

Humans and Their Deadly Military Toys. Russia's Kinzhal and Zircon Hypersonic Missiles.

Review of Andrei Martyanov's *The (Real) Revolution in Military Affairs*

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On 1 March, Russian president Vladimir Putin delivered the annual address to Russia's Federal Assembly. The part of Putin's address that drew the most notice was his revealing the development of new hypersonic weaponry unmatched elsewhere: the Mach 10+ capable Kinzhal and the Mach 9 capable Zircon.

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Russian military and naval expert Andrei Martyanov examines this advancement in military technology in his new book [The \(Real\) Revolution in Military Affairs](#) (Clarity Press, 2019). He writes that *Kinzhal* and *Zircon* hypersonic missiles revamp

naval warfare completely on a scale comparable in its effect to to the introduction of steam-powered ironclads into warfare that was previously dominated by wooden sail ships and muzzle loaded cannons. (p 65)

This, according to Martyanov, represents the real revolution in military affairs which

starts with modern hypersonic fully shoot-and-forget weaponry whose capabilities trump completely any kind of net-centricity by virtue of those weapons being completely un-imperceptible by any existent means. (p 90)

The US aircraft carrier fleet are virtually useless against such a threat. Thus, writes Martyanov,

In a conventional clash on the seas, be that on the high seas, in remote sea zones, or in a littoral of Russia, the U.S. Navy's surface fleet will simply not survive. (p 92)

Be that the case, then so much for the US military's much ballyhooed exceptionalism and full-spectrum dominance.

That the US establishment and its media would guffaw at Russian missile superiority is, therefore, to be expected. As recently as 22 August, *Foreign Affairs*, a publication of the [neoliberal, corporate-globalist Council of Foreign Relations](#), ran a headline [asking](#): "Is Russia's Domsday Missile Fake News?" This was followed by the subheader stating: "Experts are skeptical that Moscow has the money or technical know-how to field Putin's promised arsenal." In other words, doubt was being cast on poor Russia and its lack of ingenuity. Quite a scathing nullification of Putin's address.

The *Kinzhal* is a weapon carried by MiG-31K and TU-22M3M aircraft. There is purportedly no anti-missile technology capable of intercepting the *Kinzhal* which has an "astonishing" range of 2000 km.

The *Zircon* is slated to be deployed in 2023, primarily on sea-going vessels. It represents such a threat to the continental US that nuclear weapons remain as a last resort alternative. (p 95) Because of the *Zircon's* operational range of 400-1000 km and the extreme quiet of modern Russian subs, retaliation is largely avoided. And, "it is highly unlikely ... effective solutions will be found any time soon" to the *Zircon* missiles. (p 101)

And it may well take much longer for the US to come up with a solution. Martyanov is critical of analysis on military matters by non-experts. Economists, lawyers, and humanities-trained people, writes Martyanov, "simply have no tools for understanding modern warfare." (p 105) The media are held in equally low esteem by Martyanov who notes the "generally low educational level of the American journalistic corps and talking heads." (p 109)

Another technological development mentioned is the *Petrel* cruise missile whose nuclear propulsion system allows it to stay airborne a long time and cover intercontinental distances. (108-109)

Air-defense are increasingly important for military operations, and Russia is the world leader in this regard states Martyanov. The author also acknowledges China's air defense capability and notes it too has a hypersonic weapons program enabling it to defend vigorously against the US in its coastal area. (p 115)

A particularly interesting informational tidbit was that the Syrian air defense that shot down 71 of 103 US and French TLAMs was an upgraded old Soviet air defense. The Russian S-300 and S-400 air defenses were not used. (p 116)

American F-22s and F-35s are highly susceptible against the Russian air defense S-300 and S-400. Says the author, "the myth of Stealth has been completely dispelled." (p 121) The US Stealth technology is describes as a "technological and operational mistake of massive proportions." (p 130)

And the S-500 anti-missile complex is nearing operational status. The S-500 is touted as being capable of intercepting ballistic missiles, shooting down low-orbiting satellites, and reaching AWACS planes, perhaps even intercepting hypersonic non-ballistic targets. (p 123-124)

The US, according to Martyanov, lacks far behind Russia in air defense, hypersonic weapons,

and ballistic missile development. (p 125)

Elsewhere in the world, Martyanov holds that Iran would be no pushover for the US, and that such an attack would quickly turn into an exorbitantly expensive boondoggle. (p 138)

Martyanov views elitist American society with disdain. Its economy depends on perpetual warfare (p 155); it is an aggressor state against which both conventional and nuclear deterrents are demanded (p 158); and infantilism and petulance are belied by nonstop lying and irrationality. (p 160)

The US strikes an imperialist military posture, which Martyanov says makes it vulnerable. Because of its overweening pride and refusal to change with the times, the US is a declining military power.

The Russian military expert points out that if one party is armed, then arming oneself is a necessity. This serves an important function as a deterrence.

In a bizarre and dark historic irony—today it is these, the most advanced and deadliest weapons ever produced in the history of humanity, which allow keeping the peace on Earth, and with it, guarantee humanity’s survival. (p 173)

A dialogue in *Star Trek’s* “The Enterprise Incident” holds that a military technological advantage is ephemeral.

The captive Romulan commander says to the science officer Spock: “You realize that very soon we will learn to penetrate the cloaking device that you stole.”

To this Spock replies: “Of course. Military secrets are the most fleeting of all.”

Sadly, *Star Trek* is depicting a future where militarism and the pursuit of an upper hand in military weaponry appears to be a never-ending phenomenon.

For the present moment, Russia appears to have gained some important tactical and technological advantages. Technology is in perpetual development. Informed lucid-thinking Russians and Americans know this. Lasers are still a way off. AI is developing. Technology will continue to evolve.

It is hoped that humans will evolve quicker.

Martyanov’s *The (Real) Revolution in Military Affairs* is a fascinating read for those who strive to understand military technology, the strategy behind weaponry, and the pitfalls to militarism.

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