk* to sink. This is the first major naval disaster Russia has suffered since the collapse of the Soviet Union. For this reason it is a useful case study to examine what has changed in Russia since the Soviet Union’s collapse.

Not only is the FSB investigating possible foreign involvement, it is also harassing Russian citizens. Taxi drivers in and around Murmansk spoke about the situation with reporters. Whenever they drove the families of *Kursk* victims around the

³³ Russell Working, “International Business; Radioactive Waste and Unpaid Bills,” *The New York Times*, 1 January 2000, accessed via Lexis-Nexis, accessed 12 May 2000.

area, FSB agents followed them. “It’s like the ten years since the Soviet Union collapsed never happened,” one driver said.³⁴

The Russian Navy’s behavior during the *Kursk* disaster demonstrated how not to interact with the press. Navy officials’ conduct during the disaster worsened relations between ordinary Russians and the navy. The navy leadership did a poor job of managing and distributing information during the crisis. Almost every newspaper report, both foreign and domestic, quoted a “source within the navy ministry,” a “source inside Northern Fleet headquarters,” or a “source in the navy press office.” They all released different stories. Officials relayed some information as known facts before they could possibly know the truth. Official sources contradicted each other.

One of the most glaring examples of this phenomenon deals with explaining how the *Kursk* was lost. During the crisis, explanations came in many forms, from many sources. Early in the crisis, the military reported that there was another large object on the sea floor next to the *Kursk*. Further searches failed to find this object, which by all descriptions was another—presumably foreign—submarine. Soon there were reports that rescue units had sighted a floating green and white communications buoy. The navy quickly reported that British Royal Navy submarines use green and white striped communications buoys. After the initial sighting, no one saw the buoy again. Later,

³⁴ Charles Digges, “Families of Sailors Angered by Silence,” *The St. Petersburg Times*, 18 August 2000 [http] Available online: www.sptimes.ru/secur/595/top/top_families.htm, [Accessed 30 April 2001].

searchers claimed to have found a piece of a foreign submarine on the seabed next to the *Kursk*. The facts never confirmed these “discoveries.”³⁵

Russian authorities failed to provide reliable information. Reports originally said that communications were in progress, surface vessels were supplying oxygen and fuel, and rescue operations were underway. On the first day of the accident, one source inside the Northern Fleet press office even said that it was only a matter of hours before they would raise the *Kursk*. The date of the last communication changed from 15 August to 16 August, and then 14 August.³⁶

Press conferences rapidly became a fiasco. Often the officer assigned to brief the press got so frustrated he simply pled ignorance, and left. Other officials, when questioned by family members, told them to go to the press because reporters knew more than the press office representatives.³⁷

One of the first press releases the navy issued read as follows:

³⁵ “Object Resembling Foreign Submarine Part found Near *Kursk*,” *Interfax*, 21 August 2000, accessed via Lexis-Nexis, accessed 24 October 2000; “Northern Fleet HQ Denies Foreign Sub Fragment Found Near *Kursk*,” *RIA* Russian News Agency, 22 August 2000, provided by *BBC* Summary of World Broadcasts, 14 August 2000, accessed via Lexis-Nexis, accessed 25 October 2000.

³⁶ It is still not clear when, or if, communications ever existed. What is thought to have been Morse code may have been the hull settling. “Sounds Heard from *Kursk* Crew until 14th August,” *ITAR-TASS*, 21 August 2000, provided by BBC Worldwide Monitoring 21 August 2000, accessed via Lexis-Nexis 24 October 2000; Denis Pinchuk, “Operation Planned to Move Submarine to Shallow Waters,” *TASS*, 16 August 2000, accessed via Lexis-Nexis 31 October 2000.

³⁷ Charles Digges, “What Will Putin Learn From Media Circus?” *The St Petersburg Times*, 25 August 2000, [http] Available online: www.sptimes.ru/secur/597/top/top_what.htm, [Accessed 30 April 2001].

There has been a malfunction on board [the *Kursk*], forcing the submarine to the seabed in the vicinity of the North Sea Fleet exercise in the Barents Sea waters. Ships and rescue vessels have arrived in the area. They are taking necessary measures to help the submarine. North Fleet Commander Admiral Vyacheslav Popov is in charge of the rescue operation....Contact has already been established with the submarine and its crew.

The press release claimed that the submarine carried no nuclear weapons, that its nuclear reactors had been shut down, and that radiation levels were normal.³⁸ Of this information, the Russian navy could only know the following: that vessels were on the scene and that the *Kursk* carried no nuclear weapons. At this point, communications may have been established, but they consisted of at most Morse code tapped on the hull. Sensors may have been lowered from the surface to detect radiation and the status of the reactors, but no information gathered in this fashion was made public in the government statements.

This sort of information mismanagement may come back to haunt the military and the Russian government as a whole. In the future, many Russians will regard any information released as false unless proven otherwise. The Russian military cannot afford this. During the crisis, polls reported that only two per cent of the public believed the military was being completely honest, showing that to a significant extent the problem already exists.³⁹ A number of reporters have expressed (and some people on the

³⁸ "Russian Submarine in Distress Does Not Carry Nuclear Charges," *ITAR-TASS*, 14 August 2000, provided by *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, 14 August 2000, accessed via Lexis-Nexis, accessed 5 October 2000.

³⁹ Vadim Solovyov, "Tragedy Multiplied by Lies," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 23 August 2000, provided by RUSSICA Information Inc, accessed via Lexis-Nexis, 25 October 2000; Viktor Litovkin, "They are Trying to Sink Submarine Again," *Obshchaya*

street have seconded) the theory that the reason for the multiple stories from “official” sources is that the entire operation is a cover up. Many accounts in the press indicated that the initial *Kursk* media releases from the navy looked like “a disinformation campaign gone wrong.”⁴⁰

These types of public relations situations are new to Russia. The navy must learn how to deal with them if it hopes to win the battle for public opinion. If Russians do not want a strong navy, no amount of political action by the admirals will make it happen. The public will object, and it will prove much harder for the admirals to have their way. While the role of public opinion in the Russian budget process is small, it apparently has some effect. Government leaders may prove unwilling to take political chances on unpopular programs. Public influence will largely depend on the development of Russian democracy.

3. Social and Leadership Conditions in the Navy

Conditions in the navy are also a concern. As noted above, because Russia is a more open society than was the Soviet Union, it is harder to keep secrets. It has become obvious that living conditions in the Russian armed forces are poor. This problem has potentially dire consequences.

Gazeta, 24 August 2000, provided by RUSSICA Information Inc, accessed via Lexis-Nexis, 31 October 2000.

⁴⁰ “The Kursk Hit by a Russian Missile?” *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, 21 August 2000, provided by *WPS Defense and Security* 21 August 2000; “Kremlin may Have ‘Ordered’ False Information on Kursk - Senior Defence Official,” *AVN Military News Agency*, 21 August 2000, provided by BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 21 August 2000; both accessed via Lexis-Nexis 25 October 2000.

In July 2000, forty-two conscripts from the large amphibious assault ship *BDK-101* deserted in the middle of the night. There was no impending deployment or threat of combat. They went straight to the fleet commander's office to seek protection from abuse. The sailors complained that their superiors were beating them, not letting them eat, and forcing them to work in their off duty time.⁴¹

There have been worse incidents. One occurred on board an Akula-class attack submarine in 1998. A conscript seized a weapon from a topside sentry and shot his way down to the torpedo room, killing seven crewmembers and the sentry along the way. Once in the torpedo room, he barricaded himself in but made no demands. When authorities broke in to get him out, he was dead. He had triggered a small explosion while trying to detonate a torpedo, and it killed him. Most speculate that his reasons for doing this were poor conditions and abuse from his superiors.⁴²

Poor living conditions affect most Russian military personnel. Navy veterans who traveled north during the *Kursk* disaster were appalled at conditions. Houses were in dire need of repair. Often there was no hot water.⁴³

One story reported by Ren TV in 1998 is particularly illustrative of the problem:

⁴¹ "Navy Ship Crew Goes AWOL, Complain of Beatings," *Segodnya*, 19 July 2000, reported and Translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 19 July 2000, CEP 20000719000126.

⁴² "Teenage Sailor Kills Eight on Russian Submarine," *Reuters*, 11 September 1998, [http] Available online: csf.colorado.edu/pen-l/sep98/0294.html, [Accessed 12 May 2000].

⁴³ Digges, "Families;" Sergei Larin, "Bereaved Families Dismayed at Conditions in Garrison Town," *Agence France Presse*, 23 August 2000, accessed via Lexis-Nexis 25 October 2000.

Sergey Bobchenkov would have been twenty-six years old now. When he was twenty-five he hanged himself. In his suicide note Sergey explained his act very laconically: “I cannot support my family....” His wife Olga and her little son live in Bryansk with her parents. Olga left Vidyayevo when the child was born. Hot water and heating were often disconnected in the camp. Because of the chronic delays in the payment of salaries, Sergey could not send money to his family.⁴⁴

Bobchenkov is not alone. Some reports indicate that there are as many as five hundred suicides in the Russian military each year. It is not only the poor living conditions, but hazing—*dedovshchina*—as well. Hazing is so severe that across Russia mothers have organized to provide draft-dodging advice and other information to keep their children out of the military.⁴⁵

In the Far East, the situation is both more dire and more embarrassing than elsewhere in Russia for three reasons.

- The Pacific is further from the “center” and more easily ignored;
- The Pacific has suffered frequent changes in both political and military leadership; and
- Commanders who should have been looking after the needs of their sailors were only looking after themselves.

The Pacific Fleet was plagued with admirals who were more concerned with their own financial well-being and standard of living than they were with making ends meet for their sailors. Three recent cases of theft and fraud at the highest levels of the Pacific Fleet involved:

⁴⁴ Yelena Fedorova, “What Happened: Northern Fleet Personnel Reaching ‘Human Fatigue Limit,’” *RenTV*, 29 May 1998, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 4 June 1998, FTS 19980604001463.

⁴⁵ Vanora Bennett, “Pity the Russian Conscript, his Mum is his Best hope of Escape,” *The Times* (London), 30 March 2001, reported by Johnson’s Russia List #5179, 31 March 2001.

- Admiral Igor Khmelnov, former commander of the Pacific Fleet and chief of the Main Naval Staff (a description of his case follows);
- Vice Admiral Vyacheslav Kharnikov, former commander of the Kamchatka flotilla, accused of using 352 million rubles of navy money to build a vacation home on the Black Sea; and
- Rear Admiral Nikolay Germanov, former commander of a submarine task force, accused of selling on the black market fuel provided to his unit.

Admiral Khmelnov's case helps illustrate how social and economic problems are related. Khmelnov took over the Pacific Fleet with a publicly proclaimed order from Moscow: "Admiral Khmelnov will...start by solving the housing shortage. It is an outrage that thousands of officers' families are homeless!"⁴⁶ He had been involved, reports indicate, in corrupt activities since at least 1990. Around that time, Admiral Khmelnov had his son (who himself had been tried three times for theft, fraud, and forgery) fraudulently signed up as a crewmember of a Pacific Fleet ship, so that the Admiral could provide a house for his son's family.

This continued for some years, until the Admiral transferred to Vladivostok. When he left, he gave his official residence to his son. Soon thereafter, the son "privatized" the housing, which belonged to the navy, and received a significant sum of money for it. The son then followed his father to Vladivostok and moved into another furnished apartment in the best neighborhood in the city—at the navy's expense.

Simultaneously, the Admiral decided his lodging was too small, and ordered new quarters constructed in the most "sumptuous" building in Vladivostok. Shortly after the

⁴⁶ Boris Reznik, "The Admirals Have Their Honor, but the Sailors Have Nothing to Eat; the Military Procuracy of the Pacific Fleet has Handed the Cases of Three Top-Level Commanders Over to the Criminal Courts," *Izvestiya*, 25 June 1997, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 19 July 1997, FTS 19970719000164.

navy finished construction, Khmel'nov transferred the apartment's title from the navy to himself.

When Khmel'nov left Vladivostok to take over the main naval staff in Moscow, he moved his wife and daughter to Moscow. He left a farewell gift for his mistress: he renovated her apartment at a cost to the fleet of seventy million rubles. The money came from the Pacific Fleet electric power funds.⁴⁷

Numerous examples show the lack of concern for the common Russian sailor at the highest levels of command. In February 1999, the high command ordered the rations provided to both the army and the navy cut in half. This order—Moscow hoped—would save much needed money. Lower level commanders were not to issue any more food until specifically ordered. When some of these commanders questioned the order and brought it to the attention of the military investigators, Moscow countermanded it. It appears to be more proof that upper level leaders have priorities other than the well-being of their subordinates.⁴⁸

The results are what may be expected. Submarine officers—during Soviet times considered the elite of the navy—are leaving in droves. Many of the reasons stem from the social and economic conditions in the Far East. A seaman working on a fishing trawler earns three times as much as the commander of a submarine. Officers frequently

⁴⁷ Reznik.

⁴⁸ "Military Prosecutor Notes First Ever Drop in Crime in Armed Forces," *NVO*, 15 June 1999, reported and translated by BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 19 June 1999, accessed via Lexis-Nexis 8 March 2001.

report for duty in the morning, and then leave so they can go somewhere else to earn money for their families.⁴⁹

In a 1998 *Izvestia* survey of the army, 72.5 percent of officers and warrant officers reported that pay was irregular. A majority reported two to four month delays as normal. Only 18.5 percent reportedly rely solely on their military pay for subsistence. Over 55 percent report some additional “income.” Pay has improved since 1998, but problems linger. *Izvestia* reported that the military seemed to be relying on “enthusiasts alone.”⁵⁰ Others report that in the navy, “Those who have connections and possibilities leave...after a year or two of service. Those who stay are those who have nowhere to go.”⁵¹ This is not the way to build an effective military. Conditions will have to change if Russia is truly to build an all-volunteer force.

4. Media

Many of the domestic influences are political in nature, and depend on the course the Russian state charts in the near term. In this respect, state policy regarding the media plays a vital role. In the past year, Russian President Vladimir Putin has begun to neutralize the influence of some of the so-called “oligarchs,” men who profited immensely from the privatizations of Soviet state-owned enterprises. Members of this

⁴⁹ “Crisis in Far East Submarine Fleet Viewed,” *NTV*, 19 March 1997, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 19 March 1997, FTS 19970319000758.

⁵⁰ Viktor Litovkin, “Officers are Dissatisfied with Their Life but are in No Hurry to Leave Army,” *Izvestiya*, 14 July 1998, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 15 July 1998, FTS 19980715000180.

⁵¹ Fedorova, “Human Fatigue Limit.”

small group have had exceptional influence because of their wealth and political connections.

A complete discussion of Putin's actions against selected oligarchs is beyond the scope of this thesis. Some important aspects, however, warrant discussion—for instance, Putin's assault on independent media, most vividly apparent in the NTV purchase.

NTV was a privately owned television network controlled by Vladimir Gusinsky's MEDIA-MOST conglomerate. NTV was the newest and most professional nationwide station in Russia. It was also Russia's biggest privately owned television station, reaching over seventy per cent of the country. Adding to its importance and value, NTV has its own satellite. All other national stations rely on aging Soviet-era satellites. This could prove to be a significant advantage in the future as the older satellites fail. Unfortunately, launching this satellite caused significant financial difficulties for NTV. This financial weakness was a major reason that Gazprom, the state-controlled natural gas monopoly, was able to buy NTV.

It appears that the Putin regime is not tolerant of domestic criticism. While Putin does profess that “without free media, Russian democracy cannot survive and civil society cannot flourish,” he has also said that a free press must respect limits. The media cannot become a “mass misinformation instrument for fighting the state.”⁵² Some suggest that Gusinsky's sale of NTV is part of a deal to avoid prosecution by the federal government. Government control of NTV would signify government control of all

⁵² Putin quoted in Floriana Fossato and Anna Kachkaeva “Introduction: The Political Framework,” in *Russian Media Empires VI*, September 2000, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, [http] Available online: www.rferl.org/nca/special/rumedia6/index.html, [accessed 16 October 2000].

significant nationwide television news.⁵³ This would be a disaster for freedom of the press in Russia.⁵⁴ Much of what is still “independent” supports the government’s policies. Table 1 shows the major media outlets, their owners, and their politics.

Name	Owner	Politics
Television		
ORT	State and Roman Abramovich	Pro-Kremlin
RTR	State	Pro-Kremlin
NTV	Gazprom	Pro-Kremlin
TV6	Boris Berezovsky	Independent
Ren TV	UES (electricity monopoly) and Lukoil	Kremlin-leaning
TNT	Gusinsky	Independent
Kultura	State	Pro-Kremlin
Prometei	Gazprom	Pro-Kremlin
Radio		
Radio Rossiya	State	Pro-Kremlin
Radio Mayak	State	Pro-Kremlin
Ekho Moskvyy	Gusinsky	Independent
Print		
<i>Izvestia</i>	Prof-Media (part of Vladimir Potyanin’s Interrosgroup)	Kremlin-leaning
<i>Kommersant</i>	Berezovsky	Wobbling
<i>Komosomolskaya</i>	Prof-Media	Kremlin-leaning
<i>Nezavisimaya Gazeta</i>	Berezovsky	Pro-Kremlin
<i>Noviye Izvestia</i>	Berezovsky	Independent
<i>Vedomosti</i>	Independent Media Group, <i>Financial Times</i> and <i>Wall Street Journal</i>	Independent

Table 1 Major Russian Newspapers, Radio, and Television Stations, Their Owners, and Politics. From: *The Economist*, 21 April 2001, 46.

Many institutions around the world have condemned the sale—often referred to as a “government takeover”—of NTV. Not only has Russia lost an important non-state-controlled media outlet, it has also established the precedent of attacking media outlets

⁵³ The government already controls the two other major national television networks: RTR and ORT. ORT reaches 98 percent of Russia and RTR a similar fraction. *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Sophie Lambroschini, “Russian Officials Increasingly Hostile Toward Media,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 27 July 2000, [http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2000/07/f.ru.000727154756.html], [accessed 17 October 2000].

critical of the regime. This may have a deterrent effect on those who would otherwise oppose the government's policies.

The draft press bill released in mid-2000 substantiates this interpretation. This legislation has the potential to strictly limit the freedom of the press. The bill establishes a special ethics council to evaluate media coverage. It requires news outlets to give equal time to opposing viewpoints, which is extremely difficult because the government's statements are usually either short or non-existent. The bill also criminalizes any interviewer who "takes advantage of [his] interviewee's emotional state whose consequences he does not appreciate."⁵⁵

The Russian government's goals are much wider. The stated goal of the new bill is to prepare Russia for future "information attacks." To support this policy, Russia introduced to the Council of Europe a proposal that, among other things, calls on foreign states to prevent international spread of information that is illegal inside another country.⁵⁶

The NTV takeover and the new draft press bill will reduce the effects of the domestic changes—assuming restrictions on freedom of the press do not provoke revolution in Russia. With less objective reporting the government is moving closer to the controlled environment of the Soviet Union. Russian officials may be able to control

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* As of January 2001, the Duma had not taken any action on this bill. See: "Press Law 'None of President's Business,'" *Strana.ru*, 17 January 2001, [http] Available online: russia.strana.ru/stories/2001/01/17/979731617/979742116.html, [Accessed 24 May 2001].

⁵⁶ Lambroschini.

information flows more effectively than they have in recent years. Information will still leak, but the average Russian's access to it will be strictly limited.

B. INTERNATIONAL CHANGES

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact were momentous occasions in world history. They marked the end of the Cold War era. The bi-polar world of East against West and Soviet Communism against Western Capitalism was no more. This new world presented challenges to the Russian navy's leaders. They could no longer use this conflict to justify their continued existence. Many believed Russia could thrive in the new world with a much smaller navy, designed for a much more limited role. They based their theories on changes in the international order.

This change and other factors (the independence of the former Soviet republics, and changes in foreign navies) combined to drive Russian naval policy in the period following the Cold War.

1. Geography

The geography of Russia is significantly different from that of the Soviet Union. As the Soviet Union fell apart, the constituent republics of the Soviet Union went their separate ways. The central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan) are of only marginal concern to the Russian Navy. The republics in the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) are similarly not of great concern to the Russian Navy. These former Soviet republics concern the Russian Navy

only with respect to the Black and Caspian Seas.. But Russia lost territory important to the navy as well, most critically, Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

a. Fleets

Some of the most significant losses were around the Black Sea. Most of the Soviet Navy's bases there were in and around the Crimean Peninsula. These bases are now in the Republic of Ukraine. Russia has a lease on the main fleet base at Sevastopol. Nevertheless, there are problems. Every time the Black Sea fleet enters or leaves port, it must clear Ukrainian customs.⁵⁷ Authorities in Ukraine have cut off power and water supplies to the bases because of unpaid bills. The Russian Government is still disputing the legal status of the Sea of Azov with Ukraine as well.⁵⁸

The Baltic Sea Fleet suffered significantly from territorial changes. The long coastlines of the three Baltic republics—Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia—are no longer under Moscow's control. The Soviet Union had bases in East Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Russia now has only two naval bases in the Baltic: St Petersburg and Baltiysk (in the Kaliningrad oblast).⁵⁹ Russians are also concerned about the relative decline in power of this fleet compared to others in the region. In Russian

⁵⁷ I. Sidorov, "Impact of Ukrainian Citizens Working for Russian Federation Navy," *Morskoy Sbornik*, August 2000, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1 August 2000, FTS 20000915000266.

⁵⁸ Igor Vladimirovich Kasatonov, "Taking an Ax to the Navy: The Many Years of Efforts of the Builders of the Country's Fighting Fleet May Go Down the Drain," *NVO*, 30 May 1996, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 30 May 1996, FTS 19960530000835.

⁵⁹ Sergey Pashkov, "Russian Navy Poor but Honorable," *RTR*, 2 November 2000, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 2 November 2000, CEP 20001102000436.

eyes, Germany and the Scandinavian countries are potential threats. They are building their navies while Russia's declines.⁶⁰

The Baltic and Black Seas are of special concern to Russia. Both are important export routes. They are also important to Russian tradition. It took centuries of expansion for Imperial Russia to establish year-round access to the open ocean. Without guaranteed access through these two seas, Russia's access to the open ocean will be severely restricted. During winter, ice restricts easy access from the Northern Fleet's home on the Kola Peninsula. The Baltic and the Black Seas are themselves restricted in their access to the open ocean. The Danish Straits restrict egress from the Baltic, and Turkey—historically among the rivals to Russia—could shut off access to the Mediterranean.⁶¹

The Caspian Sea is also a concern. The Soviet Union once dominated this inland sea. Now, not only Russia and Iran, but Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan—all former Soviet Republics—border the Caspian as well. The reports on the size of the oil and natural gas deposits in the region are mixed, but many suggest that the deposits are enormous. There are legal concerns over the status of territorial claims in the Caspian, and the natural resources make this a contentious issue. Some

⁶⁰ Kasatonov, "Taking an Ax to the Navy;" Valery Aleksin, "It is the Economy That Makes the Navy Stable," *NVO*, 28 July 2000, 3, provided by *Defense and Security, WPS*, 2 August 2000, accessed via Lexis-Nexis, accessed 08 March 2001.

⁶¹ "The Principles of Russian Federation Policy in the Field of Naval Activities for the Period Through the Year 2010," (hereafter "Principles") *NVO*, 31 March 2000, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 7 April 2000, CEP 20000407000205; Vladimir Kuroyedov, "Russia's New Naval Strategy is Born: It Must Help Firmly Establish Our Navy on Ocean Expanses," *NVO*, 28 July 2000, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 8 August 2000, CEP 20000808000183.

commentators have considered turning the entire Caspian Flotilla (now subordinate to the Black Sea Fleet) over to the border guards.⁶² In light of the navy's current financial difficulties, it is argued, it might be wise to do this and concentrate on areas that are open to the ocean.

The Pacific Fleet has weakened significantly. The SSBNs in this fleet are the oldest in the navy.⁶³ The other Pacific Fleet vessels are also old and suffer from their location. Shipyards in European Russia built the most modern vessels in the Russian Navy. Most of the repair facilities are in European Russia as well. This is the case of the *Admiral Lazarov*. This Ushakov-class cruiser—built in St. Petersburg—is currently idle at the pier in Vladivostok awaiting repairs. Only shipyards in European Russia can make major repairs. This area has also seen significant political turmoil in civilian government and a rapid turnover of military leadership.⁶⁴

The Northern Fleet is in better shape than the others. It lost no ports during the dissolution of the Soviet empire. It is located in the same region as most of

⁶² Georgi Georgiyevich Kostev, "The Navy in the Millstones of Reform: RF Ministry of Defense Leaders are Inattentive Toward Problems of the Russian Navy," *NVO*, 3-9 October 1997, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 31 October 1997, FTS 19971031000490; "Paper Publishes Fundamental Principles of Naval Policy to 2010," *NVO*, 17 April 2000, provided by BBC Summary of World Broadcasts; accessed via Lexis-Nexis 08 March 2001.

⁶³ Radiy Zubkov, "Uncertain Future of Missile Submarines: The State, Not the Military Department, Should Determine the Fate of Russia's Naval Strategic Forces," *NVO* 11-17 December 1998, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 17 December 1998, FTS19981217000130. They are Delta III class vessels built from 1976-81.

⁶⁴ Kasatonov, "Taking an Ax to the Navy."

Russia's shipbuilding and repair facilities. Most of Russia's operational submarines—including the most modern ones—are part of this fleet.

b. Borders

Soviet-era planning was not concerned with the internal borders of the Soviet Union. This has caused huge problems for the newly independent states. Some states, such as Kazakhstan, have significant oil and natural gas deposits, but inadequate facilities to refine them. Some of the newly independent states only have the infrastructure to be raw material exporters. Russia has not been immune to the problems caused by the realignment of borders following the Soviet Union's collapse. The navy has had difficulties fixing some ships because of this. The factories that produce some of the parts for ships and aircraft are now in foreign countries. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact raised even more concerns. Shipyards in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and communist Poland built some of Russia's ships. The German Democratic Republic no longer exists. Its territory became part of the Federal Republic of Germany (and NATO) in October 1990, while Poland was admitted to NATO in March 1999.⁶⁵

2. World Naval Developments

Russian naval leaders have expressed concern regarding the deterioration of the naval balance of power in critical regions. Russian admirals are concerned that they have not been able to conduct enough nuclear deterrent patrols and out of area operations. In

the opinion of these admirals, some nations are still conducting such operations against Russia, despite the end of the Cold War.⁶⁶

More distressingly, the Russian Navy's strength relative to that of its rivals is in decline. In 1997, Russia considered only eighteen percent of its vessels "ocean going." Russian admirals have stated that if current trends are not reversed, before long the Russian Navy will have only half the combat power of Sweden and one quarter that of Germany in the Baltic, and one half that of Turkey in the Black Sea. In 1997, these admirals stated that Japan already had a three to one advantage over Russia in surface combatants and equality with Russia in the number of attack submarines in the Pacific.⁶⁷ These ratios are probably more unfavorable to Russia today.

Russia still considers the United States and NATO potential adversaries. Russian admirals cite the presence of American submarines carrying precision-guided weapons near—and, in the Russian view, in—Russian territorial waters as a threat. In 1995 Admiral Oleg Yerofeev, then commander of the Northern Fleet, stated that three to four "nuclear-powered attack submarines of these same states [the United States and Britain] are on constant patrol in the waters of the Barents Sea." These U.S. and British

⁶⁵ Radiy Zubkov, "The Navy We Lost: The Russian Navy is Greeting Its Tri-centennial Jubilee Seriously Ill," *NVO*, 1 January 1996, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 28 March 1997, FTS 19970328000664.

⁶⁶ Oleg Yerofeev, "We Must Reform—We Must Not Destroy: The Northern Fleet Must Be Preserved as a Powerful Operational-Strategic Formation," *NVO*, 22 April 1995, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 22 April 1995, FTS 19950422000037.

⁶⁷ Valeri Aleksin, "Russian Navy Enters New Stage of Reforms: Navymen Hope Erroneous Decisions Will be Precluded," *NVO*, 26 July-1 August 1997, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 11 August 1997, FTS 19970811000322.

submarines can launch long-range cruise missiles, Yerofeev declared, “whose impact zone includes hundreds of cities, including Moscow....weapons whose effectiveness can be compared only to nuclear weapons.”⁶⁸

Russian naval leaders contend that the West in general and the United States in particular believe that war is still a valid foreign policy option. The shift in U.S. naval policy away from blue water “fleet-against-fleet” actions to power-projection “fleet-against-shore” actions has caused concern. According to two Russian Navy Captains, “the American military command is considering the possibility of organizing and waging the primary operations right in the offshore waters of the enemy from the very beginning of a war.”⁶⁹ Russia’s relative naval weakness makes U.S. naval doctrine more frightening in Russian eyes. Russia’s naval leaders fear that if the decline of the Russian Navy is not arrested and reversed quickly, Russia will be vulnerable to a debilitating conventional preemptive strike.

Russian reactions to these perceived threats are evident in the doctrinal changes noted below. How seriously Russia perceives this threat (and how likely compared to other conflicts) will determine its effects upon the navy.

⁶⁸ Yerofeev, “We Must Reform—We Must Not Destroy.”

⁶⁹ S. Mezentsev and V. Vostrikov, “New Views on the Application of U.S. and NATO Naval Forces,” *Morskoy Sbornik*, April 1995, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 3 June 1997, FTS 19970603002025. See also M. Boytsov, “The 21st Century and the U.S. Navy,” *Morskoy Sbornik*, July 1995, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1 May 1997, FTS 19970501002143.

C. DOCTRINAL CHANGES

Russia proclaims that it has no enemies. However, the latest military doctrine and National Security Concept reveal certain preoccupations.

The National Security Concept lists the causes of the “fundamental threats in the international sphere” to Russian security, including:

- the desire of some states and international associations to diminish the role of existing mechanisms for ensuring international security, above all the United Nations and the OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe];
- the strengthening of military-political blocs and alliances, above all NATO’s eastward expansion; [and]
- the possible emergence of foreign military bases and major military presences in immediate proximity to Russian borders.⁷⁰

With these as the potential threats, doctrinally the future may seem to offer great tasks for the Russian Navy. It appears that while the National Security Concept gives lip service to the new “multi-polar” world environment, Russian military authorities are really looking at the world in the same East-West manner as before. For potential conflict with a distant sea power, a strong navy would seem vital.

The Russian Maritime Policy supports these views. According to “The Principles of Russian Federation Policy in the Field of Naval Activities for the Period Through the Year 2010,” among Russia’s key interests in the World Ocean are:

- excluding discriminatory actions in regard to it [Russia] or its allies on the part of individual states or military-political blocs; [and]

⁷⁰ “Russia’s National Security Concept,” *NVO*, 14 January 2000, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 16 January 2000, FTS 20000116000515, section 3. The government approved this policy shortly after the NATO air campaign in Kosovo. Its impact is clear. More on the Balkans is in a following section.

- disallowing the dominance of any state or military-political bloc in those expanses of the world ocean which have significance for realizing the Russian Federation's state interests, particularly in contiguous seas.⁷¹

The United States and NATO are evidently the targets of these points. Russian naval leaders also fear that they are falling behind their competitors. They believe that there have been changes in “the ratio of naval forces not in favor of the Russian Federation; improvements in the combat abilities of naval groupings of the leading foreign states,” and that “Russian naval arms [are] trailing behind qualitative and quantitative indicators of the arms of foreign states at an increased rate.”⁷² The new maritime policy conveys the impression that Russia is on the brink of naval disaster.

The doctrine indicates that Russia is extremely concerned about instability in its border regions and the “near abroad:” the former Soviet republics. It sees threats to its security from “economic, demographic and cultural-religious expansion by neighboring states into Russian territory, and increased activity by cross-border organized crime and also by foreign terrorist organizations.”⁷³

Russia's Military Doctrine goes into more detail. On its list of major threats to security are the following:

- illegal activities by extremist nationalist, religious, separatist, and terrorist movements, organizations, and structures aimed at violating the unity and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation and destabilizing the domestic political situation in the country;

⁷¹ “Principles,” paragraph 6(a).

⁷² “Principles.”

⁷³ “Russia's National Security Concept.”

- the planning, preparation, and implementation of operations aimed at disrupting the functioning of federal organs of state power and attacking state, economic, or military facilities, or facilities related to vital services or the information infrastructure;
- the creation, equipping, training, and functioning of illegal armed formations;...[and]
- organized crime, terrorism, smuggling, and other illegal activities on a scale threatening the Russian Federation's military security.⁷⁴

This list suggests that Russia is severely concerned with the conditions along its southern border. The two wars with Chechen “separatists” are part of this concern. There is a smoldering conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Relations with Ukraine and Turkey—while now good—could sour. The legal situation regarding the Caspian Sea and its oil and gas reserves is unsettled. Russians fear that the Taliban will spread its brand of Islamic fundamentalism up from Afghanistan through the newly independent central Asian states—which are Russia's allies in the Commonwealth of Independent States—and into Russia itself. The writings of influential Russian politicians reinforce this outlook.⁷⁵

Russians perceive these “near abroad” and associated issues as real threats to Russia's security. In none of them would a strong sea-going navy be of much use. If Moscow continues to see such conflicts as the main threats, the Russian Navy will continue to suffer. The debate will center on what is the true threat to the Russian

⁷⁴ “Russian Federation Military Doctrine, Approved by Russian Federation Presidential Edict of 21 April 2000,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 22 April 2000, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 24 April 2000, CEP 20000424000171, paragraph 6.

⁷⁵ For example Alexei Arbatov, “Russian Military Doctrine and Strategic Nuclear Forces to the Year 2000 and Beyond,” Paper prepared for the conference: Russian

Federation: foreign military-political alliances, or ethnic separatism and instability on the southern borders. The results of this debate will help determine which path the government selects for the Russian Navy: coastal defense and a small force, or a larger force for operations on the open ocean. The latter course would evidently imply greater investments in the submarine fleet.

D. THE BALKANS

Generals have told me that we must build a monument to Clinton because the campaign over Kosovo drastically changed political attitudes here. Now there is no more opposition to the idea that Russia should restore its military potential.

—Alexander Zhlin, Russian military correspondent.⁷⁶

This statement regarding NATO's military operation against Yugoslavia demonstrates how critical it was to Russian military thinking. Russians interpreted NATO's intervention in the Kosovo conflict as proof of two of their beliefs:

- NATO is dangerous, and has not changed its anti-Russian ways; and
- NATO operations in Kosovo set a dangerous precedent for interventionary operations.

Other issues surrounding the Kosovo campaign also soured NATO-Russian relations. One of the major concerns—stated in both the military doctrine and National Security Concept—was that by not going to the United Nations Security Council for approval of

Defense Policy Towards the Year 2000, 26 March 1997, [http] Available online: www.mis.nps.navy.mil/nsa/Arbatov.html, [Accessed 22 January 2001].

⁷⁶ Zhlin quoted in Stephen J. Blank, *Threats to Russian Security: The View from Moscow* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2000), 1.

the Kosovo operation, the NATO allies circumvented Russia's interpretation of international law. Russians see their importance in the world as directly related to their seat on the United Nations Security Council. Russia can no longer rely on the Warsaw Pact to bolster its power. Because of its faltering economy, Russia's role as a superpower now lies only with its seat on the U.N. Security Council and its nuclear arsenal. Moscow will likely view any threat to either of these assets very seriously.

There is also the fear that this type of operation may be just the first of its kind:

...It is not unlikely that NATO could use or even organize crises similar to that in Kosovo in other areas of the world to create an excuse for military intervention[,] since the "policy of double standards" where the bloc's interests dictate the thrust of policy (the possibility of the use of military force in Kosovo against the Yugoslav Army and simultaneous disregard for the problem of genocide faced by the Kurds in Turkey, [and] the manifestation of "concern" at the use of military force in the Dniester Region, Chechnya and Nagorno-Karabakh) is typical of the alliance's actions.⁷⁷

Some Russians fear that NATO might try to conduct a Kosovo-type operation against them.

At first glance, one might assume that the lower Russian-NATO and Russian-American relations sink, the better off the Russian submarine force will be in the competition for military budget resources. The recent espionage developments and Russian reactions to U.S. missile defense proposals (among other issues) indicate that political conditions may be improving for the Russian submarine force. Statements such as the following from Igor Sergeev, then Defense Minister, however, do not bode well:

“We must concentrate our military in central Asia because of military instability caused by the Taliban and others.”⁷⁸

E. ECONOMIC ISSUES

There can be no doubt that the economic decline of Russia has affected the navy. Of all the causes of the Russian Navy’s plight, economics have had the largest role. The economic decline has had numerous effects:

- Wage arrears,
- Reduced ship construction,
- Limited operations,
- Lower standards of living,
- Missed maintenance, and
- Increased competition from other military services for scarce resources.

This list is far from comprehensive. The problems posed by these issues are not simple. They overlap and have a significantly detrimental influence on readiness and combat capability.

1. Budgets

The Russian defense budgeting process is significantly different from that in the United States. In fact, the concept of a defense budget is different as well. Normally a

⁷⁷ Moscow, *NVO* 6 November 1998, FBIS-SOV, 9 November 1998, quoted in *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁸ Sergeev quoted in Teruaki Ueno, “North Korea could cut military force—Russia’s Sergeev,” *Reuters*, 29 November 2000, reported by Johnson’s Russia List #4660, 29 November 2000.

defense budget consists of items such as the following: personnel wages, operations, procurement, military construction, maintenance, training, and research and development. Some states include recruiting, pensions, civil defense, and environmental clean up. The Russian budget is different. Officially, the Russian military budget contains seven items:

- Maintenance of armed forces,
- Procurement,
- Research and Development,
- Military construction,
- Pensions,
- Military projects within the Ministry of Atomic Energy, and
- Maintenance of mobilization capacities.⁷⁹

Most experts regard this list as insufficient. Reality is different from what the law mandates. Most experts add the following five categories at a minimum:

- Budgets of other federation ministries and state agencies that field their own quasi-military units (24 “mini” armies such as the railroad troops, internal ministry troops, etc.),
- Disarmament in compliance with international arms control treaties,
- Federal assistance for conversion of defense enterprises to civilian purposes,
- Military assistance to fellow Commonwealth of Independent States members, and
- Other smaller expenses.⁸⁰

The proliferation of armed forces outside the Ministry of Defense is a result of political infighting in Russia and attempts to weaken the political power of the military services.⁸¹ This would be roughly equivalent to the federal government of the United

⁷⁹ Boris Jelezov, *Defense Budgeting and Civilian Control of the Military in the Russian Federation*, ed., T. P. M. Barnett and H. H. Gaffney (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 1997), 9-11.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ “Russian Military Reforms Come Unstuck as Nuclear Deterrence Gains Upper Hand,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 12 January 2000, provided by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 13 January 2000, accessed via Lexis-Nexis, 15 March 2001.

States funding all state national guards, the coast guard, a significant portion of state and local police forces, and a good portion of many civilian industries through the defense budget.

The budgeting process is different as well. Like the United States Congress, the Russian legislature is responsible for approving the budget. The budget results from negotiations and debate both in the parliament and the Security Council of the Russian Federation. The Security Council consists of the President, the Secretary of the Security Council, the chairmen of both chambers of the federal assembly, and the Prime Minister. The Security Ministers (the Defense Minister and the Interior Minister), the Minister of Foreign Trade, and the Minister of Finance usually attend the meetings by invitation.⁸² On the surface, this is similar to the process in the United States. The executive branch develops a draft budget that the legislature amends and approves.

Once it approves the defense budget, however, the parliament loses all control. The money goes *en bloc* to the government. The Security Council and the President, as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, have exclusive control over how to distribute that money. Technically the Security Council can distribute this money any way it likes without parliamentary oversight. After the budget passes, the Security Council retains the right to amend it without the consent of parliament.⁸³ This arrangement severely limits the influence of legislators in military decision-making. Nominally, they have the power of the purse, but in reality, their importance is miniscule. This arrangement greatly restricts parliamentary oversight of the defense budget and hence defense policy.

⁸² Jelezov, 40.

⁸³ Jelezov, 44.

Reformers in Parliament have little ability to influence policy, leaving reform in the hands of bureaucrats.

A good snapshot of the navy's financial straits is the year 1999. The defense budget that year allocated the navy 29.1 percent of its declared requirements. Of this, the navy received only 70.6 percent. The result was that in 1999 the Russian Navy received only 20.5 percent of its declared need.⁸⁴

Navy size halved over the period from 1991 to 1999.⁸⁵ This mitigates the funding losses somewhat, but not completely. "Support for Forces" (pay to sailors) for 1999 went up by 17.9 percent over 1998; however, it is only 39.1 percent of the 1993 level. Payments for "Arms and Military Equipment" (including procurement and repairs to industrial infrastructure) dropped 33.8 percent from 1998 and were only 13.2 percent of the 1992 level. "Research and Development" went up 3.2 times compared to the 1998 level but was only 31.3 percent of the 1992 level. "Support for Major Construction and Repairs" was 17.7 percent of the 1992 level. This last item has been increasing since 1997, but most of the money has gone to address the housing shortage, not to build and repair ships. The overall trend has been to shift money away from operations and acquisition and towards support for the troops: in either pay or improved standards of living.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ I. Shevchenko, "No Money—But the Fleet Lives," *Morskoy Sbornik*, 6 June 2000, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 14 July 2000, CEP 20000714000322.

⁸⁵ Aleksin, "Navy Enters New Stage of Reform."

⁸⁶ Shevchenko.

This is a dangerous trend for the navy. While conditions for the average Russian sailor may seem to be improving, pulling money away from operations and maintenance makes each vessel and aircraft in the navy less effective and less safe. The effect on combat capability is obvious. If the crews do not train at sea, their chances of surviving—much less effectively conducting—combat operations are that much lower.

2. Direct Results of the Financial Crisis

Combat is not the only danger. Some Russian experts speculate that one possible cause of the *Kursk* disaster was crew error. Russian submarine crews spend the majority of their time in port. There is not enough money to send them to sea regularly. Neglected training has hurt the Russian Navy in the past. When the submarine *Komsomolets* sank off Norway in 1989, training deficiencies significantly hurt the crew's chances for survival. Rear Admiral Senatsky (former head of the Russian Navy rescue service) has described what happened:

[Life rafts] were located within the conning tower, and had yellow-colored openings marked "life raft." To release one, you had to pull a lever in the opening, and the raft would be automatically disengaged. But when the accident happened, no member of the crew knew how to handle the life rafts. The chief mate ordered his men to use crowbars to knock them out. And so they did – knocking out both the rafts and the automatic operation system.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Senatsky quoted in Marina Kotelnikova, "They Go To Fight, Not to Save Themselves," *Moscow News*, 23 August 2000, accessed via Lexis-Nexis 25 October 2000.

Vladimir Putin has summed up the conditions in the navy. These accidents will continue to happen when “pilots do not fly and sailors do not go to sea.”⁸⁸

American experts agree with this sentiment. They have written for years that Russian training deficiencies risked an accident like the *Kursk* disaster. The Russian Navy routinely conducts complex, multi-ship exercises after long slack periods. The crews have little chance to get used to operating ships and submarines under normal conditions, before they have to do it under arduous conditions in company with many other ships.⁸⁹

If money for maintenance is short, each time a submarine, ship, or aircraft leaves port, it is putting the lives of those onboard and nearby at risk. Every year the government delivers insufficient funds for maintenance the situation gets worse. More and more money will be required in the future to repair the ships. Many will probably never go to sea again.⁹⁰

The navy has tried to deal with the budget crises through targeted cuts in ship numbers. The navy’s leaders realized that with declining budgets they could not maintain

⁸⁸ Putin quoted in Vasiliy Zakharov, “The Andreyevskiy Flag will Remain in the World Ocean,” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 18 August 2000, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 22 August 2000, CEP 20000714000322.

⁸⁹ Larin; Kotelnikova; Ian Brodie, “Lack of Training Caused Concern,” *The Times* (London), 17 August 2000, accessed via Lexis-Nexis, 24 October 2000.

⁹⁰ Conscription itself may be at fault. A crew of conscripts has little experience. Submarines are very unforgiving vessels. Without experienced crewmembers, a series of small problems could have snowballed into a major catastrophe. USS *Greenville*’s collision with the Japanese fishing vessel *Ehime Maru* is a good example of potential problems. *Greenville* had a relatively senior crew, but still collided with the surface vessel when a number of problems, that while in and of themselves small, combined to cause a disaster.

the same force level they had under the Soviet Union. They therefore kept the most modern and capable vessels in service, and decommissioned the older ones. This left the navy a battle force with an average age between twelve and seventeen years. This is a relatively “young” and capable force on paper. This is not the whole story, however. The true measure of combat readiness depends on more than ship ages and ship types. With reductions in training, maintenance, and repair budgets, the service life of ships will go down, as will their combat readiness. According to Admiral Nikolai Konorev, the Deputy Chief of the Navy Main Command, the navy’s combat power on the open ocean has declined by forty to fifty percent since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Without a significant increase in funding, Konorev added, the navy in 2010 will have only one hundred to one hundred twenty ships in five theaters.⁹¹

What the admirals have selected to cut is also an issue. There have been complaints that the admirals want to command a fleet that “looks good,” despite operational shortcomings. They have kept the “high-profile” ships—surface combatants and submarines—at the expense of needed support capability. The first systems neglected were the emergency and logistics systems. These choices can have devastating consequences. During the *Kursk* rescue operation, no Russian rescue vessel was able to make it to the scene. While some rescue ships were on the active list, they were not in adequate material condition to make the voyage.⁹²

⁹¹ Konorev quoted in Aleksin, “Economy.”

⁹² Vadim Solovyev, “A Lie Which has Led to Tragedy,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 18 August 2000, 1, provided by *Defense and Security WPS*, 21 August 2000, accessed via Lexis-Nexis 24 October 2000.

This type of decision-making is not new. It was common during Soviet times as well. From the beginning of the Soviet submarine force, the emphasis was always on operations and construction, which got priority over maintenance and overhauls. It frequently took five to eight years between the deployment of a new technology on a submarine and the construction of the facilities necessary to maintain it. Safety and maintaining the quality of the environment fell even lower on the table of priorities. The Soviet Navy deployed its first nuclear-powered vessel in 1958. The first facility to handle radioactive waste was not established until the mid-1960s. Handling and maintenance facilities for the Typhoon-class SSBNs (introduced in 1981) have yet to be completed.⁹³ With the lack of money even for operations, it should be no surprise that the Russian Navy still ignores support facilities.

Lack of money for fuel forces the navy to routinely cancel operations. The disaster of the *Kursk* has only made things worse. It forced the cancellation of the Mediterranean patrol planned for 2000. The navy could not afford to replace the fuel used during the search, rescue, and recovery efforts. The extra sea time expended by ships that had been scheduled to travel south resulted in their being overdue for shipyard repairs. The recovery effort itself also consumed much of the money needed for the Mediterranean cruise. The weak economic condition of the Russian Navy cannot deal with unanticipated costs. The Pacific Fleet, for example, had to cancel its 2000 Navy Day ship parade because there was not enough fuel.⁹⁴

⁹³ Nilsen, *Bellona Report Number 2*, section 4.1.

⁹⁴ Mikhail Khodarenok, "The Refusal to Demonstrate the Flag in the Mediterranean Sea Testifies to Russia Having Turned into a Second Rate Sea Power," *NVO*, 20 October 2000, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information

Financial conditions have gotten so bad that Russia has gone to desperate measures to fund its navy. It is common for ship crews to subsidize their own budgets. Many do this by growing food and fishing to provide rations. Officers and men alike must “moonlight”—that is, undertake remunerative work outside their official naval employment—to make money for their own subsistence.

Regional governments have gotten involved. It is a common for a region to subsidize a ship’s budget. The Kursk regional government began to subsidize the submarine *Kursk* in 1997. Almost all of Russia’s submarines have such sponsors. In addition to money, the Kursk regional government arranged to send its best conscripts to the submarine. The regional government constructed housing for the *Kursk*’s officers and men. Kursk area resorts provided vacations to sailors from the *Kursk*. Moscow’s mayor, Yuri Luzkhov, pledged to help fund construction of the *Yuri Dolgoruki*, the new design SSBN, as well as to pay for fuel for the Northern Fleet.⁹⁵

Similarly, the Mordovia and Archangel regions have begun collecting money to repair the cruiser *Admiral Ushakov*. The navy originally planned to scrap the ship because there was not enough money to repair her. Public outcry led the navy to change the plan and the government assigned one billion rubles for her repair. The repairs will

Service, 20 October 2000, CEP 20001026000452; “Russian Pacific Fleet Cancels Navy Day Parade Due to Lack of Fuel,” *NTV*, 30 July 2000, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 30 July 2000, CEP 20000730000022.

⁹⁵ Cristina Chuen and Michael Jasinski, “Russia’s Blue Water Blues,” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January/February 2001, 65.

still require at least another three billion rubles. The regions have begun to accept donations from citizens to save the ship.⁹⁶

These are positive developments that demonstrate the public's support for the navy. However, they will not provide the answer to the navy's financial problems. The answer must come from the federal government. Only it has the capability to provide the necessary resources.

3. Recovery?

Since 1998, there have been promising signs in the Russian economy. In 2000, average per capita income in Russia rose 32.5 percent. The recovery is the result of three main factors:

- The rising price for oil and gas on the world market,
- The payment of wage and pension arrears, and the
- 1998 devaluation of the ruble.⁹⁷

The first factor is the most important. Natural resources are the foundation of the Russian economy. Energy exports (crude oil and natural gas) made up 48.2 percent of Russia's exports in 1999. Combined with metals and timber products, these raw materials make up over two thirds of Russia's total exports.⁹⁸ While high oil prices have

⁹⁶ "Philanthropic Fund Setup to Save *Admiral Ushakov* Cruiser," *NVO*, 1 April 1999, reported by BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 6 May 1999, accessed via Lexis Nexis 8 March 2001.

⁹⁷ *Transition Report Update: Economic Transition in Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States, and the CIS* (London: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2000), 74.

⁹⁸ *Russian Economic Trends*, vol.9 (no.1, 2000), table 36 on page 109. *Russian Economic Trends* is prepared by economists at the Russian European Centre for Economic

helped Russia's economy, there is no guarantee that they will remain high. Oil prices are notoriously unstable. A decline in their market value could devastate the Russian economy.

Income derived from raw material exports helped the Russian government repay wage and pension arrears. This in turn helped stimulate the economy by putting money into workers' hands, and allowing them to make purchases with cash instead of barter. The devaluation gave Russians more incentive to purchase from domestic producers because the prices of imported goods increased. This stimulated domestic production, furthering the growth of the economy.

A different aspect of the economic downturn relates to the defense industrial base. In the past several years, Russia has not ordered, paid for, or had delivered many new ships. Along with the problems this causes for the Russian Navy today, it has negative implications for its future. If the shipyards that build submarines do not get work, the workers will go to other industries. It will take years to rebuild the perishable skills needed in submarine construction. This very problem was a concern in the United States at the end of the Cold War. The Russians are concerned about the problem, but seem to be developing a solution along lines different from those pursued by the United States. The Russians appear to be trying to keep the shipyards in operation by building for the

Policy (RECEP), which is supported by the European Union's TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) Program, in cooperation with the Working Center for Economic Reform, Government of the Russian Federation.

foreign market. This may not generate enough income to solve the navy's financial problems, but it may keep the shipyards active and their workers' skills current.⁹⁹

4. Economic Side Effects

Since funds are short, competition for them is keen. One of the most public examples of this battle does not involve the navy directly, but is illustrative of the problem. The Chief of the General Staff, General Anatolyi Kvashnin, and the then-Defense Minister, Marshal Igor Sergeev, had a very public dispute over the direction of military reform in 1997-2001. Sergeev, a former commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces, pushed for drastic cuts to the ground forces and more reliance on strategic nuclear forces for Russia's defense. General Kvashnin, an army general, countered that the strategic nuclear forces were too large, and that defense investments should center on the ground forces. This conflict mirrors a conflict among civilian experts about the same issues. The replacement of Sergeev by a new minister of defense, Sergey Ivanov, in March 2001 has not resolved this debate over military priorities.

According to Nikolai Sokov, the two schools of nuclear strategy in Russia are the maximalists and the minimalists. The minimalists hold that nuclear weapons play only a small role in national defense and foreign policy. They are useful for deterring both

⁹⁹ "Kremlin Defense Industrial Reform?" *Monitor*, Volume 7 Issue 83, Jamestown Foundation, 30 April 2001, [http] Available online: www.jamestown.org/pubs/view/mon_007_083_000.htm, [Accessed 30 April 2001]; Aleksey Lyashchenko, "Without the Reformer's Itch: RF First Deputy Trade Minister Lieutenant-General Grigoriy Rapota Discusses the Problems of Military-Technical Cooperation With Foreign States," *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 22 April 2000, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 5 July 2000, CEP 20000705000301.

nuclear strikes and large scale conventional attacks against the homeland. Minimalists view nuclear weapons as a form of national insurance policy. They have an important but limited role. Russia should therefore have a reasonably sized nuclear arsenal. In contrast, maximalists tend to put more emphasis on nuclear weapons and to assign them more roles because they hold that nuclear weapons can be useful in a variety of conflicts, both global and regional. They fear that if Russia's nuclear arsenal is too small,

the United States would use its *theoretical* ability to defeat Russia in a nuclear war to chip away at its interests and geopolitical positions. Nuclear inferiority would weaken Russia's ability to resist because it would not be able to up the ante in an (inevitable?) brinkmanship game.¹⁰⁰

Thus, according to the maximalists, Russia needs a large nuclear arsenal to guarantee its international position.

While cloaked in the rhetoric of national defense, this dispute has been truly a battle for money. The Soviet days of disproportionate defense spending are gone. All the services now realize that they are in competition with the others for a much more limited defense budget. The amount of money available is smaller, so the competition is keener. When one service is the "focus" of national defense, the others will suffer. This situation is particularly ominous for the navy, which has historically been a "poor relation" in the Ministry of Defense.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Nikolai Sokov, "Modernization of Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Russia," Program on New Approaches to Russian Security, Working Paper No. 6, May 1998, [http] Available online: www.armscontrol.ru/start/publications/ns9812.htm, [Accessed 22 January 2001].

¹⁰¹ Kostev.

The navy has not been immune to these battles. In late 1998, Colonel General Vladimir Yakovlev, Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Missile Troops, proposed that Russia set up a Joint Main Command for strategic deterrence. This plan would subordinate the nuclear forces of the air force and the navy to a unified command. The unified command would be set up and commanded by the commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Missile Troops. This proposal was obviously threatening to the autonomy and status of navy and air force commanders.¹⁰² With the recent leadership changes in the Ministry of Defense, there appears little chance of this proposal's adoption.

F. THE EFFECTS

Overall, the effects of these changes have been acute. The Russian submarine force has shrunk. It has struggled to maintain an operational capability. Its numbers have dropped by more a factor of five. The quality of life for those serving—never good by NATO standards—has gotten worse. The following figures summarize the results of these effects. Not only has the number of active submarines fallen—from 365 in 1984 to 277 in 1991 to around 64 in 2000—submarine construction has plummeted as well—from 15 in 1984 to 27 in 1991 to 6 in 2000. Low construction rates alone are not an

¹⁰² “Military Split Over Ways to Reorganize Strategic Nuclear Forces,” *NVO*, 5 March 1999; “Commander Calls for Strategic Deterrence Forces with Joint Command,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 16 December 1998; both provided by BBC Summary of World Broadcasts; accessed via Lexis-Nexis 08 March 2001; “Russian Navy Command Satisfied with Fleet’s Nuclear Forces,” *RIA*, 4 July 2000, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 04 July 2000, CEP 20000704000254.

indication of impending disaster. Low construction rates combined with low maintenance rates and a distinct lack of political will are.¹⁰³

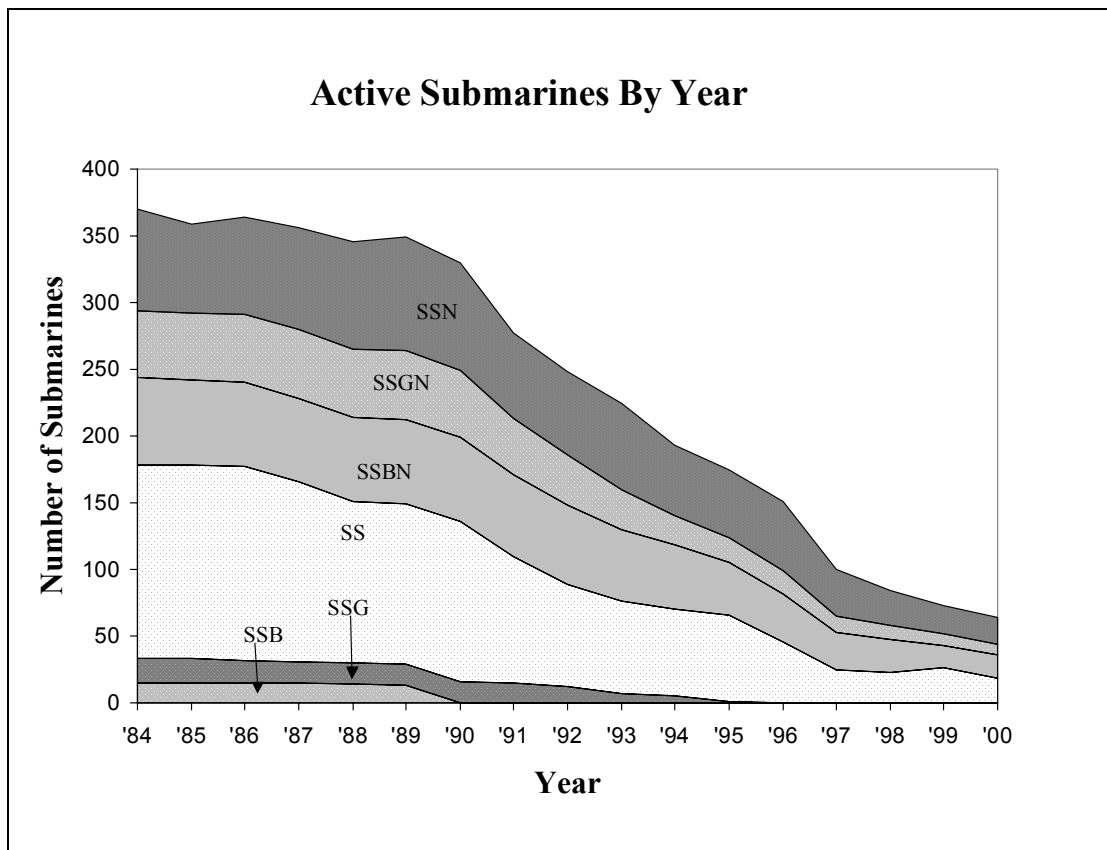


Figure 1 Active submarines by Year, 1984-2000.

¹⁰³ *Jane's Fighting Ships* (London: Jane's Publishing Company, Limited, 1984-2000). *Jane's Fighting Ships* is the source for all years to maintain continuity and comparability in the data. Some of the data are questionable, however. No reason is provided by *Jane's* for the jump in SSN construction around 1990. The most plausible explanation is that the editors at *Jane's* were adjusting to new information that became available as the Cold War ended, and expressing limited confidence in its accuracy, with due qualifications. This is supported by *Jane's* frequent use of "?" to denote construction before this time. If this is the case, the pre-1990 numbers may be significantly higher.

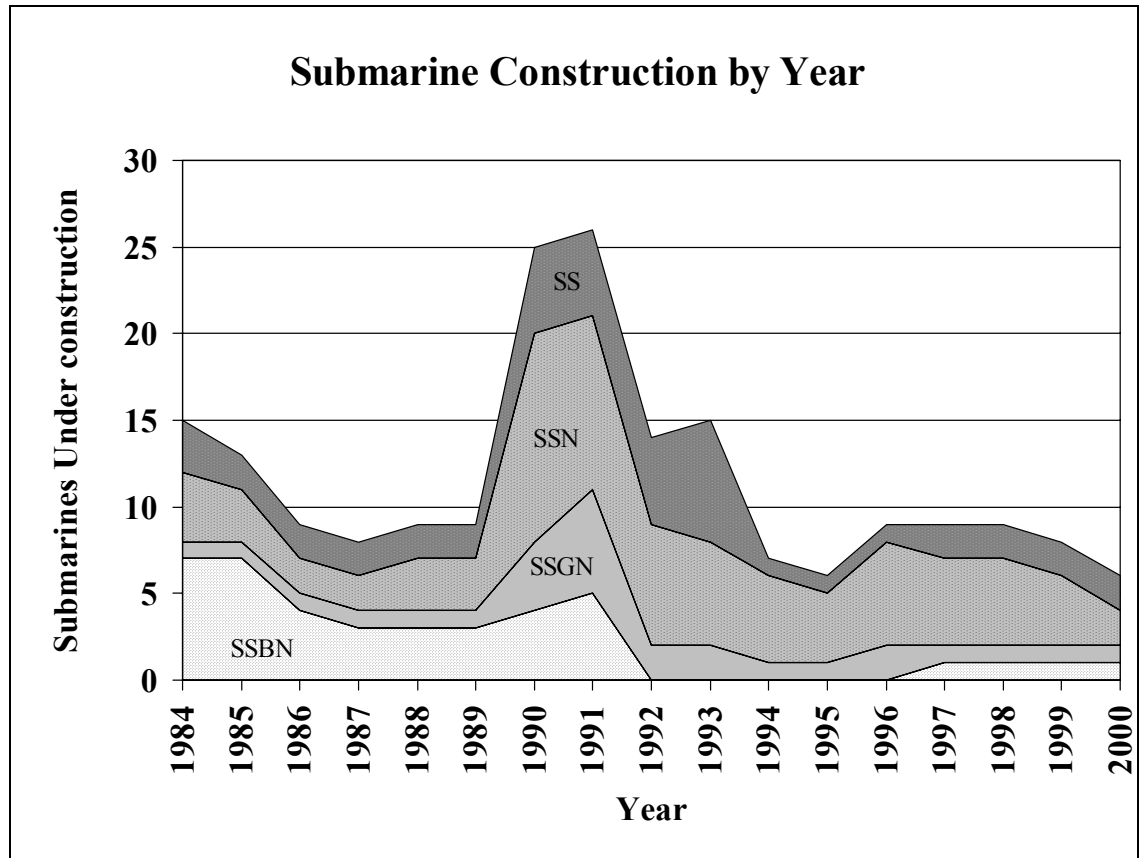


Figure 2 Submarine Construction by Year, 1984-2000.

A side effect of the size reduction has been modernization. The composition of the submarine force is much more modern than it was in 1984, or even 1990, as measured by the average age of the remaining submarines. Outdated classes are gone. All the non-nuclear-powered ballistic missile and cruise missile submarines have been retired. The balance has shifted towards larger, more capable, nuclear-powered submarines. Figure 3 depicts these changes.

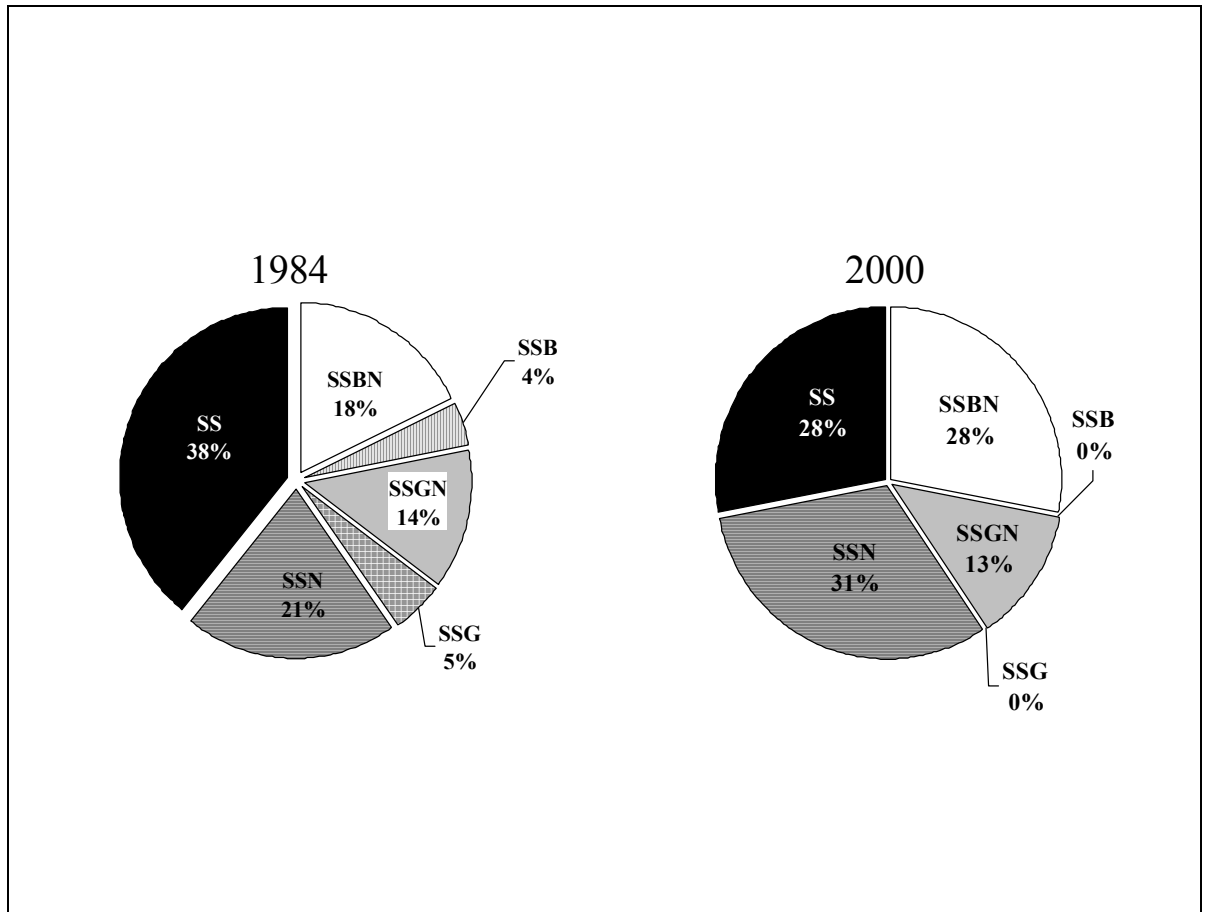


Figure 3 Submarine Force Composition, 1984 and 2000.

IV. FUTURE MISSIONS AND POLICY TRENDS

The future may not look bright for the Russian Navy in general, but there are definite reasons why it may be expected survive. For over thirty-five years, the Russian Navy has carried a portion of the state's nuclear weapons. This will likely not change. The Russian Navy could undertake other missions in the event of conflict with foreign adversaries or in support of international conflict management efforts (e.g. embargo enforcement). Russia has issued plans for the development of the navy.

Whatever future roles the navy undertakes, one seems assured: nuclear deterrence. In the past, this role has been a central mission of the Soviet/Russian Navy.

A. NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

Deterring nuclear has been a primary mission for Moscow's navy for decades. While the navy grew large over the course of the Cold War, its most powerful strike capabilities resided in the nuclear deterrence force of the SSBNs. The Soviet Navy possessed limited ability to project conventional power against the NATO allies, in particular the United States. As William Odom has noted,

The core of the Soviet Navy became the more than sixty submarines equipped with nuclear-armed ballistic missiles, SSBNs. Another roughly three hundred submarines... constituted a significant force, but not one capable of operations in the central Atlantic or Pacific oceans. The SSBNs were deployed only in the Northern and Pacific Fleets....The predominant power of the Soviet Navy was in the Northern and Pacific Fleets to defend the SSBNs with their intercontinental nuclear striking power.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 80.

Since its 1993 military doctrine Russia has endorsed nuclear deterrence as a key element of its security policy. “The goal of Russian Federation policy regarding nuclear weapons is to remove the threat of nuclear war by deterring its initiation against the Russian Federation and its allies.”¹⁰⁵

All sources indicate that nuclear deterrence will continue to be a central mission of the Russian Navy. In the next ten years the Russian Navy’s focus will be on developing these forces. According to the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Admiral Vladimir Kuroyedov,

the role of the naval nuclear forces will increase....Not only because the START-2 treaty has been ratified but given that the naval nuclear forces have a full advantage and are an ideal means for the country’s leadership in the realization of the strategic nuclear containment policy.¹⁰⁶

In part because of these considerations, in mid-1998 the Russian Security Council decided to shift to greater reliance on the submarine-based nuclear forces. By 2010 Russia plans to base one half of its nuclear deterrent at sea.¹⁰⁷ The shift towards a sea-based deterrent is required by the START II treaty. It requires that no later than 2003, the

¹⁰⁵ “Principle Guidance on the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation,” **1993**, cited in Alexei Arbatov, “Russian Military Doctrine and Strategic Nuclear Forces to the Year 2000 and Beyond,” 26 March 1997, [http] Proceedings of Naval Postgraduate School “Conference on Russian Defense Policy Towards the Year 2000,” Available online: www.mis.nps.navy.mil/nsa/Arbatov.html, [accessed 22 January 2001].

¹⁰⁶ “Russian Navy to Give Priority to Nuclear Forces in Next 10 Years,” *Moscow Agentstvo Voyennykh Novostey*, 27 July 2000, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 27 July 2000, CEP 20000727000194.

¹⁰⁷ “Russian Navy to Carry Half of Nuclear Missiles by 2010,” *Interfax*, 14 July 1998, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 14 July 1998, FTS 19980714001093.

total number of warheads shall be limited to between 3,000 and 3,500. The treaty requires distribution as follows:

- A number between 1700 and 1750, for warheads attributed to deployed SLBMs.
- Zero, for warheads attributed to deployed ICBMs of types to which more than one warhead is attributed.¹⁰⁸

This differs substantially from the historic ratios. Since the early 1960s, about sixty-five per cent of strategic warheads have been land based on ICBMs. Ten per cent were air-launched, and twenty-five per cent were on SSBNs.¹⁰⁹

The focus on submarine-based nuclear deterrence has not been widely accepted. Even under Soviet rule, Russia never defined itself as a maritime power like the United States or Britain. Moscow's predilection towards ground-based forces still exists. Historically the Soviet Union never maintained more than thirty per cent of its SSBN force at sea at any one time. Today, Russia does not even approach this level. This leaves a large percentage of the submarine-based nuclear deterrent in port at any time.

¹⁰⁸ "Treaty Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms," (hereafter "START II Treaty"), 3 January 1993, [http] Available online: www.defenselink.mil/acq/acic/treaties/start2/st2text.htm, [Accessed 7 May 7, 2001], Article I, paragraphs 3, 4(a-b).

¹⁰⁹ Vladimir Davydov, Interview with Major-General Vladimir Semenovich Belous, "Geopolitics: Cold War Arsenal," *Granitsa Rossii*, 01 November 1995, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 01 November 1995, FTS 19951101000572; S. Mezentsev and V. Vostrikov, "New Views on the Application of U.S. and NATO Naval Forces," *Morskoy Sbornik*, April 1995, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 3 June 1997, FTS 19970603002025. For comparison, over fifty percent of START-accountable United States warheads are maintained on SLBMs.

Some Russian SSBNs have been conducting their deterrent “patrols” while remaining at the pier. They are either no longer fit for submerged patrols, or there are insufficient funds to send them to sea.¹¹⁰ While these pier-side operations add to the number of warheads on alert at any time, these warheads are much less survivable than warheads aboard an SSBN at sea. The main advantage of an SSBN on patrol at sea is that its location is in doubt, thereby making a first nuclear strike risky for a potential adversary. SSBNs on patrol ensure that a retaliatory strike is always possible.

In fact, depending on the number of warheads involved, an SSBN on alert in port can be regarded as even more vulnerable and destabilizing than a MIRVed ICBM on alert. One reason the START II treaty eliminated MIRVed ICBMs was that most American experts consider them destabilizing, especially at lower total warhead levels.¹¹¹ By launching first against an enemy’s fixed, MIRVed ICBMs, the standard argument holds, an aggressive nation could devastate its enemy’s nuclear arsenal, thereby limiting the possibility for retaliation. By this logic, an SSBN at the pier could be an even more lucrative and tempting target. A single incoming warhead could hypothetically destroy the entire submarine, with all its warheads. This analysis assumes that a MIRVed ICBM contains approximately ten warheads, while a fully loaded SSBN could carry as many as

¹¹⁰ Valeri Aleksin, “The Navy Will Not Let Us Down,” *NVO*, 24-30 July 1998, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 24 July 1998, FTS 19980724000499.

¹¹¹ “START II Treaty,” Article I, paragraph 4(b).

200 warheads.¹¹² On the positive side, conducting deterrent “patrols” while remaining at the pier will reduce the stress on SSBN hulls, and thereby lengthen their service life.

Russia’s new military and national security policies have underscored the importance of nuclear weapons, and appear to lower the thresholds for their use.¹¹³ The nuclear deterrence mission suggests that the navy will continue to be relevant to Russian security.

The focus on nuclear deterrence has had distorting effects. The Russian Navy has focused on this mission so intently that other branches of the navy have suffered. In 1998, a Russian commentator wrote that this assessment had been

confirmed by the forced decision of the RF [Russian Federation] Navy command to redistribute funds earmarked for general-purpose naval forces in favor of nuclear powered missile submarines and on a five-year suspension of new submarine and surface ship construction.¹¹⁴

The future of Russia’s strategic nuclear forces is still uncertain. To some extent it depends on the policies the United States undertakes in the next few years. Decisions about missile defense capabilities and NATO expansion are very sensitive. U.S. missile

¹¹² The assumption uses a Typhoon-class SSBN, carrying 20 SS-N-20 missiles, each fitted with ten warheads (the maximum number it was tested with). (1999) “R-39/SS-N-20 STURGEON” [http] *Nuclear Forces Guide*, Federation of American Scientists, Available online: www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/slbm/r39.htm, [accessed 18 April 2001]; (1999) “R-36M/SS-18 SATAN” [http] *Nuclear Forces Guide*, Federation of American Scientists, Available online: www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/icbm/r-36m.htm, [accessed 18 April 2001].

¹¹³ See discussion in Chapter III

¹¹⁴ Radiy Zubkov, “Uncertain Future of Missile Submarines: The State, Not the Military Department Should Determine the Fate of Russia’s Naval Strategic Forces,” *NVO*, 11-17 December 1998, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 17 December 1998, FTS 19981217000130.

defense decisions will cause Russia to reevaluate its strategic nuclear forces. Moscow may decide to add to its nuclear arsenal. Production of the newest ICBM, the Topol-M (NATO designation SS-27), could be accelerated. Russia would probably also insist that any future arms control treaty allow MIRVed ICBMs. Expanding NATO eastward would make Russians nervous because in their eyes a perceived hostile alliance would be moving closer to the homeland.¹¹⁵

The composition of the Russian nuclear deterrent has been the subject of political infighting among the services. Each of them (the Strategic Rocket Forces, the Navy, and the Air Force) demands a share of the arsenal. There have been several political battles waged over these forces.¹¹⁶ The battle has had other implications as well. Admiral Oleg Yerofeev, while commander of the Northern Fleet, wrote in 1996 that the other services—specifically the Strategic Rocket Forces—were risking national security to advance their positions:

the problem of developing strategic nuclear forces is quite specific and should hardly be brought out for broad and open discussion. It is not so terrible when the quantitative indicators of missiles and warheads on various platforms are cited. It is much worse when they disclose the strong and weak points of our main weapons, their individual characteristics, areas and methods of patrolling, range of detection and tracking, and much else, which provides an invaluable service to foreign intelligence agents.

¹¹⁵ Alexei Arbatov, “Nuclear Forces.”

¹¹⁶ See discussion in Chapter 2.

From my point of view, it is absolutely immoral, for the purpose of increasing the prestige of one component of the triad, to talk about accidents and emergency situations in the other components on the pages of open publications. It is surprising that arguments on the verge of divulging classified data are presented as sprouts of democracy in the military sphere.¹¹⁷

Not immune to political pressures, however, Yerofeev went on to list why he believed that SSBNs are superior to ICBMs for ensuring strategic deterrence:

- SSBNs are continually moving and their location is unknown.
- SSBNs “are able to take up firing positions in the shortest possible time.”
- SSBNs can launch an attack from any region of the ocean.
- SLBMs can hit up to two hundred targets in one salvo.
- SSBNs can be deployed closer to their targets to minimize an opponents reaction time, and complicate an ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) system’s response.
- SSBNs can “ensure the approach of missiles and warheads from one direction with a high density and guarantee a high probability of penetration of the enemy’s ABM systems.”

Yerofeev elaborated on this last point as follows:

our country’s geostrategic position and the known locations of silo launchers and position areas of maneuvering missile systems predetermine the directions of approach of missiles and warheads to strike targets and enable the opposing side to build in advance a powerful, sufficiently effective and comparatively inexpensive antiballistic missile [ABM] defense oriented on repelling a strike namely from these directions. It is problematic to penetrate such an ABM system due to problems with creating a high density of approaching warheads when using single-warhead missiles of the Topol system from one direction. In doing this, the enemy’s ABM system, due to the large distances and virtually instantaneous detection of missiles being launched, will have the maximum amount of time to prepare to repel such an strike.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Oleg Yerofeev, “The Maritime Component of the Nuclear Triad: It Embodies the Best Achievements of the Domestic Military-Industrial Complex,” *NVO*, 14 March 1996, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 14 March 1996, FTS 19960314000766.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Yerofeev's scenarios are somewhat questionable. It is highly unlikely that a large-scale nuclear exchange of the type he is describing would occur using only land-based missiles. Yerofeev implies that the SRF leadership wished to eliminate the sea-based triad leg. In fact, the most serious power plays by the SRF called for subordinating the sea-based and bomber legs of the triad under the command of the SRF.¹¹⁹ In the event that the United States—or some other state deemed the “opposing side”—deploys missile defenses the Russian nuclear arsenal would probably change. According to Alexei Arbatov, if the United States does deploy missile defenses, Russia will probably deploy the next generation ICBM—the SS-27—with MIRVs.¹²⁰

Russian SSBNs are not as quiet as their Western counterparts, and this makes them more easily detectable and therefore vulnerable. There are also unresolved command and control issues relating to deployed SSBNs.¹²¹

Despite these drawbacks, most Russian scholars and leaders accept the role of SSBNs in nuclear deterrence. The questions seem to be how many and what type to build for the future.

With respect to its own long-term institutional interests, the Russian Navy may be staking too much on nuclear deterrence. Under the Soviet Union, and more recently, the SSBN force has been used to justify the entire navy: “In order to ensure the preservation

¹¹⁹ “Commander Calls for Strategic Deterrence Forces with Joint Command,” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 16 December 1998, provided by BBC Summary of World Broadcasts; accessed via Lexis-Nexis 08 March 2001.

¹²⁰ Alexei Arbatov, “Nuclear Forces.”

¹²¹ Davydov, “Cold War Arsenal.”

and dependable functioning of the naval strategic nuclear forces under any conditions...the Russian Navy must have general-purpose forces.”¹²² In the past this has led to the construction of massive surface fleet, aviation assets, and shore infrastructure. This itself has sparked criticism. In 1998, a Russian analyst wrote that

the capability of [SSN’s] independent ocean operation promised by [their] proponents soon proved to be a deception. Initially the SSNs required creation of an ocean reconnaissance system, then support [for] deploying from bases and penetrating anti-submarine barriers and so on. Finally, the impossibility of achieving the proper level of concealment of the USSR’s SSNs and the prospect of the appearance of space means of detecting submarines in a submerged condition in the early 21st century essentially led to their depreciation as an absolute weapon, and the entire concept of developing a Navy built on the basis of the submarine fleet suffered a fiasco.¹²³

Relying on the SSBN to justify the existence of the Navy could be risky for additional reasons. Some Russian leaders reportedly believe that command and control of SSBNs would be problematic during war. In the event of nuclear conflict, Russian SSBNs would presumably receive their orders via radio. The communications system was designed and built during the Soviet era, and it has several redundancies. The SSBNs can get their messages via High Frequency or Very Low Frequency radio transmissions from ground stations or via satellite. In addition, it has been reported that Extremely Low Frequency (ELF) radio waves—which can penetrate water up to three

¹²² Valeriy Aleksin, and Eduard Shevelev, “Fate of Russia and Her Navy Inseparable,” 15 June 1996, *NVO*, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 4 April 1997, FTS 19970404001124.

¹²³ Yuriy Kuznetsov, “On the Way to a Balanced Navy: Russia should Reject the Soviet Concept of Navy Organizational Development,” *NVO*, 15 May 1998 reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 22 June 1998, FTS 19980622000558. This statement discusses SSNs in particular but is applicable to SSBNs as well.

hundred meters—continually broadcast an “okay” signal. An ELF transmitter—which can only transmit at a very low data rate—can order an SSBN to rise to communications depth to receive messages that are more detailed. Each of these communications pathways has several transmitting stations.¹²⁴

There are three major issues with the SSBN command and control system: age, vulnerability, and reliability. Satellites may fail, and are more likely to do so as they age. Ground transmitting stations are also vulnerable to a preemptive attack. Some politicians and commentators have questioned the reliability of these systems.¹²⁵ Military and civilian leaders may determine there is too much risk in the SSBN program. They may decide the command and control system is not robust enough. They may feel there is too much risk inherent in sending a submarine to sea with nuclear weapons, with no guarantee the crew will not sell it to the highest bidder. They may decide there is too much risk of an onboard failure causing an accidental launch.¹²⁶ If the SSBN force justifies the entire navy, and the government decides to do away with sea-based deterrence forces, the navy’s very existence will be in jeopardy.

¹²⁴ E.V. Miasnikov, *The Future of Russia's Strategic Nuclear Forces: Discussions and Arguments*, trans. Brian Finn and Renee Friedman (Moscow: Center For Arms Control, Energy, and Environmental Studies, 1995), [http] Available online: fas.org/spp/eprint/snf03223.htm, [accessed 8 May 2001], Appendix 3.

¹²⁵ A summary of these debates is in Miasnikov, section 9.0.

¹²⁶ Thomas Nilsen, “Accidental Nuclear War: Increased Risk of Nuclear missile Launch From Russian Submarines,” Bellona Foundation, 5 May 1998, [http] Available online: www.bellona.no/imaker?id=9510&sub=1, [accessed 8 May 2001]; Miasnikov, section 10.0.

1. SSBN Force Structure Possibilities

Strategic importance does not guarantee survival, much less robustness. The trend of navy operations, maintenance, and construction does not bode well for the future. Russian and Western analysts agree that without significant reform and resource allocation, the naval strategic nuclear forces will be in serious trouble in the future.

In 1995, according to official documents released under the START I treaty, Russia had 1,497 START-accountable nuclear launch devices (ICBMs, SLBMs, and bombers). 43 SSBNs carried 664 of these missiles with 2,492 START-accountable warheads.¹²⁷

Scenarios based on different assumptions have produced a variety of results. With no action, most forecasts are gloomy. In 1997, Alexei Arbatov predicted that if the state took no additional action, by 2003 Russia would have only 666 strategic nuclear launchers and 3,216 strategic nuclear warheads. Continuing that trend through 2010, Russia would have only 118 launchers and 442 warheads. This would include only four SSBNs.¹²⁸

According to the assumptions and calculations of Radiy Zubkov published in 1998, by 2003 the Russian Navy will be down to 448 warheads and 7 operational SSBNs. These numbers will drop to 2 SSBNs and 128 warheads by 2010.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Alexei Arbatov, "Nuclear Forces."

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Zubkov, "Future."

Zubkov's article presents some thought-provoking options for SSBN force structures. He presents four scenarios that offer insight into future possibilities for the naval strategic nuclear forces, and by extension the entire Russian Navy.

All four scenarios start with the same initial conditions. Zubkov states that in 1998 the force structure included twenty-six SSBNs, carrying a total of 2,272 warheads, of various classes as follows:

- 6 Typhoon-class with 20 SS-N-20 SLBMs each with 10 warheads (1200 warheads),
- 7 Delta IV-class with 16 SS-N-23 SLBMs each with 4 warheads (448 warheads), and
- 13 Delta III-class with 16 SS-N-18 SLBMs each with 3 warheads (624 warheads).¹³⁰

Scenario A relies on the following assumptions:

- The service life of strategic missile submarines is up to 20 years (unchanged from the original plans).
- No new nuclear powered missile submarines are commissioned.
- The service life of SS-N-20 missiles is 10 years (unchanged from the original plans).
- The government takes no action to save the SSBN force.

Under these conditions the SSBN force structure will decline as depicted in Figure 4.

Using scenario "A," the SSBN force will cease to exist in 2012.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* The total number of submarines of each type does not always add up to the "total" shown on the figure because the graphed total only reflects the number of SSBNs with operational missiles. In general, the difference is due to variations in service life of the SS-N-20 missiles and the Typhoon-class SSBNs that carry them.

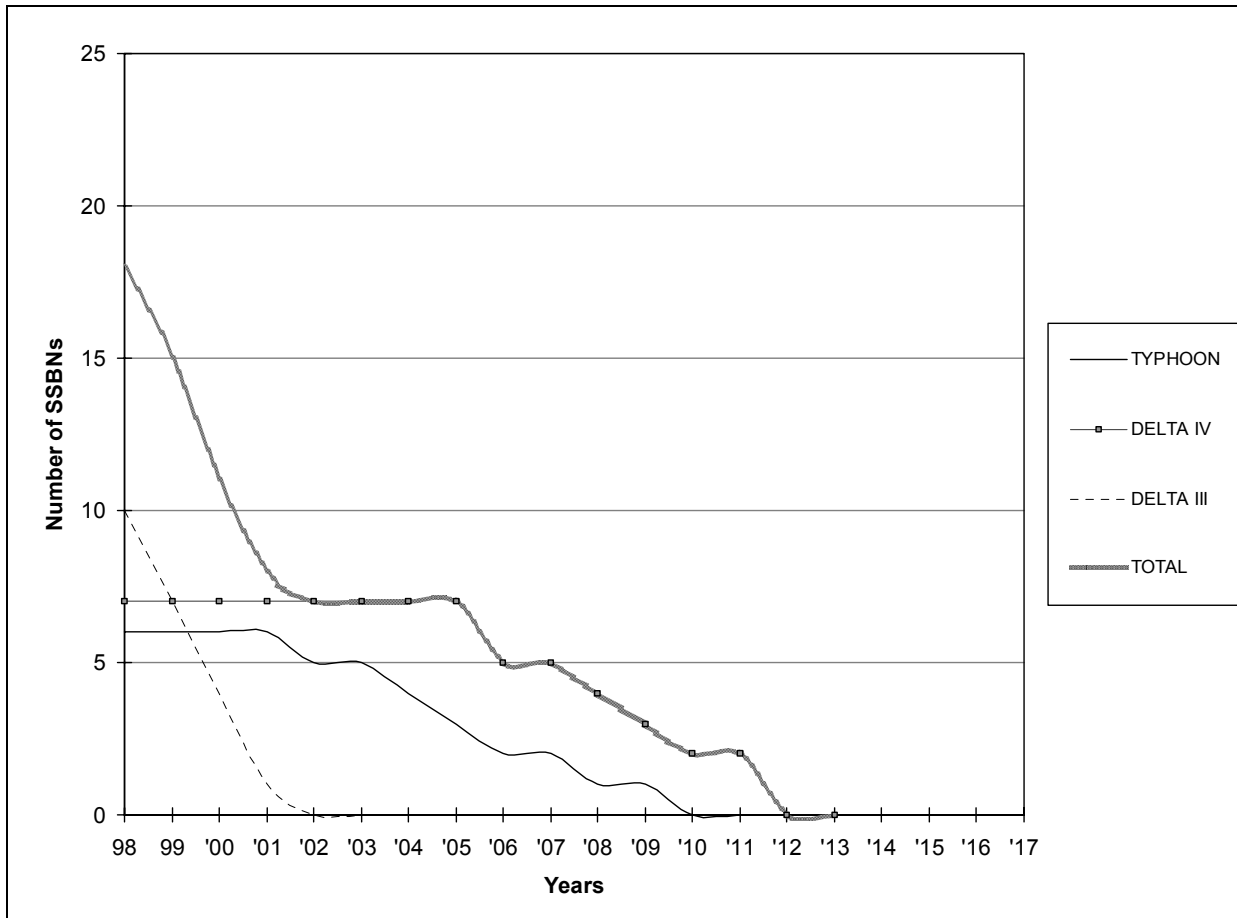


Figure 4 SSBN Force Levels Under Scenario A.¹³¹

Scenario B relies on the following assumptions:

- The service life of missile submarines is extended to 25 years.
- No new nuclear powered missile submarines are commissioned.
- The service life of SS-N-20 missiles is extended to 15 years.

This scenario requires no new construction, but extends the service life of existing vessels and missiles. This would require additional maintenance and expense, but would be cheaper than constructing new SSBNs. It would, however, only be a “patch.” Under this

¹³¹ Data for all figures in this chapter from Zubkov, “Future.”

scenario, Russia's SSBN force structure will decline as depicted in Figure 5, and will cease to exist in 2017.

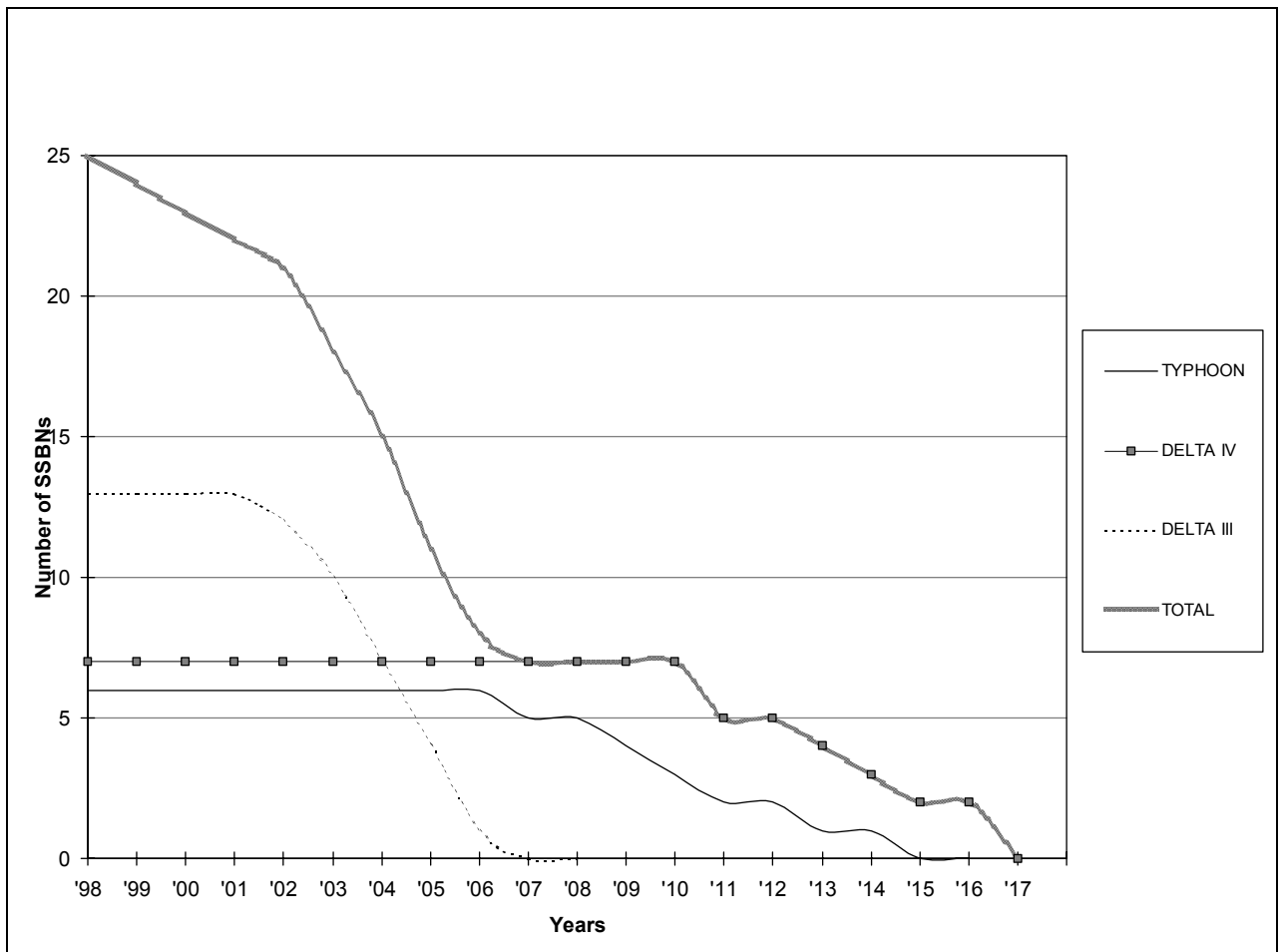


Figure 5 SSBN Force Levels Under Scenario B.

Scenario C assumes the following:

- The service life of missile submarines is extended to 25 years.
- Borey-class SSBNs come into the navy to maintain its delivery potential within the range of 1000 to 1250 warheads.
- The service life of SS-N-20 missiles is extended to 15 years.

This is the same as scenario “B,” except the construction of the follow-on class SSBN maintains warhead levels as described. The advantage of this scenario is that it allows

the SSBN force to exist beyond 2017. Figure 6 depicts force levels under scenario “C.”

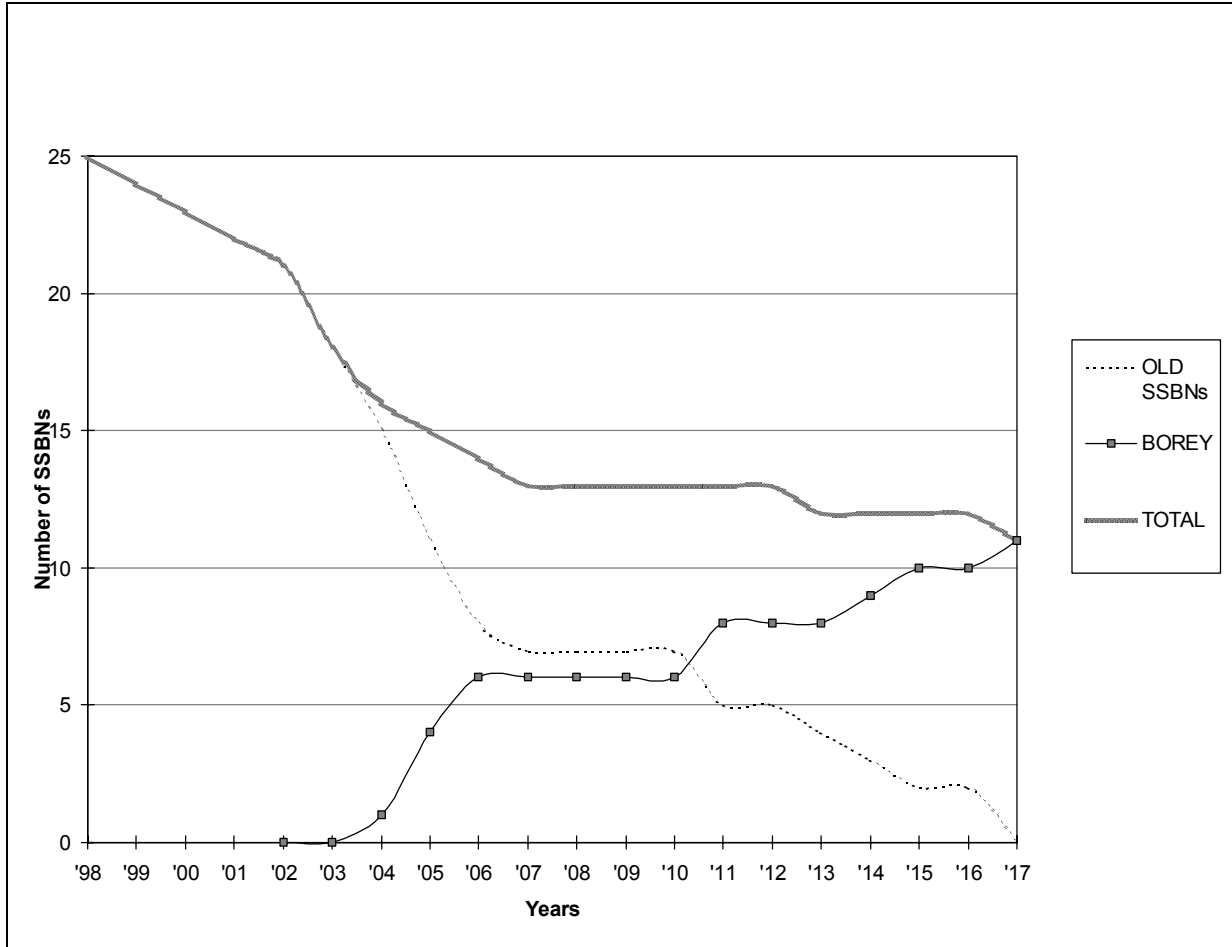


Figure 6 SSBN Force Levels Under Scenario C.

Scenario D is essentially a more modest version of scenario “C.” The only change is that construction of Borey-class SSBNs maintains a delivery potential of approximately five hundred warheads (versus 1000 to 1250 under “C”). The results are, therefore, similar to those of scenario “C” with slightly less cost and capability. Figure 7 depicts force levels under Scenario “D.”

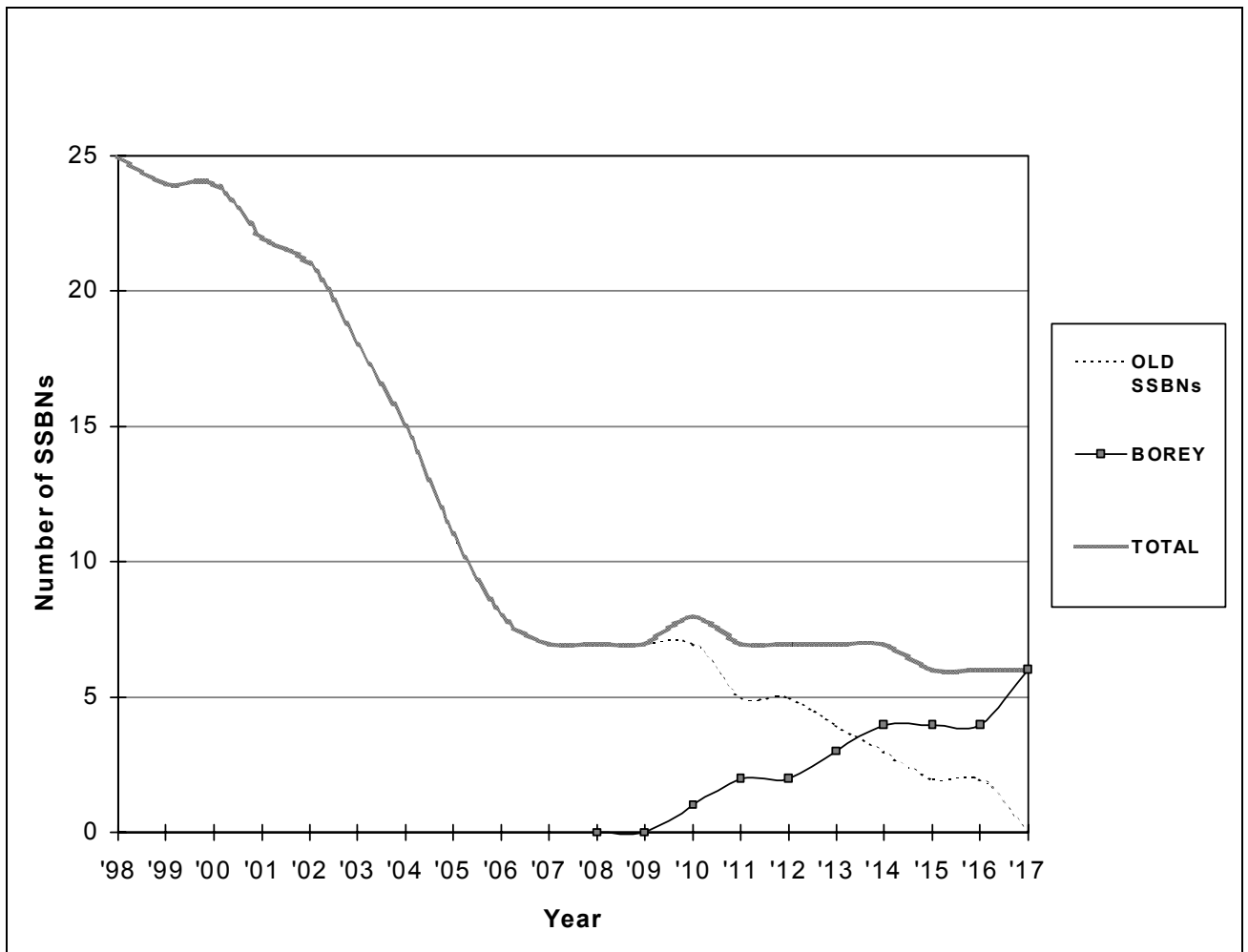


Figure 7 SSBN Force Levels Under Scenario D.

Figure 8 is a summary of warhead levels under these scenarios.

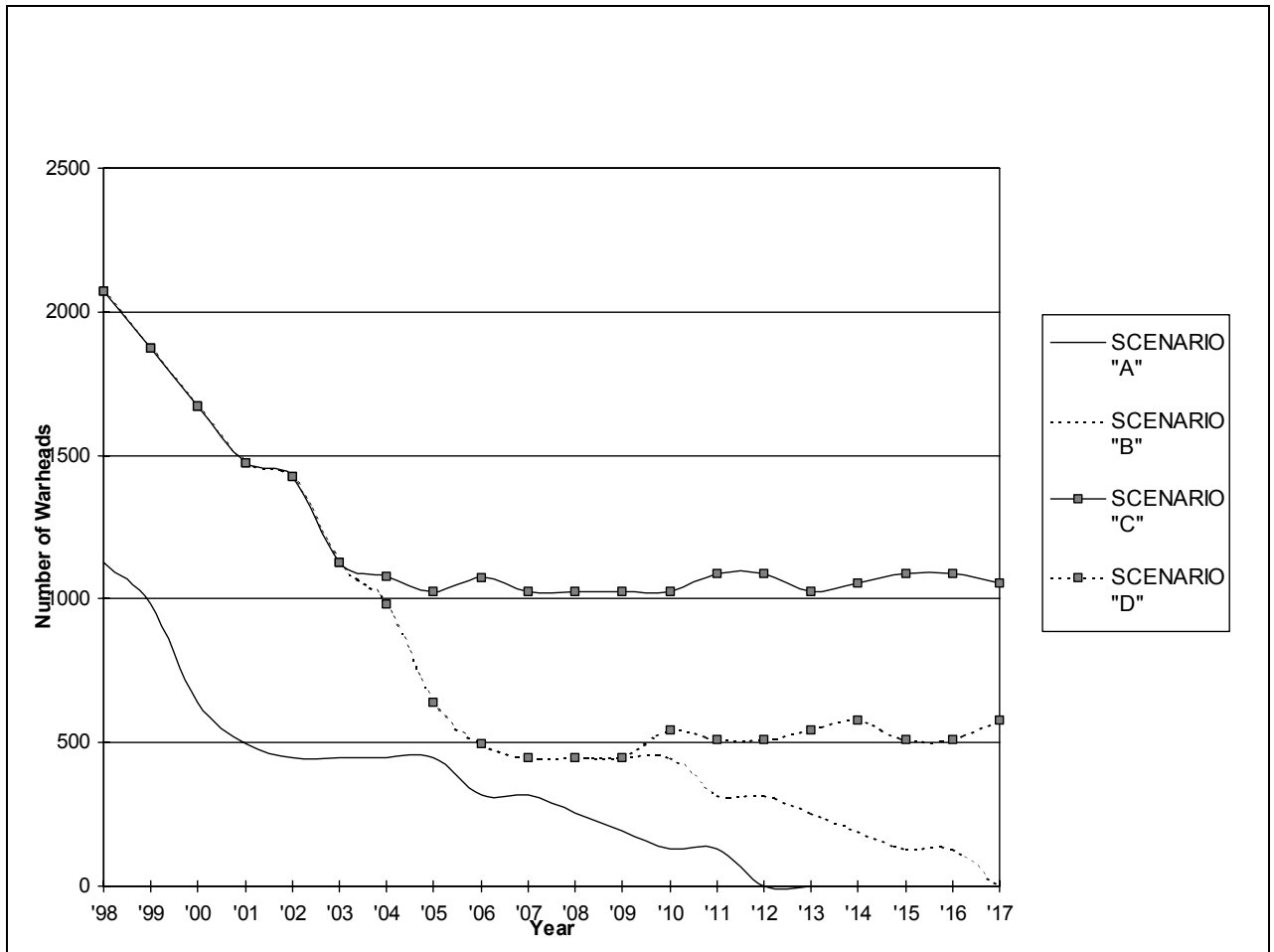


Figure 8 Warhead Levels on SSBNs Under All Scenarios.

These scenarios do not show the whole picture, because there are additional factors at work. These scenarios assume that today's platforms will continue to exist. The financial difficulties facing the Russian Navy show that this is not a safe assumption. The future of the six Typhoon-class SSBNs is in doubt, and some sources list some of them as already written off.¹³² Even if the navy extends the service life of existing

¹³² Igor Kudrik, "Typhoons to Remain In Service," Bellona Foundation, 11 January 2000, [http] Available online: www.bellona.no/imaker?id=14203&sub=1. It appears that Russia intends to decommission at least three Typhoon-class SSBNs.

SSBNs to twenty-five years, they will need significant maintenance to remain operational. Some of these vessels are relatively old. The Delta III-class SSBNs—built between 1976 and 1981—are improvements on the earlier Delta classes. The Delta I-class first put to sea in 1973. Most of the changes in the Delta-class were missile system upgrades.¹³³

It is also worthy of note that, even if all of the proposed SSBNs are constructed or refitted to remain in service, they will not all be operational all the time. Some will always be in port for a variety of reasons. Crews need rest.¹³⁴ Ships need repairs. A general rule of thumb is that one out of every three vessels can be at sea at a time; the rest will be in port for one reason or another. In times of war or heightened tensions, however, more vessels could deploy.

Some of the above scenarios—and all of them that do not predict the end of the SSBN force—require new construction. Aside from financial problems, there are technical difficulties. Only one hull of the new Borey-class SSBN, the *Yuriy Dolgorukiy*, has been laid down. Its estimated delivery date is around 2004 or 2005. If the state pursues scenario “C,” there is no time for further development delays. The Borey-class SSBN was supposed to have a new solid-fueled missile, the “Bark,” which failed during flight tests. New plans call for a navalized version of the SS-27. However, the new

¹³³ Zubkov, “Future;” Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991), 132-4; Norman Friedman, “The Typhoon Saga Ends, *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, July 1999, 91.

¹³⁴ This can be partially overcome by “split-crewing,” or giving each vessel two crews, as is done in the U.S. Navy. With today’s monetary and personnel shortages in Russia, this is not a realistic option for Moscow.

missile will require a complete redesign of the Borey-class SSBN. Reports since 1998 have not been clear as to whether work on the *Yuriy Dolgorukiy* has continued.¹³⁵

The Russian SSBN force seems to have an assured place in the state's military plans, but the rest of the submarine force and navy is still in question. During much of 1996 and 1997, there was a running debate in the pages of *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* regarding the proper role and size of the navy. The participants were experts, politicians, and naval and military officers. Two schools of thought developed during the debate: those who advocated parity with United States and NATO naval forces, and those who did not.

Those who argued for naval parity had several reasons:

- Russia should maintain its naval tradition.
- While Russia's economy is smaller than the U.S. economy, in Soviet times that was always the case, and Moscow competed with the West.
- Despite the end of the Cold War, war has not been eliminated from the globe.
- A strong navy would allow Russia to participate in a "multi-polar world" as an equal.
- With a large navy, Russia could participate in U.N.-sponsored peacekeeping operations.

¹³⁵ Zubkov, "Future;" "Marshal Reformer Locked in Strategic Conflict," *The Russia Journal*, Volume 3 Number 4(4), 22-28 February 1999, [http] Available online: www.russiamjournal.com/printer/weekly1208.html, [accessed 28 February 2001]; Viktor Litovkin, "Yuri Dolgorukiy to be Altered While Still on the Stocks: Construction of 21st Century Submarine Delayed," 9 September 1998, *Izvestiya*, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 11 September 1998, FTS 19980911000995; "News of the Military-Industrial Complex," *NVO*, 6 February 2001, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 8 March 2001, CEP 20010308000228; Dmitriy Litovkin, "The 'Sineva' Will Rise over the Sea: Vladimir Degtyar, State Missile Center 'Design Bureau Imeni Academician Makeyev' Director-General, Shares His view on the Problem of the Further Development of the Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces Naval Component," 18 May 2000, *NVO*, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 22 May 2000, CEP 20000522000289.

- While treaties limit conventional and nuclear forces, naval forces (except for SSBNs) are not thus limited. Western nations will continue to develop their naval might.
- Russia has an extensive coastline.¹³⁶

Those who were against an attempt at naval parity with the Western powers relied on one main argument: economics. “Russia’s economic might today is approximately twenty to twenty-five times lower than the United States together with its main allies, with whose naval groupings it is proposed to maintain parity.” They also attacked the argument that Russia’s extensive coastline proves its need for a navy:

Indeed, Russia surpasses the United States by almost two times in length of coastline, but it should be borne in mind here that over half of Russia's maritime border and over two-thirds of its entire coastline (with islands) is accounted for by Arctic ices unsuitable for conducting wide-scale combat operations at sea and on land and representing a convenient defensive line permitting even small forces to prevent an incursion into internal waters by any foreign navy.¹³⁷

B. OTHER NAVAL MISSIONS

Given Russia’s world position, and the security concerns expressed in the country’s 2000 National Security Concept, the navy could play a wider role. A stronger navy would allow Russia to express its displeasure with “military-political blocs” whose actions appear aggressive in Russian eyes. The presence of a token Russian naval force,

¹³⁶ Aleksin and Shevelev, “Fate.”

¹³⁷ Vladimir Sokolov, “Fate and the Russian Navy: Parity with U.S. and NATO Navies Again is Proposed for Us,” *NVO*, 5 July 1997, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 14 July 1997, FTS 19970714001674.

even a single submarine, during the Kosovo crisis would have given NATO decision makers a distinctly different operational environment in the Adriatic.¹³⁸

The Russian Navy could also perform the traditional naval mission of protecting the nation's interests abroad. In early 2000, there was talk in Russia of deploying warships to the Persian Gulf. This resulted from American and other coalition forces seizing two Russian tankers during sanctions operations.¹³⁹ Some commentators in Russia have acknowledged changes in circumstances and capabilities. Comparing the Soviet Navy's world reach with that of today's navy, one Russian reporter recognized what was lacking: "Had the same been so today, our foreign policy department would have had much more of [an] argument in favor of a peaceful settlement to the conflict with Iraq."¹⁴⁰ The potential extension of this principle to other crises—such as Kosovo—is obvious. Russia could find a variety of uses for a strong navy in the foreign policy realm. The words of former British Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell still ring true: "A man of war is the best ambassador."¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ "Whither the Russian Navy?" *Monitor*, Volume 6 Issue 197, Jamestown Foundation, 23 October 2000, [http] Available online: www.jamestown.org/pubs/view/mon/006/197_001.htm, [accessed 28 February 2001].

¹³⁹ Ilya Bulavinov and Ivan Safronov, "Pacific Fleet's Persian Trip," *Kommersant*, 13 April 2000, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 13 April 2000, CEP 20000413000215.

¹⁴⁰ Alexei Fomin, "Squadron Dies but Does Not Surrender: There is Only One Pilot in Northern Fleet Who Still Remembers How to Land Helicopter on Ship's Deck," *Novyye Izvestiya*, 6 February 1998, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 10 February 1998, FTS 19980210001115.

¹⁴¹ Peter Tsouras, ed., *Warrior's Words: A Quotation Book From Sesostris III to Schwarzkopf 1871BC to AD 1991* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1992), 387.

Some Russian leaders have recommended similar roles. In July 2000, Russian President Vladimir Putin suggested one himself. According to reports from the Hong Kong press, Putin had given the Russian Pacific fleet orders in case of a conflict between China and Taiwan. The orders reportedly directed the Russian Pacific fleet to prevent U.S. naval intervention.¹⁴²

The preceding are examples of what a better-equipped and properly maintained Russian Navy could do. All indications are that Russian leader would like to pursue these missions, but they require a navy with significant logistical support and basing capabilities. The Russian Navy has not demonstrated that it is capable of such missions. During the most recent Northern Fleet deployment to the Mediterranean, the squadron limped home with limited fresh water because of mechanical problems with distilling plants.¹⁴³

The government has made some positive changes in the area of naval missions. Until recently, the navy was responsible for not only operations and training for national defense, but also for manning and recycling decommissioned nuclear submarines. The Ministry of Atomic Energy recently assumed this role.¹⁴⁴ Other mission trimming still

¹⁴² Li Nien-ting, "Russian Fleet Will Intercept U.S. 7th Fleet's Intervention in Cross-Strait War," *Hong Kong Sing Tao Jih Pao*, 8 July 2000, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 8 July 2000, CPP 20000708000004.

¹⁴³ "Russia's Naval Caution," *Monitor*, Volume 5 Issue 75, Jamestown Foundation, 19 April 1999, [http] Available online: www.jamestown.org/pubs/view/mon/005/075_004.htm, [accessed 28 February 2001].

¹⁴⁴ Igor Kudrik, "Minatom Takes Over Naval Radwaste," Bellona Foundation, 30 September 1998, [http] Available online: www.bellona.no/imaker?id=12182&sub=1, [accessed 8 May 2001].

needs to occur. In 1995, the Northern Fleet was responsible for thirty-two garrisons. Many of these had civic administrations run by the navy. The Northern Fleet was responsible for public utilities. In most cases, sailors did the work associated with these utilities. The Commander of the Northern Fleet, Admiral Yerofeev, reported that hundreds of sailors were manning boilers, water systems, and heating systems, and also maintaining roads and houses.¹⁴⁵ Sailors were performing these tasks while ships and submarines were short of crewmembers—as they still are. In many cases, crews from other ships combine aboard one ship so they have enough people to go to sea. This augmentation sometimes makes up thirty percent of a crew.¹⁴⁶

Russia has also demonstrated a capability to undertake non-traditional missions with its submarine force. These missions will not justify its existence, but they may provide operational training and some additional funds. On at least three occasions the Russian Navy has used an SSBN to conduct scientific research. In 1995, a Delta III-class submarine launched an atmospheric monitoring probe for a German research institute. The submarine launched the probe using a specially modified SS-N-18 missile. By all accounts, the procedure was identical to that which would be followed in a wartime missile launch for the submarine crew. In 1998, a Russian Delta IV-class SSBN launched a German satellite into orbit from the Arctic. In these operations, the German research institute provided funds to Russia to cover both the redesign of the missile, and

¹⁴⁵ Oleg Yerofeev, “We Must Reform—We Must Not Destroy: The Northern Fleet Must Be Preserved as a Powerful Operational-Strategic Formation,” *NVO*, 22 April 1995, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 22 April 1995, FTS 19950422000037.

¹⁴⁶ Zubkov, “Future.”

its launch from the submarine.¹⁴⁷ This may be a way to bring some Western funds into Russia, while maintaining proficiency for the submarine force.

C. NEW POLICIES

In addition to the new National Security Concept and Military Doctrine, Russia in early 2000 released a new maritime policy, “The Principles of RF [Russian Federation] Policy in the Field of Naval Activities for the Period Through the Year 2010.”¹⁴⁸ Among other things, this document defines the priorities for development of the navy. According to the policy, the number one priority is “strengthening state support, regulation, and control of Russian Federation naval activities, including the adoption of a complex of targeted measures which will stimulate these activities”¹⁴⁹ This appears to be an acknowledgement by the government that the biggest problems affecting in the navy today rest not solely with the navy. The navy’s problems are inherent in the government and state as a whole.

¹⁴⁷ Viktor Litovkin, “Experiments: A Missile Models an Earthquake,” *Ogonek*, June 1995, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 4 April 1997, FTS 19970404001087; Litovkin, “Russian Submariners to launch German Satellite into Space,” *Izvestiya*, 30 June 1998, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 01 July 1998, FTS 19980701001151.

¹⁴⁸ “Russia’s Naval Policy Has Been Approved by the RF Presidential Edict, Dated March 4, 2000,” (Hereafter “Maritime Policy”), *NVO*, 31 March 2000, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 12 April 2000, CEP 20000412000287.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, paragraph 11.

The second priority, the first within the navy itself, is “support and qualitative modernization of forces and equipment of the naval component of the strategic nuclear forces, keeping them at the required quantitative level.”¹⁵⁰ This indicates that nuclear deterrence is, and will remain, an important mission for the navy.

To achieve the desired modernization of naval nuclear deterrence capabilities, SSBNs have the primary role: “ensuring the balanced development of the naval component of the strategic nuclear forces...[means that the state] should foresee creating new generation strategic missile submarines, modernizing and repairing existing ships of this class, [and] developing and producing missile arms for them.”¹⁵¹

“The World Ocean,” a national policy statement approved in January 1997, confirms that Russia still views its navy as important. While not exclusively or even primarily a military program, “The World Ocean” includes naval components; and it offers an informative description of why Russia views the oceans as important:

- A considerable portion of the strategic nuclear power of other states is located within the ocean. Foreign navies, capable of striking Russian territory with nuclear and conventional weapons and influencing the stability of the world, are becoming more powerful.
- The world economy depends on sea communications.
- Seventy-five percent of the world’s industry and people live within 500 kilometers of the sea.
- The ocean is a source of significant mineral, biological, and other resources.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, paragraph 12.

¹⁵² “The World Ocean,” decree of the Russian President, 11 January 1997, accessed via Federation of American Scientists, [http] Available online: www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/CDONEW22.htm, [accessed 22 January 2001], section I.

Moreover, “The World Ocean” lays out a plan for developing the navy for the future. This is the most specific government plan available for public review. It provides a flexible framework for a three-phased development of the Russian Navy.

The initial phase was to run from 1997 through 2002. During this phase, the main goal was to stop the uncontrolled decline of the navy. The “Medium-Term Phase”—planned for 2003 through 2007—addresses the “financial, legal, political, environmental protection, scientific technical, and other sea-related activities of Russia with the aim of meeting current needs and ensuring long-term interests and needs.”¹⁵³ The final phase (its duration unspecified) calls for the development of a “new structure of Russia’s activity in the World Ocean.” During this third phase, the results of the earlier stages will be available, and Russia will be able to acquire an important role in the World Ocean.¹⁵⁴

“The World Ocean” document has been in place for four years, and phase one should be well underway. Moscow has, however, made little progress on stemming the decline of the navy. This does not bode well for the success of the plan outlined in “The World Ocean.” The window for its success is also closing. According to the document itself, “the most effective projects of the Program have to be implemented, as a rule, within three to five years.”¹⁵⁵

Valeriy Aleksin, former Chief Navigator of the Russian Navy, echoed the provisions of “The World Ocean” in his 1998 article, “The Submarine Fleet and Russia’s

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, section VI.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

National Security.” Aleksin supported the development of a “State Program of Revival of the Navy.” He called for a three-phase program to restore the navy. His plan is consistent with the ideas expressed in “The World Ocean.”

Aleksin called for a two-stage building program following a conservation phase:

- Phase one: Determine what, when, and how [it is] necessary to preserve in the next 5 years [portions] of the existing navy to form a combat nucleus of Russia’s future fleet.
- Phase two: Construction of new ships...for reliable completion of the navy’s missions at the necessary and sufficient level in the next 10-15 years.
- Phase three: Construction of new ships to replace obsolete ones, ensure guaranteed accomplishment of the missions of protecting Russia’s vital interests at sea, and also participate as part of peacekeeping forces under the flag of the UN in the interests of the world community in key areas of the world for the next 20-25 years.¹⁵⁶

Because this proposed program is similar to that in “The World Ocean,” it too suffers from the fact that the Russian Navy’s decline has not stopped. Both plans, Aleksin’s and that in “The World Ocean,” have the advantage of being flexible. They nonetheless require concrete action on the part of the government; and this has not yet happened. Until it does, the Russian Navy will continue to decline.

D. NEW LEADERSHIP

On 28 March 2001, Russian President Vladimir Putin appointed Sergey Ivanov Russia’s new Defense Minister. One of several appointments Putin made that day, this

¹⁵⁶ Valeriy Aleksin, “The Submarine Fleet and Russia’s National Security: Nuclear-Powered Submarines Will be the Most Effective Means of Deterring an Enemy in a Nuclear and Conventional War in the 21st Century,” *NVO*, 20 March 1998, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 17 April 1998, FTS 19980417001060.

greatly changes the prospects of military reform and the future of each of the military services.

The most prominent change because of this appointment is the complete elimination of the conflict between Defense Minister Igor Sergeev and the Chief of the General Staff, Anatoly Kvashnin. Some reports claim that the existing leadership of the general staff will be the next to go, but that is not clear.¹⁵⁷ Regardless of Kvashnin's fate, certain things will change.

Reform is now more likely to occur in the armed forces than at any time since 1991. Sergey Ivanov is widely regarded as Putin's most loyal and trusted subordinate. Ministry of Defense personnel and military officers will perceive that Ivanov's policies and directives have the full support of the President. In addition, Ivanov headed the Security Council when it drafted the reform bill, the "Plan for the Organizational Development of the Russian Federation Armed Forces." He is intimately familiar with its requirements, and is considered well-suited to fulfill them.¹⁵⁸

Since reform now seems likely to occur, a large question remains: what does reform entail? The precise contents of the reform package are a secret—presumably to save it from outside lobbying and political infighting. There is also a lot of money

¹⁵⁷ Ivan Safronov, "Sergey Ivanov Gets Hands on Nuclear Button. Soon He Will Get Around to the Generals," *Kommersant*, 30 March 2001, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 30 March 2001, CEP 20010330000055.

¹⁵⁸ Mikhail Rostovskiy, "Abramovich People Shown the Door," *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 29 March 2001, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 29 March 2001, CEP 20010329000116.

involved in the military-industrial complex.¹⁵⁹ Certain aspects of the projected reform plan have been made public:

- Reform will cut 365,000 servicemen and 100,00 to 120,000 civilians from the armed forces.
- The Military-Space Defense Troops and Military-Space Forces will separate from the SRF.¹⁶⁰ They will form their own new service, the “Space Forces.”
- The SRF will become part of the Air Force by 2006.
- There will be a transition from conscription to a volunteer force.¹⁶¹

On the same day as the Ivanov appointment, Putin appointed Lyubov Kudelina as Deputy Minister of Defense. While Kudelina is the first woman appointed to such a high position within the Ministry of Defense, the appointment is noteworthy for other reasons. Before this appointment, Kudelina worked in the Ministry of Finances. There she was a harsh critic of the military. She continually scrutinized military spending procedures and attempted to keep military expenditures within authorized limits.¹⁶² This appointment in particular makes it likely that military finances will be more strictly monitored and controlled by the government.

¹⁵⁹ Aleksandr Golts, “In Deafening Tones,” *Itogi*, 3 April 2001, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 3 April 2001, CEP 20010403000365.

¹⁶⁰ The SRF absorbed these forces under Sergeev, who touted this as the first stage of reform.

¹⁶¹ “Putin Banned Military Reform Discussion. FSB will Handle Malcontents,” *Moscow Postfactum*, 22 February 2001, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 22 February 2001, CEP 20010222000262; “New DM Rejects Revolutionary Way of Army Development,” *Agentstvo Voyennykh Novostey*, 24 March 2001, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 29 March 2001 CEP 20010329000057.

¹⁶² Vladimir Temnyy, “Money is Behind Reshuffle,” *Grani.ru*, 29 March 2001, reported and translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 29 March 2001, CEP 20010329000365; Golts, “Deafening.”

The final question to consider here is what these changes may mean for the submarine force. This is not entirely clear. All the public statements by Ivanov and the relevant reports in the press have referred to the navy only in passing, if at all. It appears that the navy's nuclear deterrence mission is safe. In describing the blueprint of reform Ivanov stated: "It is planned to develop a Russian Strategic Missile Troops land attack group independently while preserving the existing structure of strategic nuclear forces: the ground, aviation and sea components."¹⁶³

Sergey Ivanov and the other recent Ministry of Defense appointees are also critics of NATO. They were among the government leaders in opposing NATO expansion. They will likely retain attitudes critical of U.S. and NATO policy.¹⁶⁴ The navy may therefore benefit from the new appointments, if the new managers of the Ministry of Defense support funding for the navy.

There are reasons for the navy to lower its expectations, however. One of the major results of the new appointments is the defeat of Sergeev and his reform plans. These plans placed greater reliance on nuclear forces, at the expense of conventional troops. If the Kvashnin faction wins its campaign for conventional force modernization, the future could be less bright for the navy. Ethnic separatism, frontier instability, and Islamic fundamentalism may be perceived as the dominant threats. These are predominantly domestic and continental concerns. The military's performance in

¹⁶³ Ivanov quoted in "Russian Army Set to Undergo Massive Reforms," *Interfax* (in English), 17 April 2001, reported by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 17 April 2001, CEP 20010417000213.

¹⁶⁴ Temnyy.

Chechnya has fueled concern over the quality of the ground forces. Many military and civilian leaders believe that this is evidence of their neglect under the previous Defense Minister. Increased concentration on ground force improvements will likely cause the navy further neglect.

The most recent reports from Russia suggest that these trends continue. The Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces, Colonel General Nikolai Kormiltsev, was promoted to Deputy Defense Minister on 27 April 2001. This was coupled with the ouster of the long-serving Commander-in-Chief of the SRF, General Vladimir Yakovlev. These changes portend a growing role for the Ground Forces, and a more limited one for the SRF. It appears that concern over domestic and continental threats—frontier instability, ethnic separatism and Islamic fundamentalism—continues to grow.¹⁶⁵

Taken in the context of current Russian security concerns, the new appointments will probably mean a continuation of a long-standing pattern for the navy. It will continue to play a significant role in nuclear deterrence. Its other capabilities will also continue to suffer from the neglect of the country's political and military leaders.

¹⁶⁵ “Changes Continue Atop Russia’s Military Heirarchy,” and “Ground Forces Command Strengthened,” *Monitor*, Volume 7 Issue 91, Jamestown Foudation, 10 May 2001, [http] Available online: http://www.jamestown.org/pubs/view/mon/007_091_000.htm, [accessed 10 May 2001].

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

V. CONCLUSIONS

The factors that will influence the size and shape of the Russian submarine force are manifold, and the relationships among them are complex, with some currently in flux. The national security leadership shuffle by President Vladimir Putin continues, and the results of military reform are still unknown. Whatever the result, the fate of the entire submarine force—indeed, to some extent, the entire Russian Navy—resides mainly with the SSBN force.

A. THE IMPORTANT FACTORS

Several factors favor the retention and improvement of the naval strategic nuclear forces:

- SSBNs still account for a significant portion of the Russian strategic nuclear arsenal, even though they often conduct their “patrols” in port in current circumstances.
- The START II Treaty eliminates land-based MIRVed ICBMs.¹⁶⁶
- Depending on their launch points, SLBMs may have shorter flight times to North American targets than ICBMs or bombers.
- Russia perceives the United States and NATO as potentially aggressive adversaries.

Russian SSBNs currently play an important role in the Russian strategic nuclear deterrence posture. The ships, missiles, and warheads exist, as do the operating procedures. Russia has maintained a maritime nuclear deterrent force since the early 1960s, and there are no indications Moscow intends to change this.

¹⁶⁶ Whether START II will ever enter into force is unclear. When Russia ratified the START II treaty in April-May 2000, it attached conditions relating to U.S. ratification of the 1997 ABM Treaty demarcation and succession agreements that may be unacceptable to the U.S. Senate.

Still, there are some definite negative indicators.

- Russia's SSBN force is aging and is not receiving the required maintenance.
- Russia's current economic situation does not support modernization.
- The Soviet/Russian Navy has historically held a low position in the hierarchy of military services.
- Politically, the ground forces appear to be rising in status at the expense of the strategic nuclear forces.
- The protracted conflict in Chechnya and instability on Russia's southern border also suggest that the leadership's priorities will favor the ground forces.
- Among the strategic nuclear forces, ICBMs (fixed and land-mobile) appear to be favored because of perceived cost and command-and-control advantages.

Two factors will probably dominate all others in determining the future of the submarine force. The most important of these is what President Vladimir Putin and his closest advisers plan for the navy's future. The second most important is the direction of the Russian economy in the next few years.

The content and results of military reform are unknown. How President Putin and Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov view the military and assess national security requirements will be a deciding factor. In the past, Putin has supported the navy. Early in his tenure as President, he portrayed himself as a true friend of the navy.¹⁶⁷ This has changed since the August 2000 *Kursk* disaster. Since then, he has not made high profile visits to ships, nor has he publicly supported the navy as he did before the accident. Putin's views and policies are important because without his support the submarine force's future may be in doubt, even with strong economic growth. He could direct that additional funds be budgeted to other services—for example, the ground forces and/or the

¹⁶⁷ Mikhail Timofeyev, "Putin Expresses High Opinion of Baltic Seamen," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 01 August 2000, reported and translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 01 August 2000, CEP 20000801000192.

air forces—if he determined that they are more useful for meeting the nation’s security requirements.

Russia’s economic condition is the second most important factor. Given the country’s other priorities, including other military priorities, without improvements in economic performance, it may prove difficult to maintain, much less modernize, the Russian submarine force. The required maintenance and the replacement systems—particularly missiles and Borey-class SSBNs—will require significant investments. Without an economic upswing Russia could modernize its military forces to some extent, but the costs to the country’s economic health would be immense. Without Putin’s approval, however, even an economic windfall would only marginally improve the submarine force’s condition.

B. THE WORST CASE

If Russian leaders choose to neglect the submarine force, it will slowly become less capable and less safe.

The SSBNs—historically the core of the submarine force—are in a precarious position. The submarines and missiles are aging. There is only one replacement submarine under construction—the *Yuriy Dolgoruky*. The Russian government canceled the original missile designed for this vessel. Without new submarines, the future of the maritime strategic nuclear deterrence force is limited. The missiles on Typhoon-class SSBNs are at or near the end of their service lives. Russia needs a new submarine class

and new missiles to maintain the SSBN force at a reasonable size and in reliable conditions.

The general-purpose submarine forces will degrade under this scenario as well. One of their principal missions is to defend the SSBN force. Russian leaders may sacrifice the general-purpose submarine forces to save the SSBNs. If the general-purpose submarine forces—designed mainly to counter U.S. and NATO naval power—wither more than they already have, Russia will continue to be unable to respond to certain crisis situations.

If Russian leaders continue to neglect the submarine force, the probability of another *Kursk*-type accident will rise. A catastrophic environmental disaster is possible, particularly with nuclear-powered submarines lacking proper maintenance. If living and pay conditions in the navy worsen, the situation may deteriorate even further. Incidents of theft and vandalism may increase. The theft of a nuclear warhead or an entire submarine is possible. Some commentators fear that if the crewmembers on an SSBN are not paid, the crew might sell either their services or the vessel itself to a foreign country. There have already been attempts to steal nuclear materials from disposal sites.¹⁶⁸

C. THE BEST CASE

Under more positive—and highly unlikely—conditions, the submarine force could remain the center of the Russian navy, and increase in importance to the state. The SSBN force could grow. Borey-class submarines could enter the fleet to maintain and

¹⁶⁸ Nilsen, *Bellona Report Number 2*, Section 4.3.4.

increase current force levels. New missiles could replace the SS-N-20 and SS-N-23 SLBMs on Typhoon and Delta IV-class SSBNs. New vessels could replace the aging general-purpose submarines. The government could budget and deliver the money to repair and maintain the existing general-purpose vessels. Funding for operations could increase, and could be provided regularly, allowing crews to maintain proficiency.

While this scenario would avoid the problems described in the “worst case,” it is extremely unlikely. Few signals have indicated a move to prominence for the navy. This scenario would require huge investments at the expense of other services. The prevailing trends in Moscow make it implausible.

D. THE LIKELY FUTURE

Neither the “worst case” nor the “best case” is likely. There have been no indications that the Russian government has made any major decisions about the Russian submarine force. Admirals and politicians regularly make public statements declaring their support for submarines. Leaders recognize the submarine’s importance for national security, yet they have taken no decisive action. In order for the submarine force to thrive, the government must make it a priority.

The biggest problems facing the submarine force—and the navy—are solvable only at the highest levels of the Russian government. Because that government is dominated by the executive (the powers of the Russian Duma are much smaller than those of the U.S. Congress), the personal choices of President Vladimir Putin and Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov are critical.

If the highest levels of leadership decide to develop the submarine force, the necessary resources will be provided. The contents of the still-secret military reform plan may therefore largely determine the future of the submarine force. Putin has declared that the strategic nuclear deterrence forces will remain a triad, but the relative proportions are still unclear.¹⁶⁹

The government can only correct the funding shortfalls by increasing both the amount of money allocated to the navy, and the amount actually received. Military and political leaders could take steps to eliminate wanton fraud and corruption. Military reform could include scaling back what the navy must do. Too much is expected of it and not enough resources are provided. Because the navy is unlikely to receive much more money, a logical solution could be mission elimination or redefinition. The 1998 elimination of the navy's obligation to supervise and pay for the dismantlement of decommissioned nuclear submarines is a promising beginning.¹⁷⁰ The government could continue by trimming the navy's shore infrastructure responsibilities, such as providing public utilities to towns. The government could transfer operations in the Caspian Sea to the border guards and control over the nuclear test sites at Novaya Zemlya to the Ministry of Atomic Energy. The navy is unlikely to initiate such changes because the admirals are unwilling to give up part of their domain. If the navy's missions are to be trimmed, the government must take the initiative.

¹⁶⁹ "Russian Army Set to Undergo Massive Reforms."

¹⁷⁰ Igor Kudrik, "Minatom to Handle Spent Submarine Fuel," Bellona Foundation, 22 April 1998, [http] Available online: www.bellona.no/imaker?id=12178&sub=1; Kudrik, "Minatom Takes Over Naval Radwaste."

Factors outside Russia's control will also affect any decision on the submarine force. An international conflict—such as a crisis over Taiwan or in the South China Sea, or renewed tensions involving Russian ships in the Persian Gulf—might draw attention to Russia's naval plight. This might add to the call for further naval development. If, however, the Chechen campaign continues to underscore Russia's need for ground forces, the submarine force may continue to suffer. A U.S. decision to build missile defenses could also affect Russia's submarine force. Such a U.S. decision could lead Russia to push for changes to the START treaties. For example, Moscow would probably seek a revision in the START II treaty to allow MIRVed ICBMs. This would remove one of the submarine force's advantages (MIRVed intercontinental-range missiles), but it would refocus national leaders' attention on nuclear weapons, and could thereby enhance the status of the submarine force.

The most likely scenario falls somewhere between the “best” and “worst” outlined above. It appears probable that the SSBN-centered submarine force will retain a low operations tempo. The general purpose submarines will probably only go to sea in preparation for distant missions—such as the planned (then canceled) 2000 deployment to the Mediterranean, or the recent deployment to India and South East Asia. The *Kursk* was training for a deployment to the Mediterranean when it sank in August 2000.¹⁷¹

Furthermore, given the funding constraints, SSBN patrols will probably decrease. That is, SSBNs will normally conduct their alert periods at the pier. This will save the

¹⁷¹ Khodarenok; Richard Scott, “Russia's Navy Looks to Show the Flag Again,” *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 6 April 2001, [http] Available online: jdw.janes.com/subscribe/archive/jdw2001/jdw01248.htm, [Accessed 11 April 2001].

money the government would otherwise need to pay for fuel to get the vessel to sea. It will also lessen stress on the submarine hulls and other equipment, reducing the required repairs. It is likely that during times of crisis some of these SSBNs would go to sea. Their communications connectivity and operational capacity would be questionable, however. Having had little experience at sea, they would be more likely to have accidents and would be less able to evade an adversary's anti-submarine capabilities.

According to the most likely scenario identified by the analysis in this thesis, a small number of new submarines will enter the Russian Navy over time, but not at nearly the same rate at which existing vessels will be retired. The submarines in Russia's current inventory will rapidly lose their combat capability. Because the government lacks the money to send them to sea and maintain them in proper condition, the scenario suggests, they may be dangerous to their own crews and to the environment, as well as ineffective in combat.

To avoid this future the Russian government—specifically President Vladimir Putin and Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov—would have to make a conscious decision to make the effectiveness of submarines—both SSBNs and general-purpose vessels—a priority. They would have to devote enough of the budget to submarines to ensure their maintenance, operation, and future development. Without such definitive policy decisions the Russian submarine force will slowly wither into a hollow force of limited numbers and capability.

INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center 2
8725 John J. Kingman Road, Suite 0944
Ft. Belvoir, VA 22060-6218
2. Dudley Knox Library 2
Naval Postgraduate School
411 Dyer Road
Monterey, CA 93943-5101
3. David S. Yost 1
Code NS/Yo
Naval Post Graduate School
Monterey, CA 93943-5100
4. Mikhail Tsypkin 1
Code NS/Tk
Naval Post Graduate School
Monterey, CA 93943-5100
5. LT John M. Tully, USN 3
279 Lincoln Ave
St. James, NY 11780
6. CDR Kevin Farrell, USN 1
Naval Information Warfare Activity
4251 Suitland Rd
Washington, DC 20395-5720