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The New View from Russia

Captain Dan Moore, U.S. Navy

AS CHANGES RAPIDLY UNFOLD in the former Soviet Union, new opportunities present themselves ever more frequently to gain insight into a nation that not long ago was essentially closed to us. Such an opportunity occurred in a recent war game at the Naval War College sponsored by the Chief of Naval Operations's Strategic Studies Group.

For over a century gaming has been a basic analytical tool at this War College. Game planners devise situations that force people to think about and act upon the issues of concern. The players—who in policy games such as this one would be scholars, civilian policy makers, and officers—assume roles and interact with each other through decisions the results of which are judged by control teams. Generally the discussions of the players in each “cell” while they work up their plans are at least as valuable as their final decisions, and certainly are more important than the final result of any game.

Formerly, when games were designed to gain insight into the policies of the Soviet Union and the likely Soviet reactions to events, Western experts played the parts of Soviet leaders. In this case, however, the “Russians” really *were* Russian. Six Russians and Ukrainians, each of them previously a government official or academic fellow in Soviet international institutes, participated. Their contribution greatly enhanced the interplay among the other sixty players in a “futures” game that explored how changes in U.S. naval forces might affect the framing of American security aims and the ability of the United States to satisfy those aims.

This article is a distillation of Russian deliberations and decisions during the recent game. Bear in mind that our data sample is small and was provided by individuals who may, at worst, be only on the fringes of actual movements in Moscow—but may also, at best, represent the majority opinion of policy makers there today.

Russia will continue to focus its security interests within its borders, concentrating on economic development, institutional restructuring, infrastructure

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fabrication, and ideological reorientation. Geography has not changed: Russian policy is still affected by the need for access to the sea, and the nation comprises a large and cumbersome landmass that is still hamstrung by problems of communications within its borders. The approach to the rest of the world will be four-fold: encouraging capital investment from the West; diversifying ties with the world's major economic regions; dissuading any single country from dominating any specific region contiguous to Russia; and preventing any nation from drawing Russia into a regional conflict. Most efforts in foreign relations will be focused on the other nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (C.I.S.) and in supporting the United Nations as the world arbiter.

Russia is not now confronted by any major threat to its internal security. This is due in large measure to its still-formidable deterrent forces, both conventional and nuclear, and its non-dependence on foreign oil. In fact, Russia considers its essential social challenge to be in its own border regions—educating Slavs living there about local Moslem, Turkic, and oriental cultures, and investing in these regions in order to smooth the sharp societal edges. Further, local threats from neighbors (Ukraine, Poland, China, and the Central Asian states) are limited. Inherent ideological, ethnic, nationalistic, or tribal differences with these regions can be handled diplomatically in all foreseeable eventualities; only agitation in these border regions by an external movement, such as Islamic fundamentalism, could threaten serious instability, i.e., threaten Russia's national security. Russia considers its neighboring former sister republics as "special buffer states" and will give them the economic and security support that such an important relationship deserves. In general, Russian security policies will be dominated by a desire to maintain a stable, "least demanding" international environment.

Conflicts in other world regions will constitute only a secondary threat to Russian interests. Russia will participate heavily in multinational security arrangements that respect national sovereignty and a stable world order. With the strengthening of its economic ties to the rest of the world, Russia would increase its efforts to ensure the safety of its sea lines of communications, especially in the western Pacific, and participate in international maritime forces to guard against piracy and other contingencies that might hamper free movement on international waters. Keeping in mind the need for clear policy guidelines for standing multinational maritime forces, Russia will establish explicit rules of engagement to preclude being drawn unnecessarily into war.

Russian armed forces will be drawn down to reflect the changing role of military force in the national security equation. The Russian military will be downsized to a force of about 1.4 million personnel. Its basic principle of minimal sufficiency in a defensive orientation is as much a recognition of economic reality as it is an acquiescence in a new fundamental military strategy. The main functions of the Russian military will be to prevent conflict on its borders, deter

aggression against Russia and the C.I.S., maintain readiness to defeat a persistent aggressor, and help the C.I.S. against recognized security threats.

As presently agreed, the nuclear weapons now in Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan ultimately will be dismantled or returned to Russia. In the nearer term, the Russian nuclear force will consist of small numbers of intercontinental and submarine-launched ballistic missiles and tactical weapons, predominately nuclear bombs for aircraft. The total number of warheads will be about two thousand. Nuclear forces will remain under unified, centralized (i.e., Commonwealth-level) command, and would comply with all treaties and international agreements.

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Army forces will be restructured into more mobile, lighter components than now exist. They will retain some power-projection capability, and will be withdrawn from their current border deployment positions to garrison and training regions well inside the Russian boundaries. The four major base areas would be southwest of Moscow, the Volga region, near Novosibirsk, and near Khabarovsk in the Far East, from where these highly mobile, airborne-capable units could respond quickly to any threat.

National air defense will consist of sophisticated air surveillance systems covering the entire country, with surface-to-air missile complexes near major urban and industrial centers.

As to naval forces, the Baltic, Black, and Northern Fleets will be secondary to the Pacific Fleet, and the Caspian Flotilla will be cut back. Total force structure, including submarines, will be reduced. With new procurement, ships will be fewer but more sophisticated. The navy will be tasked to defend merchant and fishing fleet activities; some capabilities for long-range oceanic (“blue-water”) operation will be maintained for this role. Russians see their navy as a mechanism that can draw Russia closer to the West through integration into Western security organizations. By participating in Western naval exercises (which the Soviet Union previously considered so dangerous) they can minimize further chances of anyone trying to harm them.

Air forces will be of a size commensurate with the requirement to defend other branches (with attack and fighter aircraft) as well as to maintain a strong reconnaissance and transport capability. The inadequacy of the internal national infrastructure (lack of extensive rail and highway networks in the central and eastern regions) not only causes but shows the reliance on well-developed air capabilities.

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Efforts at providing an equivalent to the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) will continue, with the building of five missile interceptor complexes for defense against medium-range ballistic missiles. These missiles will be built and kept in garrison, not to be deployed unless necessary. Russia would be interested in cooperating with a great-power accidental-launch protection system.

Defense budget priority will be given to space systems, mobility of conventional forces, command and control, communications and intelligence, sea control, and SDI. Forces and force structure will be geared for defense and for use only in conjunction with multinational, coalition forces. Procurement of new systems will be curtailed significantly. Much of the defense spending will be shifted to research and development—basic physics, computers, materials, biotechnology, and engineering systems.

The strategy underlying Russia's national security is to build the economy. Moscow will be willing to compromise *some* military strength in comparison with Western nations in return for geopolitical stability. The biggest task facing its industry is "retooling" from a military basis to commercial industrial applications. Progress here would greatly aid in developing a market economy based on a convertible currency.

While there is great uncertainty regarding the prospects for developing a satisfactory and viable market economy in Russia, there remain three foundation stones upon which the best chances for success lie: first, Russia is rich in natural resources; second, the country possesses a highly educated work force; and third, there is an excellent opportunity for international participation in Russian development—a prospect that appeals directly to the strengths of the Western and Japanese economies. The government must take the lead in massive infrastructure construction. While private corporations will benefit from the building process as well as from the new systems themselves, central planning may be the only institutional strength left over from the previous regime.

Future world security problems will come from an "arc of crisis" that covers the Maghreb (northwest Africa), the Levant (the eastern Mediterranean littoral), Southeast Asia, and Indonesia. This will result in a North-South orientation, with the developed national power blocs of the United States, the European Community, and Japan facing the burgeoning populations (and poor living conditions) of predominantly Moslem areas. Tribalism and indifference will prevent Sub-Saharan Africa from being of more than moral interest, and the great oceans will, in the Russian view, keep any South or Central America issues from influencing Eurasia.

Russia is interested in seeing U.S. presence around the world continue—primarily, it presumes, a naval presence, supported by prepositioned equipments for ground forces in various locations and by rapidly deployable contingency forces at home. Russia envisages cooperation with U.S. forces through participation in routine naval exercises and in task forces oriented towards merchant ship

and fisheries protection, action against drug trafficking, counter-terrorism, and imposition of U.N.-mandated sanctions (such as currently exist against Iraq).

Russia recognizes and supports the *present* (1992) U.S. role in world events. While both countries are superpowers by virtue of their strategic nuclear arsenals, the United States is the only global power. Russia now understands also that American withdrawal from overseas would invite other countries to fill the gap. This would not be manifested by a parade of regional armed forces quickly moving in as the last American went home. Rather, at the first inkling of destabilizing local unrest, at a level too low to trigger the concern of U.S. policy makers, locally strong regional actors (e.g., China, Iran, France, Argentina) would take the lead. While the debate was still being joined in America, new military forces would have filled the void and established the manner in which regional security matters were to be resolved. Russia recognizes the value of having the United States engaged from the very start in these matters (diplomatically as well as militarily), in that, as can be said of few of the world's nations, the United States lacks imperialistic aspirations or any desire for territorial gains.

Russia believes the most unsettling threat to international security as a whole, if not directly to itself, will come from entities smaller than states and not related to states. These factions will continue to attempt to influence nations, to gain a legitimate voice, and to obtain some recognition and affirmation of their causes. Russia assesses that the issues of these "non-state players" cannot be resolved by great-power politics, but rather by examining the *root causes* of the strife and incorporating solutions on the national level. The greatest fear is that these non-state entities will gain control of some source of great leverage, such as nuclear weapons, or of a scarce and inelastic resource, such as oil or water.

With regard to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Russia supports and will support denying access to such weapons and delivery systems to any additional nations, and encourages worldwide adoption of a no-first-use policy. These initiatives must be organized through international cooperation.

Russia does not, however, want to relegate the entire role of world leadership to the United States. While the presence of the U.S. as the predominant power in the world is recognized, Russia still sees an overriding necessity for the other great powers (Russia, the "G-7" economies, and China) to remain consultative, and for the formulation of the international security agenda to remain collective.

Clearly, responses from the Russian cell in this game were markedly different from those the world had learned to expect during the Cold War from the U.S.S.R. They shed light on some specific ways that at least these particular Russians think that their country may have changed. It was not possible for them to address every issue during the game, and some of the most significant (such

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as the precise relationship of Russia, and of its conventional military forces, to the Commonwealth of Independent States) remain ambiguous. Notwithstanding, the deliberations and decisions reflected here deserve close attention as indications of voices speaking today in the new Russian nation.

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We will know the standardized addresses of the naval operating forces and those other subscribers who are on the Standard Navy Distribution List (SNDL); those addresses will be updated automatically.

However, *all other subscribers using official military addresses for the subscriptions* will have to tell us what their new addresses are; for we have no other way of learning what they will be. Most such subscribers (commands and organizations) will soon receive a biennial validation mailer from us required by the U.S. Postal Service. It will ask for an address—indicate the standardized one. If you do not get a mailer but use a DoD address for your subscription, please contact us directly.

Our own new standardized address will appear on our masthead when we learn it (presumably the Autumn 1992 issue). Official DoD mail intended for us must use that address as of the end of this year. The mailer has, of course, the old address; it will be good if mailed before then.

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Yet it is a well-known thing that you can never get from bad to good through what is better, but always through a worse state of transition. . . . Through worse to better!

Ivan Turgenev
Smoke, 1867