

## Chapter 5

# Russia

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Termination of the Intermediate-Range  
Nuclear Forces Treaty from the  
Perspective of the Putin Administration

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President Vladimir Putin has effectively occupied the position of supreme leader of Russia since 2000, including the time when he was prime minister. He has been under pressure to push forward social security reforms and enact strict fiscal discipline from a long-term perspective, while at the same time he is required to manage his administration carefully so as not to turn his own administration into a lame duck or provoke the destabilization of federal-regional relations. Under the strong leadership of President Putin, the Security Council (equivalent to the NSC in other countries) is playing a core role in the formulation and implementation of policies in the national security domain, including relations with Japan.

After the termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty on August 2, 2019, the United States and Russia both officially commenced development of intermediate-range missiles, raising the possibility of a missile arms race unfolding in East Asia. There is inherent potential for fundamental changes to occur in international relations in Northeast Asia, including US-Russia relations, China-Russia relations, and Japan-Russia relations, and there is risk that the strategic environment in East Asia will be significantly impacted. Going forward, there is a pressing need to develop scenarios for Russia's deployment of intermediate-range missiles in the Russian Far East within range of Japan.

On July 23, 2019, the militaries of China and Russia carried out a joint air patrol from the East China Sea to the Sea of Japan, the first such patrol in the history of military cooperation between the two countries. Because the formation flew through airspace that had been established as the air defense identification zone of Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK), a situation arose in which responses to airspace incursions and other measures were taken. Furthermore, in September, the large-scale exercise Tsentr-2019 (Center-2019) led by Russia and centered on the Central Military District was conducted in the form of a multilateral exercise in which members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) also participated.

The “hybrid warfare” that has been actively discussed in recent years as a new form of warfare used by Russia, the “matter of degree” to which unconventional means are used, is easy to execute in some former republics of the Soviet Union due to the vulnerability of their social infrastructure. Furthermore, the dissemination of information through the mass media and the Internet is possible at an extremely small cost.

## 1. Issues surrounding the Leadership of President Putin and Political Stability

### (1) Careful Management of Internal Affairs Required of the Putin Administration

President Vladimir Putin has effectively occupied the position of supreme leader of Russia since 2000. Including his period as prime minister, he will have ruled the Russian Federation for nearly a quarter-century by the expiration of his term in 2024. The Putin administration is characterized by political stability against the backdrop of presidential leadership and stable president-parliament relations. On the other hand, the Russian people are strongly dissatisfied with the issues of corruption, media regulation, and the economic situation. Public backlash against the administration strengthened in 2019, for example, with acts of solidarity by major media outlets in response to suspected unlawful arrests of journalists and protest demonstrations pertaining to the Moscow City Duma elections. Although Russia's political regime is based on "competitive authoritarianism," i.e., elections are regularly implemented as a formal institution, problems with fair competition are frequently reported in those elections. Based on these trends, there is a possibility that Russia's political regime will change greatly as 2024 approaches.

According to a major Russian public opinion polling agency, President Putin's approval rating had hovered in the 80% range after the annexation of Crimea in March 2014. However, triggered by the problem of pension reforms, his approval rating declined to 70% in August 2018 and 64% in March 2019, and subsequently has remained roughly in the 65% to 70% range. While this margin of decline is not expected to have a significant impact on the management of the administration immediately, it is at about the same level as during the period when the anti-Putin protests intensified from 2011 to 2012.

The basic policy direction of the current administration was indicated in the May 2018 presidential decree "On National Goals and Strategic Objectives of the Russian Federation through to 2024." The February 2019 Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly also adhered to the policy direction set out in this presidential decree, and focused on social and economic issues, including the development of the digital economy.<sup>1</sup> According to the three-year federal budget

law for 2020–2022 approved in December 2019, the national defense budget for the single fiscal year of 2020 was 3.1 trillion rubles (approximately 4% less than in the previous year), or 2.4% of GDP.<sup>2</sup> In the 2021 and 2022 planned budgets as well, national defense expenditure is expected to be maintained in the 2% to 3% range with respect to GDP, and while this budget amount will remain stable, the trend toward relative restraint—as compared with immediately after the Ukraine crisis—continues.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, expenditures pertaining to social policies, innovation, and the economic modernization program are growing. The administration and ruling party are expected to tackle reforms of the social security system and economic structure while paying close attention to public opinion trends as the elections for the State Duma (lower house) planned for the second half of 2021 approach.

On June 6, 2019, investigative journalist Ivan Golunov of the independent news site *Meduza* was arrested on the suspicion of attempted drug-selling. Early in the morning of the following day, June 7, a solitary picket was held in protest in front of the building of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) General Administration for the City of Moscow.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, on June 10, the major newspapers *Vedomosti*, *Kommersant*, and *RBK* published a joint statement on the front page of their morning editions. They pointed out the illegality of the inquiry and called for transparency in the investigation process.<sup>5</sup> Golunov had taken a critical attitude toward the administration in his investigative reporting, zeroing in on corruption problems related to government procurement and the actual situation regarding the enormous presidential residence on the lakefront of Lake Valdayskoye, etc.<sup>6</sup> The following day, June 11, as a result of the investigation, Minister of Internal Affairs Vladimir Kolokoltsev made the determination that the journalist would not be subjected to a criminal prosecution. Furthermore, the Minister of Internal Affairs petitioned President Putin to dismiss the Head of the Department for the Control of Drug Trafficking of the MIA General Administration for the City of Moscow and the Head of the Department of Internal Affairs for the Western Administrative District of the MIA General Administration for the City of Moscow,<sup>7</sup> and those dismissals were ordered in a presidential decree dated June 13.<sup>8</sup> The core of the Putin administration had aimed to put the matter to rest with a speedy response. However, as symbolized by the act of solidarity by the three major newspapers, a strong sense of distrust of the security agencies, in particular MIA, remained. In these recent incidents,

the shared perceptions of media organizations and journalists with respect to the freedom of speech and the right to know guaranteed by the current Constitution of the Russian Federation were widely presented inside and outside Russia.<sup>9</sup> Going forward, the movement seeking to ensure accountability for the full range of the government's activities is likely to become even stronger.

During the Moscow City Duma elections, in mid-July 2019, notifications of 57 of the 233 people who intended to run for office were not accepted, with reasons given such as errors in the signatures necessary for candidate registration.<sup>10</sup> As a result, many of the independent candidates close to opposition leader Alexei Navalny were unable to run in the elections. For this reason, large-scale protest movements calling for fair elections were staged from late July to August, primarily in Moscow. MIA and the National Guard of the Russian Federation, which were in charge of regulating and controlling protests, responded severely to unauthorized protest movements, and on both July 27 and August 3, more than 1,000 people were temporarily taken into custody.<sup>11</sup> The protest movement on August 10, implemented with the permission of the authorities, was the largest since 2011; according to "OVD-Info," there were about 60,000 participants, 256 of whom were taken into custody.<sup>12</sup> In these series of protests, the activities of law enforcement agencies were strongly questioned once again; for example, video footage of riot police punching a female protester while taking her into custody spread on social networking services, and MIA launched an investigation.<sup>13</sup> Various problems related to administrative procedures and the guarantee of rights under the Constitution pertaining to public assembly and protest marches will undoubtedly continue to be a focus in contemporary Russian politics.

Nationwide local elections, during which the governors and provincial assembly members of the federal subjects of Russia such as republics and oblasts are elected, were held on September 8, 2019. In some regions, the ruling party was forced into a tough battle, and advances by the opposition were seen. In the Moscow City Duma election (a total of 45 seats), the ruling party United Russia saw its seats drop from 38 held before the election to 25. On the other hand, the main opposition party, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, increased its seats from 5 to 13, becoming the second largest party in the Duma. Furthermore, two left wing parties that had held no seats before the election, A Just Russia and the Russian United Democratic Party "Yabloko," attained third party status.<sup>14</sup> Opposition parties prevented from running in the nationwide local

elections deployed a “smart vote strategy” to stop the ruling party forces from winning, and it is thought that this produced results to some extent, particularly in Moscow. Additionally, in the Khabarovsk City Duma elections in the Far East region, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), a far-right political party led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, won 34 of the 35 seats. In Komsomolsk-na-Amure city, the LDPR captured 24 of 25 seats.<sup>15</sup> The weakening of the vote-gathering machine in local areas, particularly for the ruling party United Russia, is being observed.

The trends in internal affairs surrounding the 2019 elections recall the large-scale protests about “electoral legitimacy” that took place at the time of the 2011 State Duma (lower house) elections and the 2012 presidential election. On the other hand, in the most recent 2016 lower house elections and 2018 presidential election, protest movements did not gain much momentum against the backdrop of rising approval ratings for the administration as a result of the Ukraine crisis and strengthened legal regulations and crackdowns on protest movements. The opposition, led by Navalny, called for a boycott of the elections and focused their efforts on election monitoring.<sup>16</sup> In the leadup to the next election cycle, including the elections of the lower house in 2021 and the presidential election in 2024, the Putin administration is under pressure to push forward social security reforms and enact strict fiscal discipline from a long-term perspective. On the other hand, President Putin is required to govern cautiously to ensure that his administration does not become a lame duck or provoke the destabilization of federal-regional relations.

In addition, it is necessary to pay attention to the discussions around constitutional reform, including amendments to the presidential term of office. At his annual end-of-year press conference held on December 19, 2019, President Putin mentioned an amendment to Article 81 of the Constitution, which stipulates the presidential term of office. Under the current system, one and the same person may not be elected President of the Russian Federation for more than two terms in a row. President Putin stated that it was possible to delete the phrase “in a row.”<sup>17</sup> If this were realized, a prohibition on three terms for the president would be made clear. The issue of the presidential term is likely to have a large impact on the discussions around the post-Putin administration. Furthermore, discussions by Vyacheslav Volodin, Chairman of the State Duma, about constitutional amendments to expand parliamentary power are related to

partial restrictions on the prime minister's authority regarding cabinet formation and the presidential authority to form federal executive organs.<sup>18</sup> In the leadup to the next election cycle, discussions concerning the form of the political system in Russia are expected to become even more vigorous.

## **(2) Policy Mechanisms in the National Security Domain and the Role of the Security Council**

Under the strong leadership of President Putin, the Presidential Administration and the Security Council play a core role in the formulation and implementation of policies in the national security domain.<sup>19</sup> In July 2019, it was reported that the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation would be revised in 2020.<sup>20</sup> This document is the most important national strategy document that presents Russia's perception of the strategic environment and stipulates the basic direction of all the major policies, from foreign policy and military security policy to the social and economic policy domains. It is revised approximately every six years based on the law on strategic planning. The current National Security Strategy was revised on December 31, 2015.<sup>21</sup> The Security Council, which is chaired by the president, is leading this revision work. Secretary of the Security Council Nikolai Patrushev, the top official in the Apparatus of the Security Council and Putin's closest advisor, has substantial command of the revision work.

Secretary Patrushev used to work for the Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (KGB) in the Soviet era, and in 1998 succeeded Putin to serve as Deputy Chief of Staff of the Presidential Administration – Head of the Presidential Control Directorate and First Deputy Director of the FSB. Patrushev was the person responsible for the espionage and security section of the Putin administration as the Director of the FSB for approximately nine years until 2008.<sup>22</sup> In May 2008, a tandem administration was launched when Putin and Dmitry Medvedev swapped the posts of president and prime minister. At that time, Patrushev was appointed Secretary of the Security Council, and has since been consistently at the center of power in the Kremlin. His eldest son Dmitry Patrushev has joined the Putin administration as the Minister of Agriculture. He received training at the State University of Management, the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the FSB Academy, and is not necessarily a pure expert in agricultural policy.<sup>23</sup> Secretary Patrushev's second son, Andrey Patrushev, is an expert in energy who graduated from the National

University of Oil and Gas, and has also received training at the FSB Academy and the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After serving as an executive of Gazprom Neft, which is responsible for energy development in the Arctic continental shelf, he now heads the independent noncommercial organization center “Arctic Initiative.”<sup>24</sup> The influence of Siloviki (people who used to work for the military or security agencies) remains strong in important policies related to national security, including energy development in the Arctic Circle.

On July 17, 2019, Secretary Patrushev called a meeting of the Interdepartmental Commission of the Security Council on Strategic Planning (the “Strategic Commission”). In this meeting, the importance of guaranteeing mutual connectivity between the National Security Strategy and the Russian Federation’s social and economic development strategy was emphasized.<sup>25</sup> The Secretary of the Security Council serves as the Chair, the Deputy Secretary of the Security Council as the Vice-Chair, and the Deputy Director of the FSB as the Chief of the Secretariat in the Strategic Commission, which is comprised of the deputy director-generals of the Presidential Administration, the vice-ministers from each ministry and the Deputy Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to Federal District, etc. National policies at the federal level are comprehensively coordinated in the Strategic Commission before being decided in a Security Council meeting chaired by the president.

In addition to planning and deciding the national security policies, two important functions have been given to the Security Council. They are regional



Russian Security Council Secretary Patrushev (left) and FSB Director Bortnikov (right) (Sputnik/Kyodo News Images)

meetings and NSC diplomacy by the Secretary of the Security Council. In Russia, which has been faced with latent centrifugal tendencies in the federal-regional relations, the core of the administration performs direct supervision of the implementation of important policies through regional meetings. In July 2019, Yury Trutnev, Deputy Prime Minister – Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to the Far Eastern Federal District, Alexander



Kozlov, Minister for the Development of the Russian Far East and Arctic, and other top government officials and local governors attended a regional meeting held in Amur oblast concerning urgent issues pertaining to national security in the Far East and Zabaykalsky Krai. In the meeting, various issues related to the military-industrial complex of the Far East region and counterterrorism measures were discussed. In conjunction with this, Secretary Patrushev visited the Vostochny Cosmodrome with Deputy Prime Minister Yury Borisov (in charge of national defense industries), Director General of Roscosmos Dmitry Rogozin, and other officials, and observed the launch of the Soyuz-2-1b carrying the weather satellite Meteor-M and other payloads.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, Secretary Patrushev of the Security Council frequently implemented NSC diplomacy to discuss important issues related to national security with his counterparts in other countries. When Secretary Patrushev visited Israel in June 2019, he met with John Bolton, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs of the United States, to discuss strategic stability, arms control, the Venezuela problem, among other matters.<sup>27</sup> In September, in Moscow, he discussed security issues in Europe and Russian-French cooperation in the field of information security with Claire Landais, the French Secretary General for Defence and National Security.<sup>28</sup> In addition, on April 25, 2019, when the Russia-North Korea Summit Meeting was held in Vladivostok, Secretary Patrushev visited Seoul and met with Chung Eui-yong, Director of the National Security Office, and President Moon Jae-in.<sup>29</sup> On key policy issues, Secretary Patrushev continues to be entrusted to serve as President Putin's closest advisor.

Channels of dialogue are being built between the Cabinet Secretariat and the Prime Minister's Office of Japan and the Kremlin core; for example, a memorandum of cooperation was concluded between Japan's National Security Secretariat and the Russian Security Council Apparatus in September 2017.<sup>30</sup> The establishment of channels with the Kremlin core started with the Memorandum between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Russian Security Council Apparatus concluded in October 2012 under the Noda Yoshihiko administration. Under the Abe Shinzo administration inaugurated in December 2012, Yachi Shigeto, Secretary General of the National Security Secretariat, and Secretary Patrushev had held eight rounds of talks by the end of 2018.<sup>31</sup>

In September 2019, talks were held in Tokyo with Kitamura Shigeru, the newly-appointed head of the National Security Secretariat, concerning Japan-

Russia relations and bilateral security policies and other matters, and a courtesy call was paid to Prime Minister Abe.<sup>32</sup> Assistant to the Secretary of the Security Council Aleksandr Venediktov, who frequently participates in talks between Japan and Russia, stated in an interview article in December 2018 that “in negotiations with our partner of Japan on the line of the Security Council, themes pertaining to Japan-US military cooperation are constantly at the center of interest,”<sup>33</sup> and revealed that they were discussing defense and military security issues, in particular the impact of the security treaty between Japan and the United States on Japan-Russia relations. Venediktov, who was promoted from an aide to a deputy secretary in February 2019, has a long history of working in the Apparatus of the Security Council,<sup>34</sup> and plays a core role in the Apparatus as he frequently accompanies Patrushev on his trips abroad and handles long interviews with the mass media regarding global security issues, including the INF Treaty issue.<sup>35</sup> The Security Council of Russia plays a large role in policies toward Japan as well, and Deputy Secretary Venediktov is seen as a key player in this context.

It can be concluded that the Presidential Administration is also a crucial state institution for implementing Kremlin-led foreign policies, in particular the delicate policies. The Presidential Directorate for Social and Economic Cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States Member Countries, the Republic of Abkhazia, and the Republic of South Ossetia was reorganized into the Presidential Directorate for Cross-Border Cooperation in October 2018. The matter under its jurisdiction is deemed to be that it “supports the activities of the President on cross-border cooperation with the Republic of Abkhazia, the Republic of South Ossetia and Ukraine, as well as with other neighboring states at the instruction of the President.”<sup>36</sup> The Directorate is believed to be mainly in charge of relations with so-called unrecognized states. Vladislav Surkov, a presidential aide, commands the Directorate, and there is speculation that a division for cooperation with Ukraine has been established inside the Directorate.<sup>37</sup>

In April 2019, a personnel change for the Presidential Directorate for Cross-Border Cooperation was announced, and Alexei Filatov was newly appointed the head of the Directorate. Oleg Govorun, the previous head of the Directorate, was familiar with the regional economies and policies for local revitalization, having served in such roles as Chief of the Presidential Domestic Policy Directorate in the Presidential Administration, Presidential

Plenipotentiary Envoy to the Central Federal District, and Minister of Regional Development. His successor Filatov, however, reportedly commanded Russia-South Ossetia relations in the Directorate, was appointed Deputy-Head from 2018, and served as the “manager” of Donetsk and Luhansk, which have declared separation and independence from Ukraine.<sup>38</sup> While the situation in eastern Ukraine remains unstable, in particular with the simplification of procedures to grant Russian nationality to residents of the region, policies toward Ukraine and the unrecognized states problem are positioned as matters for the exclusive jurisdiction of the Kremlin.<sup>39</sup>

## 2. The Impact of INF Treaty Termination on Russian Diplomacy

### (1) The Arms Race between the United States and Russia in Asia

On October 20, 2018, President Donald Trump declared that the United States would withdraw from the INF Treaty for the reason that Russia was in breach of the treaty. Immediately afterwards, on October 23, Assistant to the President Bolton visited Moscow on short notice and informed President Putin of the United States’ intention to withdraw from the treaty. In an interview with a Russian newspaper, Assistant Bolton stated, “If Russia were to dismantle all of its equipment in violation of the treaty and China did the same, that that would be a different circumstance. I think there’s zero chance of that happening.”<sup>40</sup> Because Russia did not respond to this, the United States issued an ultimatum on December 5 to the effect that it would proceed to abrogate the treaty if Russia did not correct its violations within 60 days. The United States then officially notified Russia of its suspension of the treaty on February 1, 2019, and on March 4, President Putin also signed a presidential decree suspending observance of the treaty on the grounds that the United States was in breach of the treaty.<sup>41</sup> Subsequently, neither the United States nor Russia softened their stance, refusing to participate in discussions to suspend the termination unless the other party corrected their breaches of the treaty. As a result, the treaty was terminated on August 2, half a year after the United States notified Russia of its official withdrawal.

One of the reasons for the United States’ withdrawal from the INF Treaty was Russia’s development and deployment of new models of intermediate-

range missiles in breach of the treaty. In 2014, the then Obama administration mentioned for the first time that Russia had breached the treaty when it carried out test launches of new models of missiles; subsequently, in 2018, the Trump administration revealed that those missiles were named “SSC-8” by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (the Russian name is “9M729”), that their flight range had extended to more than 3,000 km, and that they had been fully deployed inside Russia. According to what was revealed by then Assistant to the President Bolton, Russia commenced test launches in 2008 and had been in breach of the INF Treaty since 2013.<sup>42</sup>

In response to this criticism, on January 23, 2019, the government of Russia held a briefing for the foreign military attachés and press correspondents to whom it displayed the controversial 9M729 cruise missile and presented the rebuttal that the missile was a modernized version of the 9M728 cruise missile that comprises the Iskander missile system, but with an actual range of 480 km, so it does not breach the INF Treaty, which covers a range of 500 km or further.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, Russia criticized the United States for breaching the INF Treaty based on Russia’s understanding that the ground-based Aegis system (Aegis Ashore) that the United States had been deploying in Romania and Poland was capable of launching land-attack cruise missiles with a range of over 2,000 km. Likewise, it is for this reason that Russia has repeatedly expressed concerns about the Aegis Ashore, which Japan plans to introduce.

On August 2, when the INF Treaty was terminated, recently appointed US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper released a statement asserting that the withdrawal of the United States from the INF Treaty was the direct result of Russia’s violations of the treaty over many years, and declared that beginning in 2017 the US Department of Defense (DOD) commenced research and development into ground-launched cruise and ballistic missiles within the scope of the INF Treaty, but due to its withdrawal from the treaty it would fully pursue the development of these ground-launched conventional missiles.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, on the following day, August 3, Secretary Esper declared his intention to swiftly deploy ground-based intermediate-range missiles in the Asia region, with an eye on China enhancing its nuclear forces. In response to this, President Putin issued a statement on August 5 denouncing the United States by saying it bore all of the responsibility for the termination of the treaty, and warning that if the United States resumed the development and deployment of intermediate-range

missiles, Russia would have no option other than to engage in a full-scale effort to develop similar missiles.<sup>45</sup> Sergei Ryabkov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, who held a press conference on the same day, stated that “Russia will not deploy intermediate-range missiles in Europe or other regions unless the United States places armaments of the same class there,” and called for self-restraint on the part of the United States not to initiate an arms race between the United States and Russia.

Nonetheless, on August 18, the US DOD launched a ground-launched cruise missile from a ground mobile launcher in California to a target more than 500 km away, making it clear that the United States had commenced development of intermediate-range missiles.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, in Russia, an explosion accident occurred at a Russian military facility on August 8 after the INF Treaty termination, temporarily raising the radiation level and killing five employees. The media in Western countries speculated there had been an accident during testing of the nuclear-powered cruise missile Burevestnik, which President Putin had mentioned in his Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly in March 2018.

In the National Defense Strategy published by the US DOD in January 2018 and the Indo-Pacific Strategy Report it published in June 2019, Russia was positioned as a “strategic competitor” which is challenging the United States and its allies and undermining the international order. Subsequently, on September 18, in a meeting of the US Air Force, Secretary of Defense Esper stated that “Russia remains our greatest near-term security challenge” due to its invasion of Georgia, annexation of Crimea, sustained aggression in Ukraine, “hybrid warfare” against Europe, etc.,<sup>47</sup> and expressed the perception that the threat of Russia is more pressing than that of China, which “presents an even greater long-term challenge.” If after termination of the INF Treaty the possibility increases of an arms race occurring between the United States and Russia over the development and deployment of intermediate-range missiles in the Asia region, the United States’ perception of Russia as a threat is likely to grow further on the military front as well.

The *Ryukyu Shimpō* dated October 3 reported that, according to Russian Presidential Administration officials who spoke to a journalist from the newspaper, the United States had explained to Russia in Washington on August 26 that it intended to consult with Japan in order to deploy new models of missiles

to Okinawa and other locations from the end of 2020 to 2021, that the missiles would be deployed to the four countries of Japan, Australia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, but excluded the ROK where denuclearization negotiations are proceeding, and that the measures were for the sole purpose of restraining China so it was not necessary for Russia to be concerned. Furthermore, the *Ryukyu Shimpo* dated October 19 reported that an official at the US DOD had told Tamaki Denny, Governor of Okinawa Prefecture, who was on a visit to the United States, that an announcement about where the missiles would be deployed could not be made at the current stage. In the form of a response to these media reports, in his four-hour-long, major annual press conference held on December 19, 2019, President Putin asked if there were any guarantees that the missiles would not be deployed to Japan, including the Northern Territories.<sup>48</sup> Vasily Kashin, senior research fellow of Higher School of Economics, a Russian military expert, has presented the outlook that the United States may deploy intermediate-range missiles in Guam and Japan, and because China already possesses many intermediate-range missiles, Russia will likely upgrade the Iskander missiles to deploy them to the Chukotka Peninsula in the Far East region facing the US state of Alaska.

Furthermore, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and Russia that entered into force in February 2011, will expire in February 2021. Russia, which does not have the strength to engage in a nuclear arms race with the United States, repeatedly lobbied Washington to promptly commence negotiations to extend the deadline of the treaty; however, although it was agreed to commence diplomatic negotiations at the US-Russia Summit Meeting held during the G20 Osaka Summit on June 28, no concrete progress was seen in the US-Russia Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Washington on December 10.

For the following reasons, the view that extending the deadline of the treaty will be difficult is strongly entrenched in Russia. Firstly, it is reported that when President Putin raised the problem of extending the treaty deadline in a telephone talk in January 2017 immediately after President Trump's inauguration, President Trump paused the call to ask his aides what the treaty was, and then replied that it was one of several bad deals concluded by the Obama administration. President Trump has no significant interest in the problem of arms control with Russia in the first place; moreover, he has a negative view of the policies of the previous Obama

administration. Secondly, key people involved in arms control at the time of the negotiations for New START such as Rose Gottemoeller, United States Under Secretary of State, and Anatoly Antonov, Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, are nowhere to be found; diplomatic channels between the United States and Russia are lacking due to staffing gaps at the US Department of State and the mutual expulsion of diplomats, etc. A five-year deadline extension is possible for New START, but there is little time left for the preparatory negotiations for an extension. Thirdly, as represented by Assistant to the President Bolton who contributed an opinion piece in 2011 titled “A Cold War Missile Treaty That’s Doing Us Harm” to the *Wall Street Journal*, an influential US newspaper, there is the military notion that an arms reduction treaty under which only the United States and Russia are militarily constrained is not useful for responding to China’s buildup of its nuclear forces. Fourthly, there are likely to be political considerations for the arms industry, one of the power bases of the Trump administration, which is attempting to expand the nuclear missile business.

Since the Ukraine crisis in 2014, Western countries have imposed economic sanctions on Russia, and this has structurally regulated the adversarial relationship between Western countries and Russia. Since the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, US-Russia relations have continued to deteriorate throughout Russia’s military intervention in Syria in 2015, the Russiagate problem in 2016, the attempted killing of a former Russian military intelligence agent in 2018, confrontation over the Venezuela situation in 2019, and more. If the arms control regime is lost and an arms race occurs, confrontation between the United States and Russia could escalate into military areas. Due to the Russiagate problem, US-Russia relations have become a matter of domestic politics in the United States, so it seems that a full-fledged improvement in relations is difficult for the time being.

## **(2) Impact on the Strategic Environment of East Asia**

Concerning the inequality of the INF Treaty under which only the United States and Russia are regulated, it was in fact Russia that first raised this problem. In 2007, President Putin stated that the “INF Treaty no longer serves Russia’s interests” and hinted at withdrawal from the treaty. He then cited as reasons his opposition to the deployment of the missile defense (MD) system in Europe by the United States and the fact that Russia’s neighboring countries had deployed intermediate-range nuclear missiles. Subsequently, Russia proposed

multilateralization of the treaty, but since there is no possibility of emerging nuclear powers such as China joining the treaty, Russia is thought to have commenced augmentation of the Iskander missiles in a manner contrary to the treaty. It is Russia, a continental state in Eurasia, that is enthusiastic about the development and deployment of ground-based intermediate-range missiles; moreover, it is reported that ground-launched missiles do not cost as much as sea- or air-launched missiles. Russia is also sensitive to the nuclear buildup of neighboring country China, with which it shares 4,300 km of international border. According to Russian military expert Aleksandr Khramchihin, more than 90% of China's missiles are capable of targeting Russia, and if the Dongfeng (DF) 26 (with a maximum range of 4,000 km) were launched from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, they could target nearly all of the territory of Russia except for Russia's Kaliningrad exclave.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, in January 2017, China's *Global Times* reported that a new model of intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), the Dongfeng (DF) 41 (maximum range of 14,000 km), had been deployed to Heilongjiang Province near the Russian border. In a form of response to this, there was a series of media reports and discussions from among the media and military experts inside Russia declaring concern about China's nuclear buildup. In the current China-Russia strategic partnership, China's economic superiority has been established, but Russia's superiority is also being shaken in the military area, centered on its nuclear forces.

In September 2018, the military exercise Vostok-2018 (East-2018) was implemented in Eastern Siberia and the Far East region with the participation of approximately 300,000 troops. It was the first large-scale military exercise in 37 years, comparable to the Zapad-81 (West-81) exercise, which is reported to be the largest military exercise implemented by the Soviet Union in the Cold War period; moreover, 3,500 troops from the Chinese People's Liberation Army and the Mongolian military also participated. In this exercise, the Russian military carried out Iskander-M missile launch drills near the China-Russia border, and undertook moves that can be interpreted as being based on an awareness of China's nuclear forces. As stated earlier, the United States is criticizing these missiles for breaching the INF Treaty. Supposing missiles with a range of 2,000 km were deployed to the China-Russia border, northern China, including Beijing, and the Japanese archipelago, would also fall within their range. During the aforementioned major press conference held at the end of 2019, President



Putin repeatedly declared his sense of caution with respect to the United States, but clearly stated that he had no plan to form a military alliance with China.<sup>50</sup>

After INF Treaty termination, new discussions on how to deal with the emerging nuclear powers such as China also began for Russia, and from that perspective, the possibility that the confrontational phase of US-Russia relations could be alleviated cannot be excluded. Furthermore, the fact that Russia possesses intermediate-range nuclear forces with an eye on China's nuclear forces provides evidence for the existence of the "China factor" in the military policies of Russia, and there is also a possibility that this will cast a shadow over the political honeymoon between China and Russia to date. Moreover, if intermediate-range missiles appear in the Russian Far East in the future, it could have a direct impact on the security of Japan as well, as Japan would be within their range. Based on the above, there is a possibility that INF Treaty termination will lead to an arms race between the United States and Russia, and in addition, it has the potential to essentially change international relations in Northeast Asia, including US-Russia relations, China-Russia relations, and Japan-Russia relations, so in that sense there is a risk that it could have a large impact on the strategic environment of East Asia.

### **(3) Japan-Russia Relations from the Perspective of Security**

Sharing a strong determination to resolve the issue themselves without leaving it to the next generation, at the Japan-Russia Summit Meeting in Singapore in November 2018, the two leaders agreed to accelerate negotiations for a peace treaty on the basis of the 1956 Joint Declaration, in order to resolve an issue that has remained for more than 70 years since the end of World War II, namely, resolving the territorial disputes to conclude a peace treaty. Moreover, at the Summit Meeting held in Buenos Aires during the following month of December, the two leaders agreed that the foreign ministers of the two countries would be responsible for the negotiations. At the Summit Meeting held on June 29, 2019, at the time of the Osaka G20 meeting, the two leaders welcomed the fact that the negotiations were being conducted energetically, and shared the view that they would continue to advance the negotiations. At their 27th Summit Meeting, which was held at the time of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, the two leaders reaffirmed that they would work in a future-oriented manner, and reiterated instructions to their respective foreign ministers, who are

responsible for negotiations, to advance joint work in order to find a mutually acceptable solution.<sup>51</sup>

Japan-Russia relations have made significant progress based on the deep relationship of trust between Prime Minister Abe and President Putin. Furthermore, we can conclude that in light of the strategic environment surrounding them, the significance of concluding a peace treaty to normalize Japan-Russia relations is shared by the two countries, although there are differences in objectives and degree.

Japan's National Security Strategy established in December 2013 states that "Under the increasingly severe security environment in East Asia, it is critical for Japan to advance cooperation with Russia in all areas, including security and energy, thereby enhancing bilateral relations as a whole, in order to ensure its security." Underlying Japan's attempt to strengthen its relations with Russia is the idea that concluding a peace treaty and normalizing relations with Russia is desirable in the context of the increasing severity of the strategic environment surrounding Japan, created by the Korean Peninsula, China, and other countries. In particular, this is the strategic idea of strengthening Japan-Russia relations so that Russia does not become a negative presence for the security of Japan, or at least of drawing Russia closer to Japan's side so that Russia does not become completely pro-China in its approach to Japan.

On the other side, the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation outlining the diplomatic strategy of Russia, which was adopted in November 2016, clearly states that Russia will "continue to build good-neighborly relations and promote mutually beneficial cooperation with Japan, including with a view to ensuring stability and security in Asia-Pacific," confirming Russia's stance of intending to place relative importance on Japan from the perspective of the security of the Asia-Pacific. Recently, the view that it is necessary for Russia to conclude a peace treaty with Japan to maintain geopolitical balance has been heard from Russian government officials as well. In a unipolar world solely dominated by the United States, Russia was fine with its stance of aiming to build a multipolar world by collaborating with China, but as Russia recognizes that a power shift from the United States to China will continue in the multipolar world that has arrived, the largest diplomatic issue for the Putin administration will be what position Russia will take between the two poles of the United States and China. In other words, the question is whether unconditional deployment of an

“anti-US, pro-China policy” is desirable for Russia in the medium- to long-term.

Previously, discussions that mainly connected economic cooperation and territorial problems were mainstream. Economic cooperation is effective in bringing Russia to the negotiating table, but many observers have the view that in order to advance concrete discussions about returning the Northern Territories to Japan, it is necessary for both Japan and Russia to engage in head-on discussions of the two essential problems of historical perceptions and security. Russia is not backing away from its position that the first step of the negotiations is for Japan to recognize that the islands came under the sovereignty of Russia as a result of World War II; moreover, Russia is concerned about the possibility that the US military will deploy on the islands after they are handed over.

What value do the Northern Territories have for the security of Russia? Russia has placed military importance on the Sea of Okhotsk since the Cold War era as a nuclear launch site aimed at the United States, and as a sea area where Russia’s nuclear-powered submarines equipped with nuclear weapons can navigate freely. Russia considers the Sea of Okhotsk to be an “internal sea” and “sanctuary of Russia” free of the military

influence of foreign countries. Additionally, due to the creation of the Northern Sea Route, a new factor is being added, namely that the Sea of Okhotsk will become the route by which foreign ships from Asia head toward the Arctic Ocean. Therefore, in recent years, Russia has carried out military exercises repeatedly and aimed to strengthen its military presence through the modernization of its military power, etc., in order to maintain its own influence in the Arctic Ocean and the Sea

Figure 5.1. The Okhotsk Sea and surrounding areas



Source: Compiled by the author.

of Okhotsk. For example, it has established new military bases in the Chishima Islands on Matua Island and Paramushir Island, which are located on each side of the Northern Sea Route, in an attempt to militarily restrain foreign ships from entering the Sea of Okhotsk.

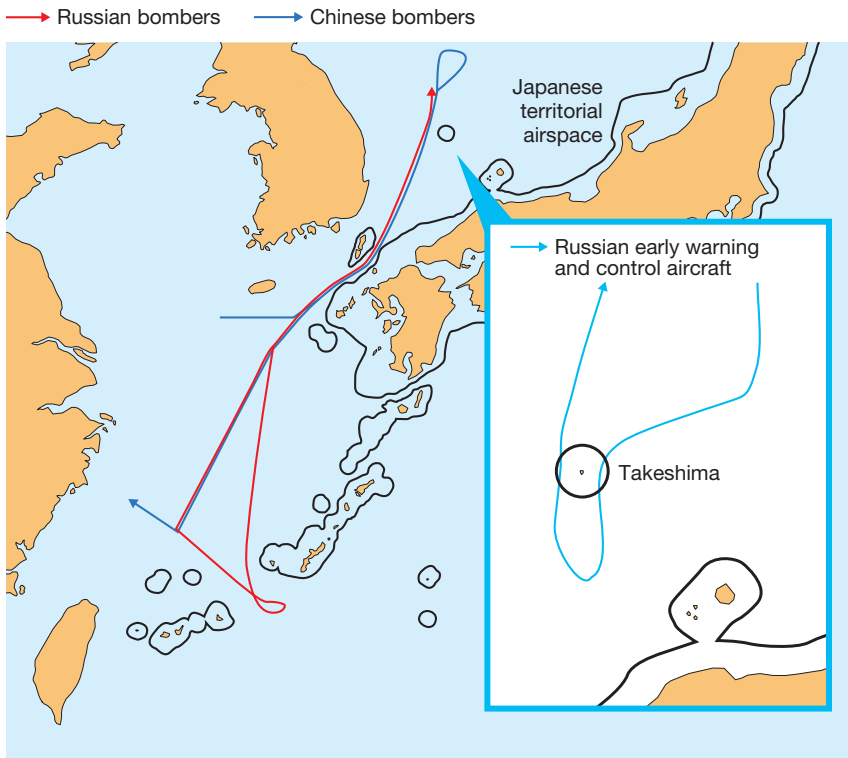
It is the Northern Territories and Chishima Islands, which Russia calls the Kuril Islands, that play the role of a fence separating the Sea of Okhotsk and the Pacific Ocean. In order to turn the Sea of Okhotsk into a “military fortress,” it is necessary for the Russian military to strongly protect this fence. The Kunashiri Strait sandwiched between Etorofu (Iturup) Island and Kunashiri (Kunashir) Island is an important entranceway for the Russian Navy from the Sea of Okhotsk to the Pacific Ocean, and 3,500 members of the Russian military are stationed on both islands. The Military Doctrine outlining the military strategy of Russia states, with an eye on the territorial claims of Japan, that “territorial claims from foreign countries are a military risk for Russia,” and over the last few years, Russia’s moves toward military modernization have been notable, including the deployment of new models of surface-to-ship missiles to both islands and the construction of a new dual civilian-military airport on Etorofu (Iturup) Island. On the other hand, only a Border Guard Service has been deployed on Shikotan Island and the Habomai Islands, which the Japan-Soviet Union Joint Declaration concluded in 1956 clearly states are to be returned to Japan after conclusion of a peace treaty. Thus, the military importance of the two large islands and the two small islands differs greatly.

Circumstances that have had a negative impact on Japan-Russia security relations have also occurred. On June 20, 2019, Russian bombers made two short airspace incursions in the vicinity of Minamidaito island and Hachijo island.<sup>52</sup> Further, on July 23, two Chinese and two Russian bombers made their first ever joint flight, entering the air defense identification zones of Japan and the ROK, followed by an A-50 early warning and control aircraft engaged in the control and support of Russian aircraft that made two incursions into the airspace of Takeshima, Shimane Prefecture.<sup>53</sup> The ROK’s Joint Chiefs of Staff announced that the ROK’s Air Force fired a total of 360 warning shots in response to this. Because it occurred in a disputed region where both Japan and the ROK claim territorial rights, and because it occurred when John Bolton, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs of the United States, was traveling from Tokyo to Seoul after visiting Japan, the move is thought to have been designed to

restrain security collaboration between Japan, the United States, and the ROK. These events happened not long after May 30, when the fourth meeting of the Japan-Russia Foreign and Defense Ministerial Consultation (“2+2” Ministerial Meeting) was held in Tokyo,<sup>54</sup> in which Japan stated that the military build-up in the Northern Territories is inconsistent with Japan’s legal positions and expressed concern about the activities of Russian military aircraft around Japan. Note that Russia has not admitted the fact of these two airspace incursions.

The surrounding countries urgently need to anticipate the possibility that after the INF Treaty termination, Russia will deploy intermediate-range missiles within the range of Japan in the Far East region, including the Northern

Figure 5.2. Joint air patrol by Chinese and Russian warplanes  
(July 23, 2019)



Source: Compiled by the author based on a Japan Joint Staff press release.

Territories, in the future. Since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, concerns about Russia with respect to international security have been intensifying. Nevertheless, as Russia is a neighboring country that cannot relocate, we can conclude that resolving the problem of the attribution of the Four Northern Islands in order to quickly conclude a peace treaty and normalize Japan-Russia relations has significance for alleviating these kinds of security concerns as well.

### **3. Discussions concerning the New Military Doctrine and Ongoing Military Reform**

#### **(1) Discussions concerning Future Warfare and the New Military Doctrine**

Ever since Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff, raised the need to research new methods of warfare at the annual meeting of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences in January 2013, discussions concerning future warfare have continued in Russia. In this context, President Putin gave instructions for a revision of the Military Doctrine in December 2018, and discussions about future warfare and the Military Doctrine intensified in 2019 in response. Three major points of contention in the discussions can be indicated. The first, in the context that the perception of the threat posed by the United States and NATO has become more severe, is the evaluation of that threat and the response to it. The second is the evaluation of the outcomes of the military operation in Syria. And the third is the discussion about the best approach to strategic deterrence.

During the meeting of the Defence Ministry Board held in February 2019, Sergei Shoigu, Defence Minister, expressed the perception that the United States and NATO are a large threat. Specifically, he criticized the strengthening military presence of NATO in the Baltic states and the Eastern and Southern European countries, the growing scale of its exercises, and the participation of even non-NATO nations such as Ukraine and Georgia in the exercises. He stated that in response to this, Russia would be forced to respond adequately, combining strategic deterrence measures with a planned increase in the combat capabilities of the formations and military units. At the annual meeting of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences in March 2019, Chief of the General Staff Gerasimov reported on the major directions in the development of a military

strategy based on the characteristics of future warfare.<sup>55</sup> In the report, Chief of the General Staff Gerasimov expressed the same perception as Defence Minister Shoigu that the United States and its allies are a large threat, and raised the “strategy of active defense” as the response of Russia. Firstly, Chief of the General Staff Gerasimov warned that the United States and its allies are increasingly deploying aggressive military operations, pursuing invasive diplomacy in which they use the color revolutions approach and soft power to aim for regime change in other countries, and dubbed this the “Trojan Horse” strategy by the United States and its allies. The essence of this strategy is to use domestic fifth-column protest potential against the administration of the country in which they wish to intervene to invite internal chaos, while at the same time using long-range precision guided weapons to attack strategically important facilities of that country. The “strategy of active defense” refers to taking various measures to preemptively neutralize the invasive actions of the enemy in order to ensure that this kind of threat does not extend to Russia. In relation to this strategy, Chief of the General Staff Gerasimov also made clear that the General Staff Headquarters had established a defense plan to respond to both military and non-military (hybrid) invasive actions. It can be considered that the establishment of this kind of plan hints at the intention of the Russian leadership to use the military to suppress all domestic riots that the Russian leadership sees as being supported by the West.

Next, Chief of the General Staff Gerasimov mentioned the “strategy of limited actions” based on the lessons learned from the military operation in Syria. This is a strategy aiming to defend and enhance the national interests of Russia outside the territory of Russia. He said that just as a group of troops based on units of the Russian Aerospace Forces showed high mobility and capability to execute assigned missions in the operation in Syria, the formation of a highly capable group of troops with the units of one service at its core is important in order to realize this strategy, and that it was essential to secure and maintain superiority in the realm of intelligence in terms of operation preparedness, command and logistics, and the covert deployment of units. Moreover, regarding the anticipated scope of military operations outside the territory of Russia, he indicated that Russia would not aim for power projection on a global scale; rather it would be oriented toward limited actions taking into consideration the economic and military constraint that Russia is facing.

Further, Chief of the General Staff Gerasimov touched on strategic deterrence, a key role of military power, and mentioned the importance of providing for nuclear deterrence and non-nuclear deterrence in the military strategy. The military operation in Syria verified the effectiveness of Russia's precision guided weapons and demonstrated the high capabilities of conventional forces, and as a result, Russian military experts share the idea that it is appropriate to provide for non-nuclear deterrence in the Military Doctrine. The focus of attention will be how these issues are provided for in the new Military Doctrine.

## **(2) Ongoing Military Reform and the Strengthening of the Military Posture**

Equipment upgrades by the Russian military continue to progress, and the strengthening of the military posture in the Military Districts and joint strategic command is ongoing. In March 2019, at the expanded meeting of the Defence Committee of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly, Defence Minister Shoigu gave a detailed report on the results of military reform since he became Defence Minister in 2012.<sup>56</sup> As a result of progress made in procurement of the latest armaments, possession of the latest armaments, which was 16% as of 2012, had risen to 61.5% (by service and branch, Ground Forces: 48.3%, Aerospace Forces: 74%, Navy: 62.3%, Strategic Missile Forces: 82%, Airborne Forces: 67.3%) by the beginning of 2019, and it is looking increasingly likely that the goal of raising this percentage to 70% by the end of 2020 will be achieved. In particular, the introduction of precision guided weapons has progressed rapidly, with ground, sea, and air-deployed long-range precision guided transporters increasing more than twelve-fold and precision guided cruise missiles increasing more than thirty-fold. Of course, the Minister is aware of some challenges. According to the report by Defence Minister Shoigu, to further stabilize development of the military, the Activity program of the Defence Ministry for 2019–2025 was newly approved, and it was decided to aim for the realization of more than 50,000 measures. These measures will be executed based on the provisions of the State Armament Program for 2018–2027.<sup>57</sup>

Placing importance on the Strategic Missile Forces and Aerospace Forces and giving priority to precision guided weapons are recognized in the modernization and strengthening of armaments. This has been reflected in the large-scale (strategic



nuclear) exercise Grom-2019 implemented in October 2019. This large-scale exercise was implemented with the objective of verifying the rapid reaction capability of all of the ground-deployed, sea-deployed, and aircraft-deployed strategic deterrent forces under the threat of an invasion. The units of the Strategic Missile Forces, the Aerospace Forces long-range aero-transport forces, the units of each Military District, the Northern Fleet, the Pacific Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla participated in the exercise and ballistic missiles and cruise missiles were actually launched.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, in December of the same year, the Russian Defence Ministry announced that the state-of-the-art hypersonic missile Avangard had been fully deployed for the first time. The Avangard is a nuclear-capable missile that has been reported in the media to be capable of breaking through all missile defense systems, including those of the United States.<sup>59</sup>

Defence Minister Shoigu's report went on to explain the progress in recruitment for the military. All regiments and brigades are formed from three battalions (two battalions comprised of the contract service and one battalion comprised of conscripted soldiers), and the conscripted soldiers are not involved in combat missions. Currently, the Russian military is formed from 136 battalion tactical groups comprised of the contract service, and it is able to handle the execution of any mission. It is reported that all of the Military District commanders, joint troops of branches commanders, Air Force and air defense forces commanders, division commanders, as well as 96% of the commanders of the joint brigade of branches and regiments have combat experience. Judging from the content of this report, it can be seen that the upgrading of military armaments has been going on as planned and that the recruitment of troops and their capability improvements have been made steadily.

In addition, Defence Minister Shoigu's report mentions the Crimea, Mediterranean Sea, and Arctic regions as areas where military posture has been strengthened. The strengthening in Crimea is to defend the territory of that peninsula and Russia's interests in the Black Sea. A pelagic operation command was established in Crimea in order to command the activities of ships in the Mediterranean Sea, including the Navy ships dispatched to Syria. We can conclude that these moves are intended to check the moves of the United States and NATO, who have been intensifying their military activities on the western strategic front of Russia.

Development of military infrastructure in the Arctic is also progressing.

In the Arctic overall, a total of 475 military facilities have been built on the Kotelný Islands, Zemlya Aleksandry Islands, Vrangél Island and Cape Schmidt since 2012. Their total area is approximately 710,000 m<sup>2</sup> and the stationing of soldiers and the installation of armaments is being carried out at these facilities. The attitude of the Russian leadership, which places importance on the Arctic from the perspectives of securing future economic interests and military security, has led to moves to strengthen the posture of the Northern Fleet which has jurisdiction over this region (the Northern Joint Strategic Command). Every year, the Northern Fleet implements large-scale exercises in the Arctic Ocean and the adjacent marine areas, and in April 2019 it carried out a large-scale exercise off the coast of Norway. This exercise is evaluated as having been larger in scale than the Trident Juncture exercise implemented by NATO in the summer of 2018. In August 2019, it was revealed that there was a plan to upgrade the status of the Northern Fleet to Northern Military District.<sup>60</sup> It is said that the Russian leadership expects that upgrading the status of the fleet to that of a Military District and strengthening its administrative authority will make decisions in the operational missions of the Northern Fleet easier. In addition to the units of the Northern Fleet, several units belonging to the Central Military District and the Eastern Military District will also be included under the jurisdiction of the new Military District command. Furthermore, it is reported that the units located in the Arctic islands and Cape Schmidt will be incorporated into the joint tactical group responsible for military security in the Arctic region, which had already been formed in October 2014. Moreover, these units will be equipped with the latest armaments such as the coastal missile system Rubezh.

The military posture in the Eastern Military District and the Central Military District also continues to strengthen. In May 2019, Ruslan Tsálikov, First Deputy Defence Minister, carried out an inspection of the Eastern Military District and the Central Military District.<sup>61</sup> In the Eastern Military District, he inspected the units and the status of the construction of military facilities in the Kunashiri (Kunashir) and Etorofu (Iturup) Islands in the Northern Territories and in Khabarovsk. In the Central Military District, he also visited Omsk, the location of the command of the 33rd Army, one of the three armies in the Strategic Missile Forces, and inspected the units and the status of the construction of military facilities. In particular, the First Deputy Minister Tsálikov's inspection of the training center of the Airborne Forces is seen as related to the large-scale exercise

Tsentr-2019 in September. This kind of inspection of units and military facilities by top officials in the Defence Ministry is carried out regularly, and is a move aimed at strengthening the military posture on the eastern strategic front and Central Asian strategic front in the same way as on the European front.<sup>62</sup>

Strengthening of the military posture in the Eastern Military District is proceeding in two respects: organizational measures and armaments upgrades. The main organizational measures are formation of the aero-combined division and surface-to-air missile brigade for improvement of the air defense capability in the Amur-Sakhalin direction, and formation of the coastal missile division that deployed the coastal missile system Bastion. Moreover, it can be seen that 26 battalion tactical groups were deployed in the Eastern Military District overall by the end of 2019. Concerning armaments procurement, Russia plans to introduce 1,744 of the latest armaments in order to replace the armaments of 139 units based on the State Armament Program, which will raise the percentage of the latest armaments possessed by this Military District overall to 53%. Concerning the strengthening of the Pacific Fleet, the Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, the first diesel-electric submarine (Project 636.3), was commissioned in November 2019. The Project 636.3 submarines have a high degree of silence and long-range target detection capability and carry the cruise missile Kalibr. Russia plans to deploy six of these submarines overall.<sup>63</sup>

The Central Military District contains the Central Asian strategic front and faces the threats of intensifying international terrorism and expanding Islamic extremism, so consistent measures to improve the combat capability of the units of this Military District are being adopted. Due to procurement of the latest armaments, the percentage of the latest armaments possessed by this Military District overall is expected to increase to 53% or greater by the end of 2019. One of the comprehensive measures for strengthening the posture of the Central Military District is the implementation of Tsentr-2019. This exercise took the form of a multilateral exercise in which members of the CSTO and the SCO also participated, and it was implemented with the objective of ensuring the security of the Central Asia region through this kind of military cooperation.<sup>64</sup> Tsentr-2019 was a large-scale exercise that involved not only the units of the Central Military District, but also the Caspian Flotilla of the Southern Military District, the units of the Eastern Military District, the Airborne Forces, and the long-range aero-transport forces of the Aerospace Forces, and mobilized

Figure 5.3. The Tsentr-2019 exercise, mainly held in the Central Military District



Source: Compiled by the author based on *Krasnaia Zvezda*, November 15, November 18, and November 20, 2019.

128,000 troops and more than 20,000 armaments, including approximately 600 aircraft and 15 ships. Moreover, in addition to the Russian military, units from China, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan also participated in this exercise. Furthermore, besides the scale of the participating troops and mobilized armaments, the exercises were implemented across a wide range of locations including eight training ranges, centered on the Donguz training range in Orenburg oblast, and the Caspian Sea, while related tactical exercises were implemented on four training ranges in Kazakhstan, one training range in Kyrgyzstan, and the 201st Army base stationed in Tajikistan. The main exercise of Tsentr-2019 was implemented from September 16 to September 21 at the Donguz training range. The scenario of the exercise was that the "Southern

Army,” an armed group and attack unit of an international terrorist organization, would invade the territory of the “Northern Country,” and in response, the “Northern Army” would form an anti-terrorism coalition army with the armies of other countries to carry out a defense operation, and then go on the offensive to restore its impregnable defense posture in the occupied border area. Following China’s participation in Vostok-2018 in the previous year, approximately 1,500 troops from China were allowed to participate in Tsentr-2019, and, for example, Wei Fenghe, Defense Minister, inspected the exercise at the Donguz training range, which demonstrated the strengthening of China-Russia military cooperation. At the China-Russia Defence Ministers Meeting held during the exercise, Defence Minister Shoigu stated that he expected that these kinds of exercises would be continued going forward.

### **(3) Strengthening of Military Cooperation and Arms Exports Aimed at Expansion**

In the context of greater tension in its relationship with the United States and NATO, it is becoming more vital for Russia to step up its strategic cooperation with China, and military cooperation between the two countries is being raised to an even higher level.<sup>65</sup> In May 2019, the two countries carried out the naval joint exercise Maritime Cooperation-2019 in the East China Sea off the coast of Qingdao. Fifteen ships, ten aircraft, and marine units from the two militaries participated in the exercise, which was implemented with the objective of improving the command level of the joint defense operation at sea.<sup>66</sup>

As stated earlier, on July 23, 2019, the militaries of China and Russia carried out a joint air patrol from the East China Sea to the Sea of Japan, the first such patrol in the history of military cooperation between the two countries.<sup>67</sup> A formation comprised of two of Russia’s Tu-95MS strategic bombers and two of China’s H-6K strategic bombers, as well as Russia’s A-50 early warning and control aircraft and China’s KJ-2000 early warning and control aircraft, flew from the East China Sea over the Sea of Japan, following a predetermined route. According to an announcement by the Russian Defence Ministry, the objectives of this flight were to deepen and develop the comprehensive partnership of China and Russia, further improve the level of mutual collaboration between the two militaries, improve the joint operation executing capability of the two militaries, and strengthen global strategic stability. Moreover, the Ministry

explained that the action was based on the 2019 military cooperation plan between the two countries and was not directed against any particular third country. This formation flew into airspace established as the air defense identification zones of Japan and the ROK, which led to a situation in which measures such as a response to the airspace incursions were taken. Regarding this, the Russian Defence Ministry explained that freedom of flight exists in air defense identification zones, unlike in sovereign airspace; moreover, based on objective data, there were no airspace incursions.

As already mentioned, the Chinese military participated in the Tsentr exercise conducted in Russia, and Wei Fenghe, Defense Minister, inspected the site of the exercise. In addition to the meeting here between Defence Minister Shoigu and Defense Minister Wei, the top military officials of China and Russia held meetings, and moves aiming to strengthen the military cooperation and military-technical cooperation between the two countries were recognized. In June 2019, a meeting between the Russian General Staff and Chinese Joint Staff Department was held and was attended by Chief of the General Staff Gerasimov and Shao Yuanming, Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff Department in the Chinese People's Liberation Army.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, in September 2019, the 24th meeting of the Russia-China Inter-governmental Joint Committee on military-technical cooperation was held in Moscow. The meeting was attended by Defence Minister Shoigu and Xu Qiliang, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, and a series of documents concerning cooperation in this area were signed.<sup>69</sup> In response to these recent developments in China-Russia military cooperation, Defence Minister Shoigu expressed the evaluation that military cooperation between the two countries had entered a new phase. It has been reported that in his keynote speech at a meeting of the Moscow-based think-tank Valdai Discussion Club in October 2019, President Putin stated that Russia is cooperating with China in the construction of their missile early-warning system; this will attract attention as a new development in bilateral military cooperation between China and Russia.<sup>70</sup>

In addition, in its East Asia policies, the Russian military leadership is re-acknowledging the importance of military cooperation with North Korea. In July 2019, Alexander Fomin, Deputy Defence Minister in charge of international military cooperation, visited Pyongyang and held meetings with top officials of the Korean People's Army, including No Kwang-chol, Minister of People's Armed Forces. At the meeting, Deputy Minister Fomin confirmed the importance

of friendly, good-neighborly and cooperative relations between the military authorities of Russia and North Korea and discussed the direction of a joint plan for the development of military cooperation between the two countries.<sup>71</sup>

Russia is continuing to strengthen military cooperation among the CSTO countries, which it has positioned as a priority matter in its military cooperation. Two points can be made concerning the direction of enhanced cooperation. The first is how to improve the military's capability to respond to the expansion of terrorism and Islamic extremism. The second is how to strengthen the joint air defense system, which is an issue in the strengthening of cooperation in the aerospace area.

In May 2019, joint sessions of the Councils of Defense Ministers of the CSTO and SCO were held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.<sup>72</sup> During these sessions, joint responses to a wide range of security issues within the area of responsibility of the two organizations, expansion of the implementation of antiterrorism exercises, exchanges of experiences in antiterrorism operations, and the establishment of a robust communication mechanism for coordinating defense operations and responses to changing military situations were considered. In these sessions, Russia's Defence Minister Shoigu invited the units of the SCO countries to participate in the Tsentr exercise. In addition, in his meeting with the Kyrgyzstan military leadership, Defence Minister Shoigu mentioned the importance of strengthening military cooperation and military-technical cooperation between the two countries in order to strengthen the combat capabilities of the Kyrgyz military, which is directly threatened by an unstable Afghanistan.

In October 2019, CSTO's joint exercise Nerushimoe Bratstvo-2019 (Indestructible Brotherhood-2019) was conducted in Tajikistan, during which an anti-terrorist joint operation exercise was conducted by the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces, the Central Asia region units of the CSTO. Prior to this, Alexander Lapin, Commander of the Central Military District, inspected the status of the unit at the Russian military's 201st Base stationed in Tajikistan, a major constituent unit of the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces.<sup>73</sup>

The joint air defense system of the CSTO countries was founded as the CIS joint air defense system and has been maintained as such, but currently it is comprised of the CSTO members and Uzbekistan only. For Russia, the issue is building an impenetrable air defense network in the areas surrounding its own

country by strengthening this system. In September 2019, the CIS joint air defense system's exercise Boyevoye Sodruzhestvo-2019 (Combat Cooperation-2019) was conducted at the Ashuluk training range in Astrakhan oblast and at the Sary-Shagan training range in Kazakhstan. Each country dispatched air defense units to the exercise; for example, Russia dispatched the S-400 surface-to-air missile system units of two surface-to-air missile divisions. The exercise was implemented with the goal of repelling an attack by unmanned aerial vehicles and cruise missiles, drawing from the combat experience in Syria.<sup>74</sup> At the same time as this exercise, the Joint Air Defense Coordination Committee of the CIS Defense Ministers' Council was held, during which the establishment of a future plan for strengthening the bilateral and multilateral joint air defense system and budget problems, etc., were considered. A proposal concerning the joint preparedness measures of the air defense units in 2020 was also approved.<sup>75</sup>

Russia's arms exports are expanding, with total exports in 2018 reaching approximately \$13.7 billion.<sup>76</sup> At a time when the importance of aerospace attack weapons in military operations is growing, awareness of the importance of air defense weapons to respond to those weapons is also on the rise. It is reported that of the percentage of the total orders received by Russia's military industrial companies, aircraft account for approximately 40% and air defense weapons account for 35%. Leading in the area of air defense weapons is the aerospace defense company Almaz-Antey, which produces surface-to-air missile systems such as the S-400, S-300PMU, Buk-M2E, and Tor-M2, and total orders for these systems have reached approximately \$14.0 billion.

In 2019, the issue of the transfer of the S-400 surface-to-air missile system to Turkey, a NATO member, became a particularly large focus of attention. A contract for this export had already been concluded in 2017, but the United States and NATO opposed its transfer from the perspective that it would obstruct the building of the NATO joint air and missile defense network and the F-35 combat aircraft joint project. However, Turkey decided to accept the transfer, and in July 2019, the first S-400 surface-to-air missile system was installed in Myurtd air base near Ankara. Furthermore, the first personnel were already dispatched to Russia in May for training in using this system.<sup>77</sup> If disagreements grow between Turkey and the United States in particular, and also with other members of NATO, there is a possibility that Turkey's closeness to Russia in terms of weapons will strengthen, leading to the further expansion of weapons exports to Turkey.



It has also been pointed out that Russia has already proposed to Turkey the option of adopting the Su-57 stealth fighter instead of the F-35 combat aircraft. Moreover, the strengthening of friendly relations with Turkey is important in terms of military strategy. This is because Turkey controls the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, the entrances to the Mediterranean Sea from the Black Sea, and it is thought that if Turkey becomes a friendly state, navigation of this strategic route will become easier for Russia, as will the activities of the Russian Navy in the Mediterranean Sea with opposition to NATO in mind.

### Comprehending Russian “Hybrid Warfare”

The definition of “hybrid warfare,” which has recently been discussed as a new form of warfare by Russia, differs slightly among analysts, but it can be roughly summarized as “a set of activities that: (1) combine unconventional means such as information warfare with conventional forces; (2) utilize nonstate proxy actors; (3) adopt covert and deniable techniques to avoid escalation into war; and (4) are aimed at achieving political goals.”<sup>78</sup> In fact, these kinds of methods are not a new form of warfare that suddenly appeared in recent years. Moreover, making large-scale changes to the status quo while avoiding escalation into war, say, a Crimea-like *fait accompli*, has been more widely observed historically than changes to the status quo through coercive diplomacy and war.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, we can conclude that modern “hybrid warfare,” rather than being a truly new phenomenon, is a “matter of degree” to which unconventional means are used.<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, the term “hybrid warfare” is used in Russia almost only when analysts refer to such discussions in the West or when they discuss unconventional ways of fighting by Western countries.<sup>81</sup> For this reason, the concept of “hybrid warfare,” rather than being an original approach of Russia, actually can be understood as a passive concept, namely, specifically as “a response to the West which Russia believes had an impact on the series of color revolutions” or an “adaptation to the trends in new forms of warfare.” Furthermore, it is important to note that researchers in the West also present this perspective. This fact suggests the need for a dispassionate analysis of the novelty of “hybrid warfare.”<sup>82</sup>

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the methods of fighting called “hybrid warfare” are at least characteristic of modern Russia (even if not unique to it). If we suppose that the rise of modern “hybrid warfare” is no more than a “matter of degree” accounted for by unconventional means, then why has the “degree” become larger? Firstly, in some of the post-Soviet states, there can exist social vulnerabilities that make it easier to use “hybrid” techniques. There is a sizable population of ethnic Russians living in these states that became independent when the Soviet Union dissolved. Of course, this kind of diversity in itself does

not immediately make the society vulnerable to “hybrid warfare.” However, there is a possibility that some of the population who are of Russian origin could be utilized as proxy actors in a crisis. In addition, the population of ethnic Russians itself can be a reason for Russia’s political or military interventions in these states in the name of protecting its citizens.<sup>83</sup>

Secondly, the dissemination of information through the mass media and the Internet requires very little resources. Governments that adopt “hybrid” tools can transmit disinformation through social media and government-affiliated mass media, and this tactic does not require any military assets. Therefore, if the transmission of disinformation can have a political effect, then it is a convenient tool from the perspective of cost-effectiveness.<sup>84</sup> Of course, as the effect of information dissemination by Russia in Western countries is small, there is large room for discussion about the size of the effect of propaganda using such media. On the other hand, in former Soviet republics such as Estonia and Latvia that have a sizable population of Russian speakers, the Russian-affiliated media is used on a daily basis and can have a political impact to some degree.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, recent empirical studies reveal that biased media can (1) encourage mass mobilization of the recipients of biased information in times of conflict and (2) strengthen the political preferences the recipients initially have.<sup>86</sup> These effects can possibly exacerbate political polarization in society.

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