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IS EURASIA'S SECURITY ORDER AT RISK?

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The foundation stones of European and Eurasian security are the series of treaties beginning with the Helsinki treaty of 1975 and its extension at Moscow in 1991; the 1987 Washington Treaty on Intermediate Nuclear forces in Europe (INF); the 1990 Paris Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), extended in 1999; and the Paris and Rome treaties between NATO and Russia in 1997 and 2002. However, some, if not all, of these treaties are apparently at risk.

In 2005 Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivano, told U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that Russia was thinking of withdrawing from the INF Treaty. Although nothing came of this gambit, a lower-ranking Russian general restated this interest in early, 2006, obviously at his superiors' instigation.

Ivanov and his subordinates now also say that Russia might withdraw from the CFE Treaty. Russia claims that the Baltic states' failure to ratify this treaty makes the Baltic a "gray area" from which potential threats to Russian security could come, even though Moscow also admits that NATO's token forces there hardly represent a current threat. The West's reply is that, at the Istanbul 1999 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) conference, it stated that the Baltic nations would ratify this treaty when Russia withdraws its forces from Moldova and Georgia as it promised to do then. Russia since has refused either to withdraw those forces or accept that it had any legal or political obligation to do so. Thus a standoff has ensued.

Recently, thanks partly to Western pressure, Russia agreed with Georgia that it would leave its bases there by 2008. Meanwhile, it refuses to leave Moldova. Indeed, it seeks a 20-year lease on a base there to perpetuate its intervention on behalf of a separatist and visibly criminalized Russian faction across the Dniester River. Russian officials also talk of launching political gambits to formalize Russia's incorporation of Georgia's breakaway province, South Ossetia, into Russia.

These actions would not only violate Russia's 1999 agreement, putting the lie to claims that Russia has no juridical obligation to leave Moldova and Georgia, they also would shatter the basis of European security as outlined in the aforementioned treaties. Incorporation of South Ossetia by force not only invokes Soviet and Tsarist precedents, it violates the Helsinki and Moscow treaties, the Istanbul accords, and shatters the accords with NATO. Like Moscow's 2004 and 2006 intervention in Ukrainian elections, such actions betray Russia's continuing inability to accept the end of empire in Eurasia even though a Russian empire there inherently threatens Eurasian and even Russian security.

Moreover, the efforts to withdraw from the INF and CFE treaties are connected to Russian fears that Western military-political pressure will be used to consolidate post-Soviet states' membership in NATO and/or the European Union (EU) or to compel

democratizing reforms in Russia, or elsewhere in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) where Moscow supports the reigning authoritarians. Since Russia cannot compete militarily with the United States, let alone with NATO, it has discussed openly using its strategic and/or tactical (or so called nonstrategic) nuclear weapons in a first strike mode in the event of a threat by either of those parties against it or its interests in the CIS. Indeed, it long ago gratuitously extended its nuclear umbrella to the CIS even though none of those states invited it to do so. But such contingency planning truly could only be taken to its logical culmination if Moscow frees itself from these two treaties that are pillars of arms control and security in Europe and renounces its interest in European security.

Ironically, Russia actually depends for its security on the restraints imposed by those treaties upon NATO's members, including Washington. Moreover, it depends on them for subsidies through the Nunn-Lugar Act or Comprehensive Threat Reduction program to gain control over its nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons arsenals. Without that funding, it is quite likely that the recent visible regeneration of the Russian armed forces would have been impeded greatly because at least some of those funds would have had to go to maintain or destroy decaying nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Russia also needs Western, and especially American, help against terrorism emanating from Afghanistan or Iranian and North Korean nuclearization. Therefore, these efforts to withdraw from the relevant treaties are quite misguided, even though Moscow's legal right to withdraw from a treaty is obvious. But if Moscow persists in these attempts to weaken, eviscerate, or even leave these treaties, what does that signify concerning its goals, and what, then, is the future of European and Eurasian security?