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# Russia's New Military Doctrine

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Mary C. FitzGerald

**I**N MAY 1992, A DRAFT OF RUSSIA'S new military doctrine was published in *Military Thought*, the main theoretical journal of the Russian armed forces. Despite much discussion about the ascendance of civilians, the military has reasserted its dominance over the development of this doctrine.

The essence of the new doctrine lies in current Russian views on the nature and requirements of future war. An examination of Russian military writings reveals both the visionary nature of these views and their unbroken continuity with Soviet military art. As in the Soviet period, the new political leadership has not sought to impede the development of those technologies perceived to be at the heart of future military capabilities: advanced conventional munitions (ACMs), directed-energy weapons, and space-based systems.

On the one hand, the new Russian defense ministry appears to be developing an agenda that differs significantly from the declaratory policy of the political leadership. For example, military leaders describe a set of "vital national interests" highly reminiscent of the old Soviet imperial interests. The military has also articulated a spectrum of threats to these interests that not only matches but also exceeds that of its Soviet predecessors. Alongside the alleged Western superiority in nuclear and, especially, high-technology conventional forces, the new Russian military leaders include the "nuclear potential" of about twenty-four other states and the "territorial ambitions" of states on the Russian periphery. As a result, the role of Russian nuclear forces is advancing to the forefront.

On the other hand, Russia's new military doctrine proceeds from a striking civil-military consensus on, first, the nature and requirements of future war, and second, directions for the near and long-term development of the Russian armed forces. For the near term, this consensus is reflected in the creation of "Russian Mobile Forces" to conduct such operations as the protection of Russian minorities in other republics of the former Soviet Union. For the long term,

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both civilian and military leaders call for development and “rapid surge production” of those emerging technologies required to fight the new “technological war.” This civil-military consensus also reflects a continuing, disproportionate emphasis on military power as a prerequisite for establishing Russia’s place in the international system.

This article analyzes the military-technical aspects of Russia’s new military doctrine by documenting Russian views on the technologies, operational concepts, and requirements for research and development (R&D) for future war. Because Russian doctrine constitutes a logical elaboration of Soviet views, the article first traces its roots in the Soviet period. For both periods, Operation “Desert Storm” serves as the paradigm of future war in strategy, operational art, and tactics.

### **Soviet Views on Desert Storm**

By August 1991, the Soviets were arguing that Desert Storm had already generated a fundamental revision of Soviet military art: the identification of a new type of combat action. The experience of military operations in the Persian Gulf zone had shown that in the very near future, “the delivery of a surprise first strike and numerous subsequent massive missile, aero-space, and electronic strikes in combination with strikes by naval forces may decide the outcome of war without the invasion of enemy territory by ground force groupings.”<sup>1</sup> The legitimacy of that conclusion, Soviet analysts asserted, could be confirmed by the very high effectiveness manifested in fire and electronic strikes and assault landings in local wars of recent years. Therefore, initial operations would most likely begin with remarkably fierce fire engagements.

The combination of fire engagements and massed or single fire and electronic strikes, conducted for a certain time and under a common concept and plan, would represent a new type of military action, the “strike operation.” The experience of the war against Iraq confirmed that such an operation could be conducted for several days or weeks. Its goals may be to disrupt state and military command and control; destroy nuclear force installations; defeat air defense, aviation groupings, and forces of the first operational echelon; disrupt mobilization, deployment, and forward movement of follow-on forces; destroy supplies; and demolish the most important economic areas and installations, transportation hubs, and ecologically dangerous facilities (atomic electric-power stations, hydroelectric plants, dams, water reservoirs, and so on). It was noted that the opponent would make special efforts to demoralize the country’s population in the course of such an operation.<sup>2</sup>

Writing in late 1991, Colonel A.N. Zakharov examined the major trends governing the development of warfare from the end of the twentieth to the beginning of the twenty-first century. After singling out such general features as

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“the increase in types of weapons in all spatial spheres as a result of the growing role of ‘weapons, air, seas, and space,’” he enumerated seven specific trends:

- A higher degree of mutual influence between combat actions in various spheres, and a shift from primarily ground actions to simultaneous warfare on land, sea, and in the air—with a growing emphasis on the latter two.
- A capability to strike throughout the entire depth of the operational zone with simultaneous combat actions.
- A striving for simultaneous destruction of targets and groupings.
- A shift on all levels and in all spheres to combat actions of a combined-arms nature, based on massed, group, and concentrated strikes by various types of troops.
- A rising level of simultaneity of action by troops and weapons in each sphere in the course of any operational task.
- A shift in the centrality of influence away from military equipment and arms and toward support and information systems.
- A reduction of time and expansion of methods for unleashing military (combat) actions.<sup>3</sup>

According to Zakharov, the first trend reflected the ceaseless growth in the use of aviation and naval forces for destroying ground groupings, since the capabilities of ground troops to destroy the opponent have become clearly inadequate. This trend was confirmed by the Gulf War, wherein coalition ground troops commenced active operations only after extended air and naval strikes on Iraq’s ground targets (total command of the air and sea having been achieved). Success in operations, especially at the outset of war, would therefore depend directly upon gaining and maintaining superiority in the air and at sea. This trend presupposed a successive concentration of efforts to seize the initiative—first in the air, then at sea, and only later on land.<sup>4</sup>

The seventh trend, wrote Zakharov, proceeded from the constant growth in the number of forces and assets capable of inflicting destruction by conventional means (e.g., B-2 bombers, sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCMs), reconnaissance-strike complexes, and others), as well as a higher degree of constant readiness to strike. With each year, he continued, a side that articulated a “non-aggressive” doctrine would have fewer and fewer capabilities (with respect to both time available and to combat resources) to rebuff successfully a carefully planned attack, since by doctrine it would necessarily begin its first defensive operation only after detecting the fact of aggression.

Even with the highest level of readiness to deliver a (retaliatory) strike, Zakharov noted, there could be a scenario wherein the opponent’s preparation for aggression, and the act itself, would become “irreversible.” In theory it would therefore be possible “to begin a defensive operation with preemptive strikes to thwart aggression—without betraying the obligations of military doctrine.”

Zakharov argued further that preemptive strikes could soon become “the only,<sup>3</sup>

means of thwarting aggression and successfully beginning the first defensive operation." Therefore it was necessary to plan for operational-strategic defensive actions beginning with preemptive strikes on those opposing assets whose combat use was expected to assume "an aggressively irreversible character."<sup>5</sup>

### Soviet Military Research and Development

The new Soviet vision of future war—with its focus on the growing role of ACMs, directed-energy weapons, and space-based systems—was clearly reflected in military programs and R&D. Despite galloping domestic economic difficulties, in the USSR's last years the Soviets continued to produce technologically advanced weapon systems and to fund expensive military R&D activities. A review of Soviet writings reveals that a significant degree of civil-military convergence proceeded from the interdependence of the military-technical and scientific-technical "revolutions." In early 1985, for example, the Politburo approved a state-wide program to develop the production and effective utilization of computer technology and automated systems up to the year 2000. Not long after his accession to power in March 1985, Gorbachev stressed that "machine-building plays the dominant, key role in implementing the scientific and technological revolution. . . . Microelectronics, computer technology, instrument-making, and the entire informatics industry are the catalysts of progress. They require accelerated development."<sup>6</sup>

Here it should be stressed that the foregoing civilian requirements for implementing the scientific-technical "revolution" were *identical* to the military's requirements for implementing the new military-technical "revolution."<sup>7</sup> As Colonel N. Goryachev noted in 1987, "in the struggle for improving the technical equipping of the military, it is difficult to over-estimate the basic trends of scientific-technical progress: the further priority development of machine-building—especially machine-tool manufacturing, robotics, computer technology, instrument-making, and microelectronics. It is precisely these trends which are today the basic catalysts of military-technical progress."<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Colonel-General K. Kobets stressed that in the field of technology and software for automated systems, development should proceed along the lines of "military robotics, artificial intelligence systems, distributed and multi-function processing, personal computers, and multi-purpose networks."<sup>9</sup>

Inspired by the new military-technical revolution and galvanized by Gorbachev's defense cuts, the Soviet military's vision of military restructuring was quality enhancement across the board. The stated objective was to "upgrade not only the material and technical foundation of the Army and Navy, but also the system of manning and training, as well as military art and science in general" in order to "boost performance by an order of magnitude."<sup>10</sup> Military experts thus stressed a more intensive exploitation of such existing technologies as

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microprocessors and other computers, lasers, fiber optics, robotics, radioelectronics, expert systems based on artificial-intelligence technologies, advanced sensors (including imagers), and munitions.<sup>11</sup> They also stressed the ability to “develop, exploit, and weaponize such cutting-edge technologies as electron-beam, plasma, pulse, membrane, biochemistry, and radiology.”<sup>12</sup> Soviet science had to discover and apply “as yet unknown properties of matter, natural laws, and phenomena that would generate a qualitative leap in developing new types of weapons.”<sup>13</sup> The stated objective of “preventing the imperialists from achieving a so-called ‘technological breakthrough’ in weapons development” was said to justify “the continued diversion of the required scientific resources toward fortifying the nation’s defense might.”<sup>14</sup>

According to authoritative Soviet analyses, the application of existing and cutting-edge technologies would result not only in modernization of current systems but especially in the development of “principally new weapons systems.” Indeed the main task consisted in shifting from the “evolutionary path” of modernization to “a path characterized by qualitative leaps, whereby weapons acquire principally new combat characteristics.”<sup>15</sup> The Soviets thus predicted that fewer but higher-quality systems manned by smaller but better-trained crews would enhance combat effectiveness despite quantitative reductions.<sup>16</sup>

### The New Era

In late 1991, the Soviet General Staff began to focus primarily on the need for a revised military doctrine and force structure in order to cope with such stark realities as the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the withdrawal of Soviet armed forces from Eastern Europe, the ongoing economic crisis, mounting problems with conscription, uncertainty regarding the maintenance of a unified armed forces and military policy, the ominous lessons of the Persian Gulf War, and Western superiority in conventional forces and “emerging technologies.” A review of pre-Russian-era military writings accordingly reflected such recommendations as:

- A reevaluation of the nuclear no-first-use pledge.
- Replacement of “reasonable sufficiency” by “sufficient reasonableness.”
- Replacement of the defensive doctrine by “preemptive strikes.”
- U.S.-Soviet “condominiums” in ACMs, advanced (“third-generation”) nuclear weapons, and anti-ballistic-missile technologies.
- Cost-effective counters to reconnaissance-strike complexes.
- A new strategy, operational art, and body of tactics based on the lessons of the Gulf War.

Russian military writings (that is, those written after the demise of the Soviet state) reveal strong continuities with their predecessors.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the new Russian military leaders continue to articulate a spectrum of threats that varies

little from that envisioned by their Soviet predecessors. First, the United States is said to be modernizing its nuclear arsenal in order to implement a counter-force strategy. Second, Russian military scientists argue that only two changes have occurred in Nato strategy: a shift in focus (imposed by the Conventional Forces in Europe agreement) away from the European “central front” and toward the northern and southern theaters of military action and a revitalization of the “flexible response” strategy in order to counter the growing probability of low-intensity conflicts. Third, the military continues to charge the West with superiority in conventional forces and an ongoing lead in emerging technologies. Finally, these experts warn of the territorial ambitions of Islamic states and of the prospect of nuclear capability for about twenty-four additional states by the year 2000.

***The Russian Image of Future War.*** As a result, Russian military analysts continue to develop a new doctrine and force structure to counter these perceived threats. For example, *Military Thought* offers a dramatic proposal by Colonel-General A.A. Danilevich, reputed to have been the long-time collaborator (if not ghost-writer) of N.V. Ogarkov, chief of the Soviet General Staff from 1977 to 1984.<sup>18</sup> His arguments can be summarized as follows.

- In contrast to nuclear war, the aggressor in conventional war can count even now on a temporary if not final victory.
- Owing to its current difficulties and weakness, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is vulnerable not only to nuclear but also conventional strikes by highly developed states. This disparity must be eliminated if political stability and deterrence are to be maintained.
- As the Gulf War demonstrated, modern warfare is based on the delivery of prolonged ACM strikes throughout the opponent’s entire territory, without deployment of ground forces.
- It is therefore necessary to create “a new class of weaponry” that can destroy (or at least threaten to destroy) the opponent’s important political, economic, and strategic targets at any range with conventional warheads only.
- At the present time, such “strategic non-nuclear deterrence forces” (SNNF, in the Russian acronym) can be developed most realistically on the basis of corresponding elements of the strategic nuclear forces. It is now expedient to “unilaterally convert a certain portion of the strategic nuclear forces to conduct non-nuclear actions.”
- The resulting disruption of parity in strategic nuclear means is unimportant, because the potential for deterring conventional war—the most probable form of warfare today—will be improved.

Danilevich then describes several successive stages in the development of an SNNF: strategic aviation, whose entirety (or at least bulk) is easily converted to conventional use; a “strategic non-nuclear triad” armed with conventional

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warheads and comprising intercontinental ballistic missiles, strategic-type bombers with long-range cruise missiles, and submarines and surface ships with cruise and possibly ballistic missiles; and, finally, "intercontinental information (intelligence) strike systems" for use in a conventional war. Since the basic delivery vehicles of conventional warheads would be long-range cruise missiles, the main problem in developing the SNNF would be modernizing Soviet cruise missiles.

According to Danilevich, the SNNF can be employed against four basic "target sets." The first group consists of the opponent's nuclear means and related facilities, whose destruction or attempted destruction would prompt escalation and involve technical complexities. The second group comprises the opponent's nuclear power and chemical plants, attacking which would be simpler technically but still escalatory. The third group involves such general-purpose military targets as air and naval bases. But Danilevich argues that with a limited number of SNNF assets, it would be extremely difficult to inflict substantial damage on the opponent by destroying the relatively small number of even important military targets that could be attacked.

Finally, the fourth group consists of those targets that constitute the opponent's "military-economic potential." Danilevich argues that this target set is the most advantageous for the SNNF in the near future, considering the limited number and currently feasible accuracy of the new weapons. In comparison with the effect of destroying targets of the other groups, disabling key elements of the military economy would ensure a prolonged reduction of industrial potential and substantially hinder any enemy attempt to wage war.

According to Danilevich, the SNNF could be used to deliver selective strikes on some single category of targets as well as simultaneous strikes on all types of targets. Under certain conditions, the actions of the SNNF would assume the form of a "special strategic operation." Of all future programs, he concludes, the development of the SNNF could be the "most economical and technically feasible."

It should be noted that throughout the 1980s, Marshal Ogarkov and other Soviet military experts alluded to the ultimate development of the SNNF but usually in connection with U.S. technological developments. While Russian military experts clearly acknowledge the crippling effects of recent events upon the future of their armed forces, they continue to prepare for Ogarkov's vision of future war. In the meantime, the Russian political leadership must likewise be seeking the "most economical, technically feasible" means of both deterring and fighting such a war, if war should come.

**Russian Views on Desert Storm.** Like their Soviet predecessors, Russian military scientists view Desert Storm as the paradigm of future war in strategy, operational art, and tactics. The writings of these experts reflect, in this respect, unbroken



For example, General-Major I.N. Vorob'yev has recently summarized the central lessons of Desert Storm.<sup>19</sup> He begins with a statement unprecedented for both the Soviet and Russian press: the Iraqis lost the Gulf War because they fought with Soviet doctrine and Soviet weaponry. Indeed, the thrust of his article is a call for "new military thinking" on the part of "our generals and officers" who are still locked into the "inertial thinking" of the World War II generation.

According to Vorob'yev, Desert Storm was one of those rare "turning points" in military affairs—akin to the Franco-Prussian War—that stands at the juncture of two epochs in military art. It ended the era of multimillion-man armies and began that of high-technology wars fought in the air, space, and "ether (airwaves)." While in past wars new armaments were employed only singly, in Desert Storm a multitude of new systems was used on a mass scale.

Vorob'yev argues that because it constitutes the first victory achieved without massive ground forces, Desert Storm has prompted a radical reexamination of the structure of armed forces and the roles of particular branches. The emphasis has shifted from quantity to quality, because technological superiority nullified quantitative superiority in divisions and conventional arms. As a result, the technological indices of new weapons—arms that are capable on the whole of predetermining the outcome of military actions—now constitute the basis for analyzing the combat potential of the opposing sides.

Vorob'yev argues further that Desert Storm demonstrated a shift in the balance between the spheres of military art. While tactics were dominant in all past wars, strategy and operational art are decisive now. As a result, the "battle" has ceased to be the sole means of achieving victory in war. Indeed, the revolutionary nature of Desert Storm lies specifically in its having generated such new forms of operational and tactical actions as the "long-distance" (remote) battle and the "electronic-fire operation." According to Vorob'yev (and others), the "electronic-fire operation" consisted of massed and prolonged missile, aerospace, and electronic-warfare (EW) strikes in conjunction with sea-based attacks. This operation predetermined the successful outcome of Desert Storm. Vorob'yev notes that its novelty lies in the emergence of EW as a weapon equal to "fire strikes" in combat effectiveness. The essence of this new phenomenon lies in the duration of the electronic-fire phase, the large quantity of new EW resources employed, a simultaneous impact on Iraqi command and control (C<sup>2</sup>) at all levels, and the synergism created by precise coordination of EW and fire strikes.

According to Vorob'yev, Desert Storm has also produced a shift from positional to maneuver warfare. While both types were conducted equally in past wars, maneuver is now the dominant form. Desert Storm has also generated a new method of penetrating the defense: prolonged, continuous, and massed electronic-fire strikes in conjunction with a double envelopment of troops—by land and air, and by the creation, with air, air-mobile, and naval landing forces,

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of an active "front" in the opponent's rear. This operation signals the eventual demise of linear actions, close-in combat, stable fronts, and long operational pauses. The author notes, however, that some positional combat can still be conducted between technological equals.

Finally, Vorob'yev describes six changes in the principles of military art that have resulted from Desert Storm: a shift from the concentration to the mobility of troops; a shift from the massing of troops to the massing of ACMs; a shift from unidimensional to multidimensional warfare, whose essence consists in decisive superiority not only on land but also in the air and ether; a shift from selecting axes for the main strike to identifying "areas for concentrating efforts," the epicenter of the opponent's defense now being not positions and lines but a "fire

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grouping" comprising widely dispersed nuclear attack forces, air defense and anti-tank systems, EW assets, reconnaissance-strike complexes (operational or strategic), and reconnaissance-fire complexes (tactical); fifth, the achievement of surprise by the mass employment of technologically new systems; and finally, precise coordination during the air offensive of land, air, and space-based systems with regard to objective, place, and time.

Similarly, Rear Admiral V.S. Pirumov argues that the effectiveness of information systems has led "developed countries" to acknowledge the dominant role of the "electronic-fire" concept of waging war.<sup>20</sup> In force structure and equipment, this concept manifests itself not in competition for numerical superiority in motorized rifle or tank formations for ground battles, but in using industrial and technological advantages to create high-precision sea and aerospace-based weapons and global C<sup>2</sup> systems that facilitate "surprise first and subsequent massed radioelectronic and fire strikes that decide the outcome of the war without the invasion of ground forces."

Pirumov argues further that a war's main objective is shifting away from seizure of the opponent's territory and toward "the suppression of his political or military-economic potential" and "ensuring the victor's supremacy in the political arena or economic markets." The primacy of this concept has generated a new form of utilizing armed forces, the "electronic-fire operation."

This operation would typically begin, Admiral Pirumov suggests, not with an invasion by ground forces but a surprise air attack, which permits not only seizure of the strategic initiative but also disruption of the opponent's strategic deployment by hitting a series of his most important targets with a first strike.

In addition, losses of personnel are significantly lowered since ground troops are used only after space and air superiority are achieved—which in turn guarantees their success. Pirumov concludes that parity and defense sufficiency thus require calculations not only of the fire component of combat but, especially, the “information component”—which must govern the allocation of scarce defense resources.

According to Colonel V.V. Krysanov, the next stage in the development of military actions will be connected with weapons based on new physical principles and cutting-edge technologies. Here preference will be given to two “revolutionary” directions in developing the means of warfare: the robotization of military technology, and directed-energy weapons. Both of these developments will generate new types of military action, which will reduce the participation, and hence the losses, of personnel. In the first stage, combat robots will merely supplement existing weapons, but later their use could lead to two-sided independent battles on particular axes. The advantages of remotely piloted vehicles are obvious, Krysanov continues: they can be used in radioactive areas and areas saturated with air defense weapons, as well as in poor visibility. In time, he concludes, they could become “the basic means of air attack.”<sup>21</sup>

Krysanov argues further that the “electronization” of military actions is also a prospective direction for their development. Numerous foreign specialists, he points out, view “electronic weapons,” which have a direct destructive effect, as “absolute” armaments. U.S. experts are discussing another new type of warfare, “electronic-beam” combat, which will be characterized by speed, high accuracy, instantaneous destructive effect, and the impossibility of escape by maneuvering. The development of such “super-high-frequency, infrasonic (subsonic) weapons” designed to impact specifically on the opponent’s personnel is also generating a special type of warfare with “psychogenic” effects. Krysanov concludes that the appearance of these and other fundamentally new systems urgently requires development of systems capable of defending against them.

In sum, Russian experts argue that the Gulf War was the prototype of the new “technological war,” wherein the surprise use of new systems will be decisive and the initial period of a war will be essentially the only period. The lines between strategy, operational art, and tactics are said to be disappearing, because strategic objectives can be achieved with a first deep strike.

**Russian Military R&D.** It is noteworthy that a strong civil-military consensus exists regarding the R&D priorities for the Russian armed forces. First, such leaders as Defense Minister Pavel Grachev and Deputy Defense Minister Andrei Kokoshin agree that large armored forces have become “dinosaurs” in modern warfare.<sup>22</sup> Second, all parties agree that the Russian armed forces must be smaller, more professional, more mobile, and equipped with emerging technologies.

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Third, civilian and military leaders are both convinced that "there is no alternative" to the development of ACMs, despite the current "time of troubles." For example, both the military leadership and the leaders of the Russian Supreme Soviet view ACMs as the "basic deterrence factor" of future war. Other experts argue that ACMs are cheaper than both nuclear weapons and large armored forces, and that ACMs will permit a Russian military of even less than 1.5 million men.

As a result, civilian and military leaders agree that R&D must be maintained at the expense of procurement as the defense budget declines. According, for example, to Marshal Yevgenii Shaposhnikov, the current Russian lag (e.g., in stealth and ACMs) prohibits any cuts in the R&D budget. "Here we cannot be second best," he has argued, "where our partners are concerned."<sup>23</sup> Other experts note that Russia is currently seven to ten years behind in ACMs and warn that the United States can double or treble its arsenal of those weapons by the year 2000.

On the other hand, such spokesmen as Kokoshin have announced that Russia remains "quite competitive" in at least six areas: several aspects of shipbuilding, aircraft construction, rocket construction, heavy power machine-building, composite materials, and laser and space weaponry.<sup>24</sup> Russian military experts have even gone so far as to assert that despite the current technological lag, Russia enjoys superiority in "intellectual developments."<sup>25</sup> This proposition may well explain the warning that was recently delivered to senior Russian officers to stop releasing to "the Americans" intelligence information that the latter once spent billions to acquire.

The striking Russian civil-military consensus is reflected in the new list of priorities for the Russian armed forces recently announced by both Vice President Rutskoi and Defense Minister Grachev: highly mobile troops; army aviation ("strike helicopters"); long-range ACMs and reconnaissance-strike complexes; systems for command, control, communication, and intelligence (C<sup>3</sup>I); EW systems; military space systems; air defense systems; and strategic arms (not further defined).<sup>26</sup>

This consensus is also reflected in the 1992 Russian defense budget, which is stated to be about 400 billion rubles. Both civilian and military spokesmen assert that current allocations represent a seventy-one percent cut in procurement as opposed to a sixteen percent cut in R&D—a figure that apparently matches the amount of R&D conducted in other republics of the former Soviet Union. According to Deputy Prime Minister Gaydar, the R&D budget is being maintained "to preserve the main most important projects at the 1991 level, as far as Russia's share . . . regarding Russian science."<sup>27</sup>

Finally, both civilian and military leaders agree that the defense complex is Russia's "main resource" for maintaining a high status in the world economy. The Russian government has thus enacted several measures designed to ensure

the maintenance of military R&D and production infrastructures. In an attempt to stem the "brain drain," for example, additional funds were recently allocated for the remuneration of defense complex employees. More importantly, President Yel'tsin has signed a law that closed all regions of Russia involved in developing, producing, storing, or utilizing weapons of mass destruction, in processing radioactive materials, and in which military or other facilities that require a special security regime are located. The closing of these military-industrial complex regions suggests an attempt to isolate the personnel and equipment required for high-priority military R&D and production from the rest of the Russian economy.

### Russia's New Military Doctrine

The Russian leadership is currently focusing not only on creating the Russian armed forces but also on developing a new military doctrine for the 1990s and beyond. As already noted, a draft of Russia's new doctrine was published in *Military Thought* in May 1992. This doctrine is based on "defense documents adopted by the Russian president and Supreme Soviet, as well as by the CIS Council of Heads of State." *Military Thought* states further that "in announcing its military doctrine, Russia guarantees the unconditional implementation of all of its provisions."<sup>28</sup>

The new doctrine describes two potential developments that would constitute "direct" military threats to Russia: introduction of foreign troops into contiguous states, and buildup of air, naval, and ground forces near Russian borders. In addition, a violation in the former Soviet republics of the rights of Russian citizens and of persons "ethnically and culturally" identified with Russia would be viewed as "a serious source of conflicts." Finally, it is extremely interesting that Russia now views *conventional* strikes on its nuclear and other "dangerous" targets as an escalation to weapons of mass destruction—which implies that such strikes will elicit a nuclear response.

According to Russian doctrine, local wars are becoming the most probable type of warfare. But large-scale conventional wars may arise either with the escalation of local wars, whether aimed against Russia or the CIS or breaking out in regions adjacent to their borders, or after a "prolonged threat period" that involves general mobilization. The doctrine assigns priority to wars fought with existing and emerging conventional weapons.

The new doctrine postulates three distinct components of the Russian armed forces (similar to those of the U.S. military as structured by its new "national military strategy"). First is a limited presence in the theaters (presumably the Russian borders), kept in permanent readiness to repel local aggression; second are mobile reserves, or rapid-response forces, capable of quickly deploying to any region to deal, alongside the permanent readiness troops, with mid-level

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aggression. The third component comprises strategic reserves formed during peacetime high-threat periods and ensuing wars to conduct large-scale combat actions.

The new doctrine also describes the two priorities of Russian military-technical policy: "emerging high-precision, mobile, highly survivable, long-range, stand-off weapons," and arms, equipment, and C<sup>3</sup>I systems whose quality will permit a reduced quantity of armament. The doctrine stresses that Russia must have a military-technical policy as well as weapons programs on a par with world standards. In order to achieve this objective the doctrine calls for reducing procurement of arms and equipment in serial production, but maintaining R&D and production capacities to ensure development and rapid surge production capability for emerging combat technologies.

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A comparison of Russia's new doctrine with the 1990 Soviet military doctrine reveals at least five key changes.<sup>29</sup> First, in 1990 the main "wartime objective" was to "repel aggression"; in 1992, the main "wartime objective" is to "repel aggression and defeat the opponent." Second, in 1990 the main "development goal" was to structure forces to "repel aggression"; in 1992, it is "to optimize" the table of organization and equipment for all possible wars and combat missions. Third, the 1990 doctrine held that nuclear war "will" be catastrophic for all mankind, while the 1992 version holds that it "might" be. In addition, the 1990 doctrine stated that nuclear war "will assume a global character," and that calculations on limiting it to a single region are untenable. In 1992, however, both of these provisions have been deleted—which implies that limited nuclear war-fighting is now a possibility.

These changes may stem from Russian perceptions of the growing proliferation of nuclear weapons on their borders, increasing the possibility of a limited nuclear conflict. In addition, Russian military spokesmen argue that tactical nuclear weapons have become a strategic deterrence factor vis-à-vis the massive armies of neighbors such as China.

Fourth, the 1990 doctrine held that conventional "sufficiency" meant that no large-scale offensive operations could be conducted. In 1992, however, conventional "sufficiency" means that no large-scale offensive operations can be conducted "without additional deployments." Gorbachev's 1987 prohibition against developing large-scale offensive capabilities has clearly been rejected. Finally, the 1990 doctrine stressed that Soviet military art was based on a "defensive strategy," and that the USSR excluded the option of a preemptive strike. Defense was said to be the main type of military action at the outset of

war. In 1992, however, these provisions are deleted. Instead, the Russian armed forces will conduct "all forms of military action," will conduct defense and offense equally, and will seize the strategic initiative to destroy the opponent.

One explanation for these striking divergences from the 1990 Soviet doctrine lies in the dramatic changes that have since occurred in the former Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the new doctrine clearly rejects the long-standing civilian call for forces structured solely to conduct defensive operations. The Russian military's reassertion of its influence is also discernible in two broader aspects of the new doctrine. First, while Gorbachev's concept of "reasonable sufficiency" was stated to guide Soviet force development in 1990, the military's concept of "defense sufficiency" is given as directing Russian force development in 1992. Second, Russia's 1992 doctrine defines "military-strategic parity" as approximate *quantitative* equality in all types of weapons—a clear rejection of the civilian call for a *qualitative* assessment of parity.

The new Russian doctrine also reflects the pervasive impact of Operation Desert Storm on Russian military thought. Beginning in the early 1980s, such prominent military thinkers as Marshal Ogarkov argued that emerging technologies were generating a new "revolution" in military affairs. Russian military scientists now assert that Desert Storm confirmed these predictions and serves as the paradigm of future war in strategy, operational art, and tactics. That campaign's lessons are reflected in the current Russian military doctrine in several ways.

First, Russia's new doctrine assigns priority to the new systems employed during Desert Storm: advanced conventional munitions, electronic warfare, and C<sup>3</sup>I. Russian military scientists have argued, for example, that during the war ACMs accomplished missions once assigned to nuclear weapons. As already noted, electronic warfare is considered to be a weapon equal to "fire strikes" in its combat effectiveness, and advanced C<sup>3</sup>I systems are now described as just as important as the entire "correlation of forces and means." In fact, superiority in EW and C<sup>3</sup>I is said to ensure victory in future war.

Second, the doctrine lists a new strategic mission for the Russian armed forces: repelling a surprise "aviation-missile attack." Presumably such an attack would be in the nature of the above-described "electronic-fire operation"—which, while foregoing seizure and occupation of territory, would aim at "suppressing . . . political or military-economic potential" and ensuring "supremacy in political or economic arenas."

Third, the new doctrine stresses the decisive importance of a future war's initial period, now said to consist of air and naval strikes aimed at disrupting strategic deployments, disorganizing civilian and military C<sup>2</sup>, and removing CIS states from the war. The destruction of economic and military targets by ACMs will be accompanied by simultaneous or preemptive EW. Only in subsequent periods might the attacker deploy ground troops, under strong air cover.

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## The Rodionov Response

From 27 to 30 May 1992, a "scientific conference" on "Russia's Military Security" was held at the General Staff Academy of the Russian Armed Forces. The keynote speech, entitled "Some Approaches to Developing Russia's Military Doctrine," was delivered by Colonel-General I. Rodionov, head of the General Staff Academy.<sup>30</sup> Several observers, including Defense Minister Grachev, described the speech as a "bold" one. Another commentator noted that much of what Rodionov said would not have been heard before from the lips of a military man, "even in a situation of strict secrecy." His speech therefore suggests that the 1992 published doctrine resulted from a compromise between "harder" and "softer" views on the requirements for Russia's military security.

In short, Rodionov argued that Russia's new military doctrine must unambiguously specify Russia's vital national interests, the current threats to these interests, and the probable nature of future wars and military actions. In achieving this objective, he warned, the doctrine must be corrected to ensure "that we not deceive first of all ourselves, and that we not [subscribe to doctrinal provisions that] either justify hasty political declarations or seek to simply increase trust in us by the world community." (This sentence was deleted from the published version of the conference proceedings.)<sup>31</sup> Russia's new military doctrine, he stressed, must serve the Russian people "not in words but in deeds."

Rodionov first described the "global, regional, and national interests" of Russia, none of which are enumerated in the published 1992 doctrine. He began by stating that any attempts at political, economic, scientific, or cultural isolation of Russia (whether originating in Europe, Asia, or some other part of the world) or the creation of any military-political alliance directed against Russia will "violate Russian national interests."

According to Rodionov, Russia's geographical expanse predetermines that its "vital interests" on the Eurasian continent extend from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. They include, for example, the East European states (former members of the Warsaw Pact) that border on the CIS. At the very least, these states must maintain their neutrality because their entry into military-political groupings aimed directly or indirectly against Russia would seriously damage the latter's strategic situation.

Rodionov noted further that Russia's vital interests include the Baltic states and require that these nations recognize Russia's right to free access to seaports, unconditionally reject both the stationing of third-country military forces on their territory and entry into military blocs aimed against Russia, and guarantee the civil rights of the Russian population in these states. He also contended that for many centuries, Russia has struggled to acquire an exit to the Baltic and Black Seas. Therefore "the deprivation of such free exits would contradict [Russia's] national interests."



As for the CIS countries, Rodionov continued, all of the Commonwealth states are in the sphere of Russia's vital national interests. Russia must prevent these states from becoming some kind of "buffer zone" or "cordon sanitaire" separating Russia from the countries of the West, South, and East. Therefore, attempts by any state in Europe, America, or Asia to capitalize on existing disagreements among the CIS states or to strengthen its own influence in these states could negatively affect its own situation and would violate Russia's national interests and security.

Finally, he described Russia's national interests as including maintenance of mutually advantageous economic relations with all countries of the Near, Middle, and Far East, and use of the waters of the "World Ocean" for free navigation and economic activity.

Rodionov then described the currently existing threats to Russia's vital national interests, none of which are specified in the 1992 published doctrine. First, he said, Russia's interests in the aforementioned regions conflict with the interests of other states, and above all the vital interests of the United States in these regions. Second, the United States and Nato are not only maintaining but also rapidly increasing their vast military might. The incorporation of new, more effective types of weapons is quickly compensating for certain quantitative reductions in their armed forces. Rodionov claimed that the Nato countries currently have about twenty thousand "means of air attack" as well as a developed system for basing them near Russian borders. He contended that as a result these countries possess massive offensive power that is rapidly being further developed. In addition, he asserted, one of the principles of U.S. strategy is the maintenance of superiority in "aerospace" and on the seas.

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***“. . . [The] published doctrine states that Russia will wage all types of military action, will conduct the offense and defense equally, and will seize the strategic initiative to destroy the opponent. Indeed, it represents the final demise of Gorbachev's 1987 'defensive doctrine.'"***

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According to Rodionov, many post-war military conflicts, including the Gulf War, demonstrate that the United States and Nato could use military force in order to achieve their military-political objectives. He concluded by stressing that a military threat to Russia's national interests "currently exists and is unlikely to disappear in the near term." Therefore, "it is impossible to agree that no one now threatens us" simply because ideological differences are disappearing: "This is completely false."

Along with enumerating Russia's vital national interests and the current threats to these interests, Rodionov also suggested adjustments to the 1992 published doctrine in the following three areas: the probable nature of future

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wars, possible military actions at the outset of war, and the role of nuclear weapons in future war.

First, in describing the probable nature of future wars, the published doctrine states, as already noted, that a large-scale conventional war could arise with the escalation of local wars either aimed against Russia or the CIS or unleashed adjacent to their borders, or after a "prolonged threat period" involving general mobilization. Rodionov added a third scenario: "when military assistance is provided to one or several countries that have been subjected to aggression." (Why this would not remain a local war was left unclear.) In addition, Rodionov stated that local wars that violate Russia's national interests may arise not only near the borders of Russia and the other CIS countries, but also "in remote areas." Finally as regards future war, Rodionov stressed the possibility of conflicts—national, religious, or civil—that undermine Russian internal stability and require the intervention of armed forces. Russia's new doctrine must therefore focus much more attention on the principles of conducting "conflicts designed to restore stability within the country." He contended that "opposition forces struggling for power" reject the notion of using the Russian armed forces to accomplish domestic missions, but that once in power, they would begin to look differently at the role of these forces.

Second, in describing possible military actions at the outset of war, the published doctrine states that Russia will wage all types of military action, will conduct the offense and defense equally, and will seize the strategic initiative to destroy the opponent. Indeed, it represents the final demise of Gorbachev's 1987 "defensive doctrine." While Rodionov welcomed these provisions of the published doctrine, he apparently believes that they require greater elaboration.

The nation's military doctrine, he began, recently envisaged the conduct of only defensive actions at the outset of war. After that, a counteroffensive would dislodge the opponent from captured territory. Military actions would cease upon reaching the state border and would not be conducted on the aggressor's territory; the opponent would be fought "not on foreign but on our own territory." In essence, the opponent was to be ejected beyond the state border, and the mission of destroying him was not assigned.

According to Rodionov, it is impossible to agree with such doctrinal tenets, which clearly reflected certain political moods and ignored the laws of armed combat. These tenets would be essentially "fatal" for the state and preordain its defeat in war. History demonstrates that defense, passivity, and loss of the strategic initiative have never yet led to victory—and Gorbachev's defensive doctrine prematurely surrendered the initiative to the opponent.

Rodionov therefore stressed that Russia's new military doctrine must succinctly, clearly, and unambiguously reflect the premise that if the opponent initiates aggression, then the laws of armed combat will immediately take effect: ~~state borders will cease to exist.~~ (The reference to "state borders" was deleted

from the published version of the conference proceedings.)<sup>32</sup> The armed forces should then select and implement those forms and methods of military action that are most effective in the given situation, offense or defense, delivering fire strikes on the opponent no matter where he is. Above all, these methods must include the delivery of strikes on the most important military and economic targets in the aggressor's territory. (One explanation for this dramatic change may be Russian perceptions that a future war will be waged with stand-off, conventionally armed, "aerospace" weapons.) Rodionov concluded, in any case, that it is therefore necessary to reject such notions as defensive doctrine, defensive strategy, defensive armed forces, and so forth.

Finally, in describing the role of nuclear weapons in future war, the published Russian doctrine implies the growing possibility of a limited nuclear conflict and of a nuclear response to conventional strikes on Russia's nuclear and other "dangerous" targets. Rodionov, on the other hand, offered a much more provocative view regarding the role of nuclear weapons in Russia's military doctrine.

According to Rodionov, the United States can reach the territory of Russia from all sides and throughout its depth not only with nuclear weapons but also with general-purpose forces. Russia, on the other hand, can reach neither the United States nor many other potential opponents with its general-purpose forces—and all the less so in light of conversion of military assets to civilian uses. Therefore, Russia is left with only its strategic nuclear forces for such purposes, and above all the Strategic Missile Troops.

However, he continued, Russia's new military doctrine again tries to articulate the nuclear no-first-use pledge. In Rodionov's opinion, statements pledging "no first use of nuclear weapons, retaliatory strikes, and defensive nature" only repeat past mistakes that stemmed from the "self-advertising of political leaders" and inflicted "irreparable damage" upon the nation's defense. For the foreseeable future, nuclear weapons are the basic political weapon for deterring aggression and preventing war.

It will therefore be an "irreparable mistake," he charged, if Russia does not openly declare that, in the event of aggression, it will use its entire arsenal—including nuclear weapons—to destroy the opponent and defend its interests. In fact, Rodionov went so far as to propose that reference to nuclear weapons be excluded altogether from Russia's military doctrine. (Here it should be noted that one explanation for the Russian military's rejection of the nuclear no-first-use pledge may proceed from loss of confidence in its own conventional options.)

At present, Russia's 1992 published draft doctrine proceeds from a striking civil-military consensus on the nature and requirements of future war and directions for the near and long-term development of Russian military art and force structure. At the same time, General Rodionov's "bold" views on the new

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doctrine—which were largely condoned by Defense Minister Grachev—may reflect a civil-military rift regarding the extent to which old Soviet imperial interests should be pursued.

One source of this rift is the overall state of Russian civil-military relations. Hard-line Russian nationalists have been elevated to critical posts in the new Russian defense ministry, while both civilian and military reformers have been relegated to the margins. As a result, the new military leadership appears to be developing an agenda that differs significantly from the declaratory policy of the political leadership. Reminiscent of the Cold War, this agenda reflects such objectives as reestablishing an extensive sphere of influence, including such areas as Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. Given both the militant nationalism of the new military leadership and its willingness to pursue this independent agenda, such issues as the treatment of Russian-speaking minorities in neighboring states could be exploited to undermine the status quo.

**W**hat can we conclude about the military-technical aspects of Russia's new doctrine? First, the doctrine assigns priority to wars fought with existing and emerging conventional weapons. Second, it views the Gulf War as the paradigm of future conventional wars. Third, the doctrine calls for sustaining R&D at the expense of procurement as the defense budget declines. These budgetary allocations reflect a dramatic shift away from the era of quantitative superiority in manpower and armor and toward the era of qualitative, technological indices of combat potential. Fourth, the doctrine indicates changing views on nuclear war, views now implying that a limited nuclear scenario is possible and that conventional strikes on Russia's nuclear and other dangerous targets will elicit a nuclear response. Finally, it reflects the demise of Gorbachev's "defensive doctrine" and a shift to waging all forms of military action, including "large-scale offensive operations."

Russian military doctrine thus remains highly dynamic and visionary even in the current "time of troubles." Despite much discussion about the ascendance of civilians, the military has reasserted its dominance over the development of this doctrine.

For the near term, the new doctrine postulates rapid-response forces in order to prepare for local conflicts. For the long term, it calls for the development of emerging combat technologies in order to prepare for the new "technological war." But the future of Russia's economy and defense industries, as well as the nature of its political leadership, will be the final determinants as to whether and when Russia implements the future-oriented aspects of its new military doctrine.

It is important to note, however, that a striking civil-military consensus exists on current requirements for Russia's military security. This consensus reflects a

continuing, disproportionate emphasis on *military power* as a prerequisite for establishing Russia's place in the international system. Russian awareness of Soviet overextension in this sphere is unlikely to result in a reduction of military appropriations to a level commensurate with Russia's *economic* ranking in the world. For example, the current consensus includes an insistence on the maintenance of military-strategic parity and superpower status—if at a lower level of effort. This stance signifies that the absolute but not relative burden of defense expenditures will drop.

The current civil-military consensus also includes an image of future war based on the development and deployment of ACMs, directed-energy weapons, space-based antiballistic-missile (ABM) and strike weapons, and third-generation nuclear weapons. The Russian leadership has offered no suggestion that an arms control regime should prevent the development of these systems. On the contrary—military-technical progress is viewed as a phenomenon that “cannot be stopped.” Instead, the leadership has proposed a U.S.-Soviet “condominium” in the development of ABM systems. Such proposals could indicate either, first, a sincere desire to implement the new military-technical revolution in cooperation rather than confrontation with the United States, or second, the mother of all “*peredyshekas*” (breathing spaces).

In order to achieve its political objectives, the Soviet leadership created and maintained a vast military force that served as a substitute for war. Today, the Russian leadership is calling not for serial production of weaponry but for an infrastructure that ensures the development and rapid surge production of emerging combat technologies. Military-technical *potential* will thus represent the modern substitute for war.

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