Russia considers the Northeastern part of Asia a very important area. Two of Russia's largest federal regions – the Siberian and the Far East regions – represent about 2/3 of the whole Russian territory (see Table 1). The territory of these regions is larger than that of the United States or China. At the same time their population is relatively small and comparable with that of North Korea or Taiwan.

The Eastern part of Russia is rich with natural resources including oil, natural gas, metals, etc. In particular, proved oil resources in the region are estimated as 1.3 billion tons, which is almost 20% of the total Russian proved reserves. At the same time, the territory of Eastern Russia is not well explored yet, so that some experts believe that oil resources are larger by an order of magnitude. If oil production is increased and an appropriate transportation system is created, the Siberian and the Far Eastern oil could become an attractive import option for China, Japan, and South Korea, as demand for energy resources grows in these countries.

The demographic situation in the Russian East is growing ever more complex (Table 5). Even at the time of the Soviet Union, the region was not economically self-sustained. The federal center subsidized the region, but the investments were halted after the collapse of the Soviet Union, so that the population found itself in a very complicated situation. As a result,
many people chose to move to the Western regions of Russia. The population of the Siberian and Far East regions dropped by nearly 12% during the last eleven years, and it is very difficult to stop this tendency, because the population of Russia as a whole is diminishing. In particular, it dropped by almost 4 million people since 1992.8

At the same time, a high demographic pressure comes from China, where the density of population is much higher. Depending on the area taken into account, the density of population to the south of the Russian-Chinese border exceeds that to the north by a factor from 15 to 30.10 In particular, about 100-120 million people live in the Heilongjiang province alone, which neighbors the Primorsky Krai and the Khabarovsk Region. The majority of the population is relatively poor, and the unemployment rate is high. Since the Russian border has been opened for Chinese at the end of the 1980s, many have traveled to Russia as merchants or temporary workers.

The decline of the population and the Russian government’s inability to change this tendency gave rise to public concerns over the potential sinoification of the Eastern regions of Russia. Although there are different views on the seriousness of the problem and how to deal with it, experts in general agree that on the longer term Russia may face a Kosovo-like scenario if migrants from neighboring countries eventually make up the majority of the population and therefore dominate the local political power. Thus, Russian politicians frequently raise concerns about the possible loss of control over the Eastern part of Russia not as a result of general war with China or another country, but as a consequence of demographic changes in the region. It should be mentioned that Chinese authorities understand the problem and currently act responsibly. However, it is quite clear that any joint development of the regional resources like oil and gas will require an additional workforce. China is a very attractive source of cheap labor for the region. At the same time, the Russian authorities will have to find ways of keeping control over the migration process.

### The Role of Nuclear Weapons and Prospects for Reductions

The level of military confrontation between nuclear powers in the region has substantially decreased since 1980s. The bulk of today’s military forces is a legacy of the history. Both Russia and China continue to downsize their forces. Even though military host strategic submarines once the last Delta-III nuclear submarines will be retired. Thus, perhaps, the only place where strategic forces will remain in this part of Russia is Ukrainka, the home of strategic bombers.

As deployment of strategic nuclear forces in the Eastern part of Russia is curtailed, non-strategic nuclear weapons in the region may be assigned budgets are increasing, modernization still continues, although at a slower pace. At the same time, inferior by quantity but thus far superior by quality of its arsenals, Russia feels that it needs nuclear weapons to maintain a balance of forces.11

Currently, about 20% of the deployed Russian strategic nuclear forces remain in the Eastern part of Russia (see Table 7). As strategic forces shrink, the pace of reductions in the region is the fastest. In particular, three of the four divisions of the Russian Strategic Forces that have been disbanded since 2000 were located here. And the reductions will continue. Most likely, the SS-18 base at Uzhur will be closed down after 2010. The future of the SS-25 mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) is also uncertain, as they are getting older. The submarine base on the Kamchatka peninsula will likely no longer have a stronger role. According to the author’s assessment, nearly one third of the 3,300 Russian non-strategic weapons15 are assigned for deployment with general-purpose forces in the Siberian and Far Eastern military districts (see Table 8). All of these weapons are currently kept at central storage facilities of the 12th Directorate of the Russian Armed Forces. In case of hostilities they can be deployed with surface-to-surface, surface-to-air, air-to-surface, anti-ship, antisubmarine missiles, and other dual-use means of the Ground, Air, and Naval Forces.

Estimates of deployed nuclear forces of China are largely speculative and variable. According to U.S. experts, China deploys about 400 nuclear warheads.16 Russian expert estimates of the total Chinese arsenal are about two times higher (about 700 warheads).18 The nuclear forces of...
China will likely grow numerically in response to the buildup of the US missile defense systems.

Fortunately, the current situation in the region is quite stable. Russia reduces its strategic forces deployed in Eastern Siberia and the Far East. There are no signs that Russian non-strategic forces would grow there either. If China builds up its nuclear forces, the current pace is slow. However, it is quite clear that the current state of affairs cannot be preserved indefinitely. In particular, the existing situation reduces chances to open a productive dialog on transparency of non-strategic nuclear weapons between Russia, the US, and NATO. A way to break this deadlock could be to initiate talks between Russia and China on possible bilateral confidence-building measures in the nuclear area. Such discussions could involve both governmental and independent experts and become an important step toward improving security in Northeast Asia.

Conclusions

Several observations can be made from the above:

1. Russia is interested in a stable and peaceful development of its Eastern territories. It does not see an immediate external military threat from China or other countries in Northeast Asia, but Russia is concerned with the potential emergence of such a threat in future.

2. There is a great potential for growth of mutually beneficial economic cooperation between Russia and countries in Northeast Asia. However, the development of natural resources in Siberia and the Far East may create a complex demographic situation and provoke distrust and tensions in the region.

3. With respect to the regional situation in Northeast Asia, Russia considers its nuclear forces as an equalizer in a balance of military forces and as a “hedge” against potentially undesirable developments in the future (e.g. a Kosovo-like conflict or war).

4. In order to support a regional military balance, Russia may place more emphasis on non-strategic nuclear weapons assigned to its armed forces in Northeast Asia while its strategic forces shrink.

5. There is a need to start developing transparency and confidence-building measures between China and Russia on nuclear forces in order to achieve further reductions of nuclear arsenals.

1 The figures for the population of Russia are taken from official data of the State Committee on Statistics (www.gks.ru) and correspond to January 1, 2004. Figures for other countries are taken from: Naselenie i Obshchestvo (Population and Society), No 74, August 2003, Information Bulletin of the Center for Demography and Human Ecology at the Institute of National Economy Forecasting, Russian Academy of Sciences.
Report on “Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons”

The Center for Arms Control, Energy and Environmental Studies at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology released an English translation of a new "Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons. Problems of Control and Reduction". The report analyzes place and role of Non-Strategic Nuclear Weapons (NSNW) in Russian, US, and NATO nuclear doctrines, assesses their NSNW arsenals, studies their approaches towards problems of NSNW control and reductions, and suggests possible solutions to these problems.

The Introduction analyzes the current state of affairs in the sphere of control and reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons. Particularly, it is concluded that after the 1987 INF Treaty and the 1991 Presidential initiatives, no noticeable steps have been made.

Chapter 1 is devoted to problems of classification of nuclear weapons. There is no common view among nuclear arms control experts on what tactical (non-strategic) nuclear weapons are. One of the reasons is that objectively, it is rather difficult to choose criteria that would help differentiate between strategic and non-strategic arms unambiguously. Other reasons that make classification difficult are also considered. Classification used in the report is based on provisions of the START-I Treaty, and according to it strategic nuclear weapons are the US and Russian ones that are covered by START-I limitations, including nuclear warheads attributed to them, while non-strategic nuclear weapons are US and Russian weapons that are not considered to be strategic.

Chapter 2 analyzes place and role of NSNW in Russia's nuclear doctrine, gives an assessment of the Russian NSNW arsenal, and briefly describes nuclear safeguard measures.

Chapter 3 provides an analysis of the US NSNW, analyzes place and role of NSNW in the present-day American nuclear policy, the current status of the US non-strategic nuclear forces, and planning issues; also considered are current US discussions that question the need to maintain NSNW, as well as issues related to development of new non-strategic nuclear weapons.

Chapter 4 analyzes the NATO nuclear doctrine, provides assessments of NATO nuclear forces and of the US nuclear forces in Europe, and considers legal aspects of its deployment and use. The Chapter also analyzes contradictions of the NATO nuclear strategy in view of its extension to the East and in connection with provisions of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Chapter 5 analyzes US and Russia's attitudes towards controllable reductions of NSNW and discusses why progress in the sphere of control and reductions of NSNW would be in the interest of all concerned; suggested are possible ways to solve this problem.

The full report is available as a PDF file at www.armscontrol.ru.