



Defence Academy
of the United Kingdom

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Russian Series

**The Mouse that Roared, or the Bear that Growled?
Russia's Latest Military Doctrine (February 2010)**

Dr Steven J Main

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Key Findings

- The new Military Doctrine (MD) was carefully thought through over a period of years, as evidenced by the fact that many of its ideas had been debated in an earlier conference held in January 2007.
- It provides a detailed, comprehensive, examination and exposition of the current views of Russia's military-political elite of the nature of the current threats – both internal and external – facing Russia and, as such, has to be better understood and analysed than has currently been the case.
- Its assessment of the threats facing Russia are based on an analysis of *recent* events in European and world affairs AND not on old-fashioned stereotypes.
- The new MD, once again, underlines the importance of Russia's Strategic Deterrence Forces in maintaining the country's national security both now and in the foreseeable future: a reliance based on necessity, rather than choice.
- The new MD was not written to please, or anger, NATO but, regardless, NATO should not dismiss it out of hand. NATO should more actively engage to change the mindset which produced the MD in the first place and attempt to more deeply understand the genuine security concerns and anxieties of Russia. Russia is a Euro-Asiatic power and, within living memory, knows well the near decapitating effect of a conventional military attack, (22nd June 1941), never mind nuclear or even one involving precision guided weapons.
- In short, as reflected in the new MD and elsewhere, Russia's security concerns are very real and should be treated accordingly.

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"Russia remains an obdurate enigma and not an ally in international diplomacy...Russia is a brute fact of international diplomacy, it is not an ally."¹

It is a sad indictment of previous policies, pursued both in the West and in Moscow that, despite the recent commemoration of the Fall of the Berlin Wall, one of this country's leading newspapers felt justified in publishing a leader containing the above quote. The remark has a double poignancy to it: not only would it appear to confirm that little good seems to have evolved over the past 20 years or so in relations between Russia and the West but, perhaps more worryingly, that the paper itself saw little chance of any meaningful improvement in the foreseeable future. In many respects, this was further underlined by the criticism which appeared, particularly in the West (but not solely in the West), following the publication of Russia's latest Military Doctrine, (hereinafter referred to simply by the abbreviation, MD) in February 2010, given the renewed anti-NATO emphasis in the MD itself.

Most initial reaction, particularly and obviously in the West, to the content (as opposed to the earlier speculation surrounding the content), of the new MD was focused largely on its assessment of NATO as the most significant external military threat to the Russian Federation (RF), with one commentator speculating that the new MD simply proved that Russia had taken a step backwards, to the days of the Cold War, and confirmed the country's nascent mistrust of things Western.² However, the picture is more complicated than that and, as this paper will show, the new MD had relatively little to do with events and thoughts of over twenty plus years ago and much more to do with the development of events in the world, at large and in Europe since the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

Even given the relatively brief passage of time since the publication of Russia's third MD, (the previous two being published in 1993 and 2000, respectively), it is now possible to take a much more balanced view of the contents of the MD, as well as offer some detail on the document which was published at the same time as the MD but, to date, has not been made publicly available, The Foundations of the state's policy in the area of nuclear deterrence to 2020, in itself potentially, at least, as important as the MD. Both documents taken together, or individually, represent the latest official pronouncements on Russia's changing military and nuclear security policy and, as such, have to be viewed as amongst the most important official documents produced by the Russian political-military power elite since D Medvedev became President back in 2008.

The new MD has been the subject of both analysis and a fair degree of criticism, in the West and in Russia itself, since it was officially published in February. The advance speculation surrounding the content of the new MD did not do much to calm pre-publication fears that the new MD would represent a more significant shift in previous Russian statements, concerning

¹ *The Times*, 2/11/2009

² Reuben F Johnson, "Kremlin draws outdated strategic blueprint", *Military periscope*, 14/4/2010; V Petrov, "New Russian military doctrine focuses on NATO expansion", *Janes Defence Weekly*, 11/2/2010; V Charnysh, "Russian Nuclear threshold not lowered", *Arms Control Today*, March 2010; J Kipp, "Medvedev approves new Russian Military Doctrine", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vo.7, issue no 26, 8/2/2010; Marcel de Haas, "Doctrinal provisions and political realities", *Defence and Security*, no.22, 3/8/2010.

the pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons. However, the earlier furore has now settled and, since publication, there is almost a palpable feeling that the document failed to live up to its pre-publication hype. Regardless of the earlier pre-publication fuss and post-publication sense of disappointment felt by some, the MD is still an important declaration of state and will help shape the military and security policies of the Russian Federation for the next 5-10 years.

This paper hopes to provide a more balanced evaluation of the MD. Firstly, it will examine the immediate historical background to the new MD; secondly, the Russian perception of the threats facing the country, as detailed in the MD and in the statements of a number of the country's leading military and political personnel; thirdly, examine Russia's views on deterrence (containment), both nuclear and non-nuclear; fourthly, examine what has been publicly made available on its sister document, The Foundations... and, finally, conclude by producing an overall assessment of the MD in ascertaining Russia's current and mid-future security position. As a public statement of Russian military intent and policy, is it an accurate and fair reflection of how we can expect Russia to behave on the international arena, or is it simply a cover for weak capability?

Background

As stated earlier, this is now Russia's third MD since the break-up of the USSR in 1991. Its immediate predecessor was published before the attack on the Twin Towers in New York in September 2001, various 'coloured' and 'flower' revolutions in various parts of the fSU, Putin's first term as President and the global financial crisis, and was published at a time when, certainly as most Russian commentators now interpret their recent history, Russia was still very much in a state of transition. Indeed, similar to the period of the 1920s/1930s, the 1990s have become known as a transitional period in the country's development and, as such, the 2000 MD has been dubbed as the MD for the "transitional period", (*perekhodniy period*, in Russian).³ Leaving behind the chaos of the Yeltsin years, the 2000 MD came into being just at the beginning of Putin's first term in high political office – as appointed PM. Russia was also moving on from the economic crisis of 1998 and entering a relative period of economic and political stability, despite the ongoing tensions in the Caucasus. Thus, for many of Russia's senior military and political leadership, less than five years after publication, the 2000 MD had already served its purpose. This has been affirmed by no less a figure than General M Gareyev himself, noted Russian military historian and theorist, as well as President of the Russian Academy of Military Science. In a speech he delivered in January 2007, at a conference held under the auspices of the Russian Academy of Military Science and under the general heading, "The structure and basic content of the new military doctrine of Russia", he stated that:

"at a session of the Security Council of the Russian Federation in June 2005, the President of the Russian Federation, V V Putin, placed the task of drafting a new military doctrine (MD) for Russia [before the Council], the necessity of which had arisen as a result of...the material changes which had occurred in the direction and tendencies of the development of the military-political situation, the nature of the military threats facing the defence security [*oboronnaya bezopasnost'*] of the state, [better] definition of the tasks facing the Armed Forces and other troops; the great changes which had taken place in the system of political and military organisation."⁴

³ Of course, it is a matter of debate whether, or not, Russia has completely finished going through the transitional phase in its latest historical development cycle.

⁴ General M A Gareyev, "Struktura i osnovnoye soderzhaniye novoi voennoi doktriny Rossii", *Voennaya mysl'*, no.3, 2007, 2-13; 2. This was a major conference, including not only senior military figures, like General M Gareyev, General Yu Baluevskiy, Colonel-General A S Rukshin, "senior commanders of the Army and Navy, other power structures," but also senior representatives of Russia's political establishment, including

Curiously enough, this would appear to clearly contradict at least one statement made by another Russian analyst, as well as an apparent statement by the then MoD of the RF, Sergei Ivanov, that Russia's senior political and military leadership only began talking about the need for reform of the MD in the autumn of 2008:

“our leadership began to talk about the need for the drafting of a new military doctrine back in the autumn of 2008 – Sergey Ivanov, defence minister and deputy premier at that time, announced that a new document was being drafted and that it would contain substantial changes compared with the wording of the doctrine approved at the start of 2000.”⁵

Gareyev's acknowledgement of Putin's statement of June 2005, as well as the large-scale conference held at the beginning of 2007, would clearly prove that Russia's senior political and military leadership were discussing changes to the 2000 MD a good deal earlier than the autumn of 2008. Given the relatively short passage of time, it is odd, to say the least, that there is now such a discrepancy in the actual chronology of events. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the January 2007 conference must have played a prominent role in the drafting of the 2010 MD and, as will be detailed below, there is very little which appeared in 2010 that had not already been discussed openly by Russia's senior leadership three years earlier. Thus it is concerning that so many observers in the West *were taken by surprise* at the actual content of the 2010 MD. The content of the 2010 MD could still have come as a bit of a shock, but it should not have come as a complete surprise.

National Interests and Military Threats

Also addressing the January 2007 conference was the then Chief of the General Staff (CGS), General Yu N Baluevskiy. In his report, he pointed out that, like all other states, Russia had national interests, amongst these being:

“state sovereignty, territorial integrity, the socio-political stability of society, strategic stability in the world community, free access to the vitally important economic and strategic zones and communication arteries.”⁶

However, given Russia's physical size, this does create certain problems, as it straddles two continents and borders tens of states, hence the potential threats it faces are broad and varied. Unlike many other countries, Russia faces threats to its security not only from “developed” countries, but also from the “developing” countries. Unlike the USSR, Russia cannot count on any automatic support, or friendship, from countries who used to fall in the category of the Non-Aligned Movement, or the Third World, meaning that it can now be viewed with the same degree of hostility and anger as the US, France, Britain.⁷

In relation to the country's “national strategic priorities”, Baluevskiy listed the main priority as being:

“representatives of the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation, the Federal Assembly, Security Council of the Russian Federation”, (“New Military Doctrine of Russia – what should it be?”, *Russian Military Review*, No.2, February 2007, 6-10; 6).

⁵ “No mention of democracy in new military doctrine”, BBCM, 9/2/2010.

⁶ General Yu N Baluevskiy, “Teoreticheskiye i metodologicheskiye osnovy formirovaniya voennoi doktriny Rossiyskoi Federatsii”, *Voennaya mysl'*, no.3, 2007, 14-21; 14.

⁷ Baluevskiy, *ibid.*

“the creation of a democratic, law-based society, in which is secured the political, economic, social and humanitarian demands of society, on the whole, and each member of society, in particular.”⁸

Not far behind was the “economic flowering of Russia and the civil harmony of all sections of society.”⁹ Away from the domestic side of things, Baluevskiy listed Russia’s main foreign policy priorities as lying with the countries of the CIS, first and foremost, followed by the EU, but warned against expecting too much from co-operation with the West. Russia’s previous experience had taught it a salutary lesson:

“Russia’s move to co-operation with the West, on the basis of forming general, or close strategic interests, did not help to strengthen its military security. On the contrary, the situation in vitally important regions of the world for Russia and in close proximity to its borders, in a number of cases, has become much more complicated.”¹⁰

In listing the main threats to Russia’s national security, he stated that:

“in the military sphere and for the foreseeable future: the current course of the US military-political leadership at maintaining its role as world leader, expanding its economic, political and military presence in regions of traditional Russian influence; the realisation of plans to further expand NATO; introduction in the practical actions of the West of force, circumventing generally recognised principles and norms of international law; existing [and new] thresholds of local wars and armed conflict, in areas very close to the Russian border; the possibility of a break down in strategic stability as a result of violation of international treaties in the area of arms limitation and arms reduction...; the growth in the spread of nuclear weapons and WMDs.”¹¹

Further down the list is a part concerning “the special group of military threats to Russia” which included “the activity of international terrorist organisations”.¹² It is interesting (and possibly even symptomatic of a realignment of Russia’s assessment of the threats facing it in the future) that, despite the number of terrorist outrages in Moscow and elsewhere in recent times, Baluevskiy rated “the activity of terrorist organisations” lower in his list of real threats to Russia’s national security than continuing US ambitions to lead the world, or further attempts by NATO to expand its operational outreach. Baluevskiy also pointed out that the new MD should not only be geared towards guaranteeing Russia’s military security by “achieving victory in war”, but also by “effective preventive diplomacy,” ensuring Russia’s security by non-military means, in other words, forestalling aggression without a shot being fired in anger.¹³

Gareyev also had much to say about Russia’s national interests and the threats facing his country. His views are interesting in that they seem to reflect a very strong suspicion, (still felt by many of Russia’s senior military and, by extension, political leadership), concerning the precise nature of the role of the US and NATO. Both his general outline, as well as the specific nature of his interpretation of recent events in Europe, may seem to us anachronistic, even old-fashioned, but given his general standing within the overall military academic and policy-making community, they have to be taken seriously and will be quoted in length here. We may think, to put it in simple terms, that the Russians have got it badly wrong but, looking at it from the point of view of the men in the Arbat, as well as in the Kremlin, the recent historical record leaves itself wide open to a cynical interpretation of the West’s actions towards Russia.

⁸ Baluevskiy, *ibid.*, 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹² *ibid.*, 17.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

In examining the broad relationship between national security and sovereignty, Gareyev underlined the fact that the two were inextricably linked and that conflict could easily arise between nation states, simply as a consequence of a clash of national interests:

“in the modern world, where everything is based on competition, much depends on what type of policy is pursued by the country’s leadership. If the state has national interests and intends to defend them, then it could come into conflict with the interests of other states and this could lead to the appearance of potential, or direct, threats. If that, or any other country, does not particularly value its interests and is prepared to concede to other states, then in real terms, there will be no threats, except one – losing your own sovereignty...However, under contemporary conditions, without...sovereignty, neither democratic nor socio-economic reform will be possible to the fullest extent...Thus, in evaluating the threats to Russia’s security and addressing questions of defence, the idea should run through the MD that maintaining the country’s sovereignty and national interests is unquestionable.”¹⁴

Examining the recent course of events in Europe, and elsewhere, Gareyev was in no doubt that the threats to Russia were less military and more non-military:

“using the example of the collapse of the USSR, Yugoslavia and the parade of the ‘coloured’ revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, Kirghizia and others, one can confidently be sure that major threats do exist objectively and are put into effect not so much by military ways and means, but hidden and open methods of political-diplomatic, economic, information, influence, various underground activities and interference in the internal affairs of other countries. In Peter Schweitzer’s book, ‘Victory – the role of the secret strategy of the US administration in the collapse of the USSR and the socialist camp’, and other publications of recent years, all is convincingly explained how this was carried out...On top of that, one of the generators of the realisation of this policy at the time was P Gates, who became the Secretary of Defence of the USA. He knows how this is done. We do not have to dream up anything special...Western historians and politologists openly write about these things. We must make the necessary conclusions and extract lessons. Russia’s security interests not only demand that we make a proper assessment [of the threats], but also define adequate steps to react to such threats.”¹⁵

The growing realisation that the new MD would have to take into account all the non-military threats to Russia’s national security was also very apparent in Gareyev’s report. In his view, “it’s impossible to separate the non-military and military threats one from the other”, diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions being as equally effective as a military blockade in applying pressure to bring about the required change.¹⁶

Gareyev listed the three main areas of threat facing Russia:

“in the first place, the unfriendly [hostile] policy and activities of specific international forces and states, encroaching on the sovereignty of the RF, aimed at limiting its economic and other interests; various forms of political and information pressure and underground activities, as has happened in Ukraine, Georgia, Kirghizia and other countries; territorial claims on the RF almost along its entire border. Of a particularly acute nature is the threat to our energy security, (certain senior leaders of NATO see changes in the price of energy resources as being akin to a form of aggression)...; in the second place, there is [still] the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons and the deployment of WMDs against Russia. Practically, all nuclear weapons of all the other states possessing nuclear weapons today are, in the final analysis, aimed at Russia...In the third place, there are direct military threats

¹⁴ Gareyev, *ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

to Russia, the probability of armed conflicts arising and, under certain circumstances, even including a large-scale war, has not diminished, [especially] in the face of the desire by a number of leading powers to make a qualitative leap to achieve military-technical dominance, in the approaches towards Russia are deployed ever [more] powerful groupings of military force, abruptly breaking the military parity. One must also take into account the fact that the North Atlantic Alliance is extending its sphere of activity and aims to operate on a global stage.”¹⁷

Despite all this, however, Gareyev warned against those who favoured a much closer relationship with the likes of India and China:

““decoupling [*obosoblyatsya*] from the West would not be expedient. Suggestions by some politicians who call for a break [from the West] and unions with China and India are not realistic...Russia needs a multi-vector policy which must be determined exclusively by its [own] national interests.”¹⁸

In a similar vein, Gareyev called for allies to be found amongst those countries which are part of the CIS or the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, with “economic and military power and socio-politically and culturally close to our country.”¹⁹ As he himself stressed: “*you have to be ready to fight for [on behalf of] your allies, [emphasis as in the original]*”.²⁰

Thus, despite Gareyev’s major concerns about USA and NATO policies in relation to Russia’s future position on the world stage, he held back from joining the ranks of those advocating a break in relations with the West and a re-configuration of Russia’s strategic position in the world more to the South and the East. Although Russia’s national emblem is the two-headed eagle and whilst it is a matter of historical, political and geographical fact that Russia straddles two continents, the Kremlin, like Moscow, cannot escape a basic geopolitical fact: it is much closer to Europe, than it is to Asia. Russia is still one of the major powers in Europe and, throughout its history, it has always displayed a greater sense of its European roots and destiny, than Asiatic. For better or worse, its fate has been much more closely tied to Europe than Asia. Indeed, one of the main reasons for the continuing need for the country’s Strategic Deterrence (Containment) Forces is to forestall any future military threat from the East, rather than meeting any likely military threat from the West.

Towards the end of his report in January 2007, Gareyev warned against “the growth of potential enemies in the East and in the South” and called for more attention to be paid to the ground force element of the country’s military forces, particularly in the border regions.²¹ Bearing this in mind, for a growing number of Russian military strategists, China is becoming a very real issue in their assessment of the threats facing Russia in the not too distant future. The growing economic, military and political power of China in Asia is not only of concern to the USA, but also one of ever increasing alarm to Russia, particularly as it is happening at a time when its own political and military power east of the Urals is noticeably on the decline.²² Thus, it is not too difficult to fathom a scenario in the Russian Far East when China makes serious inroads in the Russian Far East at Russia’s expense. One of Russia’s leading military strategists, V I Ostankov, wrote the following concerning the changing balance of power in Central Asia:

¹⁷ Gareyev, *ibid.*, 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.*, 10.

²² P Foster, “Pentagon warns of China’s military growth”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 18/8/2010; P Foster, “Where will the Long March end?”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 18/8/2010; J Gomez, “Clash of words intensifies as US and China clash over territorial claims”, *The Scotsman*, 19/8/2010..

“the increasing military [and] economic might of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the growth in the country's [China] population, requires enormous resources. As much as other resource regions of the world have been exhausted, it is perfectly logical and the vector of Chinese expansion will be aimed at the closely-lying regions of Russia (Siberia, the Far East), Kazakhstan and the other countries of Central Asia, the long-held fears of a large-scale, non-nuclear, conflict between the two countries have not disappeared.”²³

The nature of the future relationship between the PRC and the RF is problematic, at best and, as outlined by Ostankov, alarming, at worse. Even if nuclear weapons are not factored into any equation concerning a potential armed conflict, given simply the sheer weight of numbers which the Chinese could deploy, Russia would find it nearly impossible to repulse any serious Chinese aggression in the border regions between Russia and China, without using part of its strategic deterrence forces, (the threat of use might gain Russia some time, if there was a prospect of successful negotiations, but if China was willing to gamble and simply seize any part of Russian territory by sheer weight of numbers, the threat of use by itself might not be enough to dissuade the Chinese from attempting the necessary living space/resource grab). To paraphrase an old Cold War scenario: Beijing would have to gamble that Moscow would not go nuclear over Vladivostok.²⁴

Given the current state of the conventional Russian military force in the region, as Ostankov points out, there is a “political reliance” on nuclear weapons ‘holding the line’:

“in spite of the current stable relationship between the RF and the PRC, long-held fears about the likelihood of a large-scale military non-nuclear conflict between the two countries have not disappeared... Preventing such a possibility only by political methods, through the consolidation of friendly relations, or by reliance on the power of conventional weapons is proving ineffective. The Chinese factor compels us to maintain a political reliance on nuclear weapons and to strategic co-operation with the West.”²⁵

Long gone are the days when the Great Teacher, Mao Tse-Tung, exhorted Chinese youth “to study well of our older brother – the USSR.”²⁶ There is now a perceptible fear amongst a growing number of Russian strategic thinkers that it is now no longer a question of *if* China attacks, but simply *when* and under what circumstances. Few are still as blunt as the Deputy Director of the Institute of Military and Political Analysis, A A Khramchikhin, but there can be little denying the fact that his forecast of military conflict between Russia and China is being taken a lot more seriously now than previously. In a recent article, Khramchikhin stated that given “its serious domestic problems”, China “will simply not survive without external expansion” and that, in effect, both Russia and the states of Central Asia will feel the dragon's breath in the not too distant future.²⁷ Analysing the scale and locale of China's

²³ V I Ostankov, “Geopoliticheskiye problemy i vozmozhnosti ikh resheniya v kontekste obespecheniya bezopasnosti Rossii”, *Voennaya Mysl*, 1, 2005, 2-7; 2.

²⁴ Even without the use of nuclear weapons, China's overwhelming weight of numbers would almost force a nuclear response from Moscow. In a detailed analysis of the latest Russian war game in the East, “Vostok-2010”, A A Khramchikhin painted the following gloomy scenario, from the Russian perspective: “it is obvious that in the East, there can be no local wars, even in principle. Here there could only be a large-scale war. Why are there suspicions that if China decides to act aggressively, it will only limit itself to an offensive against Vladivostok with a few ‘motor rifle divisions’, as played out in the ‘Vostok-2010’ scenario? The strike will be delivered by several army groups, numbering hundreds of thousands, if not even millions, of men along the entire length of the 4,300km border. They will not be put off by a few nuclear flares and, in any case, they have their own nuclear weapons,” (A A Khramchikhin, “Neadekvatniy ‘Vostok’”, *Nezavisimoye voennoye obozreniye*, no.27, 23/29/7/2010.

²⁵ Ostankov, *ibid.*, 7.

²⁶ K Blinov, A Pasmurtsev, V Litovkin, “Russkiy s kitayem – soldaty navek”, *Nezavisimoye voennoye obozreniye*, 31/7/2009.

²⁷ A A Khramchikhin, “Millionny soldat plius sovremennoye vooruzheniye”, *Nezavisimoye voennoye obozreniye*, 31/7/2009

latest series of military manoeuvres, as well as the most recent trends in its military procurement policy, Khramchikhin came to an unavoidable conclusion:

“in conclusion, I would like once again to underline the following: to assert that the leadership of the PRC and the command of the PLA [People’s Liberation Army of China] are seriously examining the possibility of undertaking, in the not too distant future, offensive combat operations against Russia and the countries of Central Asia. At the very least, we have to consider this war scenario as the most likely.”²⁸

Somewhat flamboyantly and, for the older readership in particular, with an ironic, nostalgic turn of phrase, reminiscent of the old Party promises of the “shining future” which lay ahead under Communism, Khramchikhin ended his piece on a deliberately ironic, upbeat message:

“ah, but the anniversary parade [commemorating the 60th anniversary of the creation of the PRC, held in October 2009] was very beautiful! I would advise you to look at it, (the footage is available, naturally, through the Internet). In the first place, it is real Big Style, not some modern, national, nauseating PR. Secondly, it is also our shining future.”²⁹

Khramchikhin’s generally pessimistic views concerning the overall thrust of the Russo-Chinese relationship have received some surprising support from unexpected political quarters, namely members of Russia’s liberal political elite. In their study of Putin’s Presidency, Boris Nemtsov and Vladimir Milov had the following to say about the relationship between Russia and China:

“it would be most correct to call Putin’s policy on China ‘capitulatory’. During the years of Putin’s rule, the Russian military-industrial complex armed the Chinese Army...China is a real threat to our country. Unlike Western countries China does not hide its claims to Russian territory...Chinese figures openly state that the territory of east Siberia and the Far East was ‘unjustly seized’ by Tsarist Russia. Maps circulate freely in China which colour our eastern lands the same colour as China.”³⁰

Similarly, in his memoirs, USSR’s former Foreign Minister, E Shevardnadze, recalled a meeting with the Chinese Premier, Deng Xiaoping, in which the latter bluntly stated:

“we are arguing about large districts, about territories which historically belong to China. The time will come when China may regain them.”³¹

Of course, there are others who do not share such pessimism as regards the future of the Russo-Chinese relationship. Chief among these is a political figure, but prominent Chinese specialist, V L Sedel’nikov. Examining the military-economic strategy of the PRC, in particular, its programme entitled “Total national might [using the Russian word, *moshch*’, usually meaning “power”, in Russian], or “complex state might”, Sedel’nikov, whilst conceding the stated Chinese aim of having the most powerful armed forces in Asia by 2030 and, in the world, by 2049³² (the 100th anniversary of the creation of the modern Chinese state under Mao Tse-Tung) has warned against extrapolating too much from too little:

“without having a clear idea about the new concepts surrounding the use of the Armed Forces of China in strategic (operational-strategic) operations, due to an inadequate information base concerning the path of development of their [Armed Forces], systemic and organisational reform, the composition of the People’s Liberation Army, we can only estimate

²⁸ Khramchikhin, *ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ “Website views ‘strange logic’ of new military doctrine”, (BBCM, 8/2/2010)

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² V L Sedel’nikov, “Voenno-ekonomicheskaya strategiya i reformirovaniye Vooruzhennykh Sil Kitaya”, *Voennaya Mysl*, No.9, September 2007, 65-80; 70

on the basis of information [received] about the new VVT [weapons and weapons technology] systems. However, this is insufficient, [especially] in relation to understanding how and against whom these systems will be used against in the future, as a direct link between the acquisition of the new forms of VVT and their appearance [in the ranks] of the People's Liberation Army, of new combat possibilities is lacking."³³

Sedel'nikov proposed adopting a much wider approach in attempting to better understand the thinking behind China's future use of its Armed Forces, by drawing on a much broader range of source materials and expanding the "normal" information base:

" thus, it is necessary to adopt a more complex approach in evaluating the state of the Armed Forces of the PRC, including studying the changes in their organisation, structure, concepts in the use of troops (forces), as well as weapon systems, which they intend to acquire and deploy. Undoubtedly, studying the experience of China's military-economic activity deserves the greatest attention [possible], both from the academic and practical points of view. It is instructive and demands consolidation of the efforts of intelligent people in a wide variety of disciplines: military strategists, economists, lawyers, administrators and managers."³⁴

In a more recent examination of Chinese military strategy, another of Russia's leading Sinologists, P V Kamennov, was careful to focus on China's attitude towards its immediate neighbours, the importance of Taiwan to China, the modernisation programme of the Chinese Armed Forces over the past decade, etc., rather than examine the role of China's military policy in assisting the country achieve its national strategic aim of turning China into the leading power in the Asia-Pacific Region by the mid-way point of the 21st century.³⁵ For instance, in relation to Russia, Kamennov contented himself with simply listing the border agreements signed between the two countries since the collapse of the USSR in 1991, but did point out that, in general terms, China had spared little effort, particularly amongst the ASEAN countries, of "weakening the influence...of the myth of the 'Chinese threat' and achieving significant success in creating in the Asia-Pacific Region multi-lateral cooperation, based on inter-state trust."³⁶

There is little to be gained from ignoring the fact that if China continues to strive to attain the maximum goals of its national strategic plans, then there is the real prospect of conflict arising if, for no other reason, either through demographic or economic pressure. China has the wealth to buy, more or less, whatever it needs for the time being; however, for the Chinese economy to continue to grow, it will need greater access to more and more of the world's dwindling natural resources, at least in the short to medium term and, as it looks around as who has got what it needs most, then the argument for some sort of conflict – on whatever pretext – involving the Russian Federation becomes almost compelling. An increasing number of Russian strategists are becoming ever more aware of this prospect, but it would still seem to be an argument that has yet to convince all. There are informed sources in the West, however, who do not need such convincing:

"Moscow and Beijing remain more rivals than partners. China, whose economy...is still motoring ahead, has recently flexed its muscles, concluding several big hydrocarbon deals in Kazakhstan and elsewhere in central Asia. In December [2009], Turkmenistan is due to start pumping gas to China through a new pipeline. Moscow remains deeply suspicious of Chinese influence in central Asia...Russia is also paranoid about the thinly populated eastern third of its land mass, home to a paltry 6m people who live across the border from China's 1.3 bn. Russia and China talk merrily of a multi-polar world. But both know that China has a far more creditable claim to great power status. The only cards Moscow holds are abundant

³³ Sedel'nikov, *ibid.*, 80

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ P B Kamennov, "Kitay: printsipy aktivnoi oborony", *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'*, No.4, April 2010, 40-56.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-3.

oil and gas reserves, and nuclear arms...It is not time for the Dragon and the Bear to lie down together just yet.”³⁷

But if China would appear to be a problem for Russia’s military strategists for the future, an initial glance at the new MD would appear to show that Russia still had a major problem with an old adversary, namely NATO. As stated earlier, part of the advanced speculation surrounding the content of the new MD was largely fuelled by an interview of the Secretary to the Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev, given in October 2009. Outlining what had NOT changed since the publication of the last MD in 2000, Patrushev listed some of the concerns of the current political-military leadership in the Kremlin and on the Arbat:

“earlier existing military dangers and threats to our country have not lost their urgency. Thus, work to accept new members in NATO has not ceased, the bloc has stepped up its military activity, and exercises by the strategic forces of the United States with a study of questions controlling the use of strategic nuclear weapons are being intensely conducted.”³⁸

Interestingly enough, similar to the Chinese on this particular issue, Patrushev also noted that there was “a worsening struggle for fuel-energy and other raw material resources.”³⁹

Further on in the interview, he also detailed why it was felt necessary to introduce a new MD at this particular time in history:

“the financial-economic crisis has clearly shown the imperfection of the existing order. It has manifested itself in the structure of the international financial system, in international trade, and in the price-forming mechanism for raw materials and energy resources [i.e. moving away from everything being traded in US\$]. All systems and mechanisms have been regulated to serve the interests of the notorious ‘golden billion’ [in other words, the world’s most advanced states]. Every country faces a choice: accept the way of life and moral values of Western civilisation in the hope of some day becoming a part of it, even if, in the words of Brzezinski, as a ‘junior partner’, or preserve one’s individuality and try to change the existing world order for the better. We believe that the idea of forming a polycentric international system is urgent like never before.”⁴⁰

Of course, one could easily debate the whole premise of Patrushev’s reading of recent past events. However, given his prominence within the ruling elite, his views should neither be ignored or simply brushed aside. They represent a very distinct view on the turn of international events and, whether we in the West agree with them, or not, the fact that prominent and influential Russians think in such a distinctive way, especially in terms of their analysis of NATO’s actions over the past decade, demonstrates that there is still much to do in the overall Russia-NATO relationship.

However, what caused most concern in the West – and possibly in the East, as well – was the section of the interview devoted to outlining the use of nuclear weapons against any future aggressor-state:

“in relation to the points on the possible use of nuclear weapons, then this section of the Military Doctrine is formed in the spirit of preserving the Russian Federation’s status as a

³⁷ The Dragon and the Bear, *The Financial Times*, 14/10/2009.

³⁸ N Patrushev, “Rossiya menyaetsya i ee doktrina”, *Izvestiya*, 14/10/2009.

³⁹ Patrushev, “Rossiya...”, *ibid.* According to Sedel’nikov, “the military-political leadership of the PRC thinks that a global military confrontation today is not very likely, but that conflicts on a local scale are unavoidable, [especially] in connection with the growing competition for raw materials and spheres of influence. It is not accidental that in the system of official views of the Chinese leadership, concerning reasons for the outbreak of contemporary war which appeared in the 1980s ...was included *resource-raw materials*, [original emphasis]”, Sedel’nikov, *ibid.*, 67.

⁴⁰ Patrushev, “Rossiya...”, *ibid.*

nuclear power, capable of realising the nuclear deterrence of potential enemies from unleashing aggression against Russia and her allies... *Also amended are the conditions of use of nuclear weapons when repelling aggression involving the use of nuclear weapons not only on a large-scale, but in a regional or even local war, [emphasis mine – SJM]... In situations critical to national security, the delivery of a pre-emptive (preventative) nuclear strike on an aggressor is not ruled out, [emphasis mine – SJM].*⁴¹

Thus, the implication of Patrushev's interview, concerning Russia's future military intent, would seem to have been fairly unambiguous: if Russia felt under serious military threat, then it would not hesitate to launch a pre-emptive nuclear attack against the aggressor state. June 22nd 1941 would not be repeated. We could argue that Russia had learnt the wrong lessons from the events of the past decade but, going slightly further back in the country's past, Patrushev seemed to be raising the spectre of an earlier attempt to decapitate the ruling regime and informed us that any such attempt, from any direction, would be met by a nuclear strike, not a conventional one.

In another interview, published just a month later, Patrushev added little new. Again, in outline form, he listed the changes in the world strategic picture, detrimental to Russia's national security and, once again, NATO headed the list:

“thus, NATO's advance on Russia's borders continues unabated; the military activity of the bloc is more evident. After a nine year break, US strategic forces are now working on means of controlling the use of strategic nuclear weapons; widespread deployment of nuclear, chemical, biological technologies; production of WMDs, international terrorism.”⁴²

However, he did include a couple of interesting *addenda*, not mentioned in his October 2009 interview, but specifically addressing a couple of “live” international issues – namely the Arctic and Japan. In the November interview, Patrushev stated that “the conflict potential is growing in the struggle for fuel-energy and other raw material resources in the border regions of our land mass, including the Arctic region” and he also made reference both to a specific issue and a specific country: “heightened territorial claims on Russia [made] by a number of states, for example, Japan.” In the November interview, in his list of “new military dangers”, he also mentioned, “bio-cybernetics”, although he did not define what he meant by the term.⁴³ In the November interview, as regards the use of nuclear weapons, he did not alter any of the previous wording from the interview he gave in October: perhaps, he felt that enough of an impact had been created by his choice of words in October that nothing more needed to be added in November?

Thus, viewed by many from inside Russia, Russia's geo-strategic position did not look promising, to put it mildly. Everywhere, the country seemed to be surrounded by enemies, near enemies and half-hearted allies. In many respects, the book of Russian allies must, on occasion, look to be one of the slimmest books on the shelves of the Kremlin library. In the event of any form of aggression shown towards Russia, which of the nation states *closest* to Russia – in any sense of the word – would come to assist Holy Mother Russia in defending itself? Despite the recent spat between Moscow and Minsk, probably only Minsk would be prepared to militarily help Russia, with very little arm twisting. Other than Belarus, who else?

Thus, it is relatively unimportant to Russian military strategists whether the West accepts the basic premise that, as far as they are concerned, Russia will face a future military challenge. For many in the Russian political and military elite, it is only a question of when, not if. Many are also under no illusion that, were it not for its nuclear arsenal, Russia probably would already have faced some sort of military challenge by now, hence the over-riding importance

⁴¹ Patrushev, *ibid.*, “Rossiya...”.

⁴² N Patrushev, “Voennaya doktrina v tret'em variante”, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 20/11/2009.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

of the country's nuclear arsenal. Rightly or wrongly, they see the current global situation as not only justifying the retention of the country's nuclear arsenal but, as much as possible, modernising and improving it. As Gareyev pointed out in 2007, Russia will need its Strategic Deterrence Forces in order to maintain the country's overall security:

“given the extremely unfavourable balance of forces in all strategic directions for Russia, nuclear weapons remain the most important, secure means of strategic deterrence against foreign aggression and maintaining [the country's] defence security.”⁴⁴

In short, Russia's Strategic Deterrence Forces will still act as the country's main guarantor against any large-scale aggression either from the East, West, or South. This can be viewed as risky, placing too much reliance on one particular class of weapon but, given the overall geostrategic position Russia currently finds itself in, does it have much of a choice?

In short, much had been written concerning the new MD long before it was eventually published in February 2010. There should have been no uncomfortable surprises for those in the West, carefully monitoring the statements of the Russian political and military elite. As revealed by both the reports of Gareyev and Baluevskiy in 2007, and subsequently confirmed by Patrushev, among others, in 2009, NATO had crept back on to the list of main threats to Russia's military security. But this is not simply a rehash of old Soviet military thinking about the NATO alliance spearheading some sort of anti-Russian crusade. *This is a new fear of a new NATO, flaunting, as the Russians perceive it, international law and much more willing, unlike old NATO, if you will, to resort to military force in order to settle international crises, far out with the traditional NATO heartland.* Senior Russian military figures had been warning us about their negative “fundamental foreign military threats” for quite some time. Point eight of the new MD simply stated:

“the desire to impart the force potential of the Organisation of the North Atlantic Treaty (NATO) with global functions, carried out in violation of the norms of international law and to move the military infrastructure of the member –states of NATO [closer] to the borders of the Russian Federation, including by way of expanding the bloc.”⁴⁵

The creeping movement of the Alliance towards the Russian border had continued unabated since the publication of the last MD in 2000 and, given the vagaries of the political situation in both Georgia and Ukraine, events there must have looked very ominous indeed for the men in the Arbat and in the Kremlin. Until relatively recently, the thought, for instance, that NATO ships, flying Ukrainian flags, could soon be berthed in Sevastopol' must have caused a great deal of concern to the Russian senior military and political leadership. It may be alright for people in the West to sit comfortably and pontificate that Russians should have no problems with any state joining NATO, be it Ukraine, Georgia or anyone else for that matter, but such statements either betray a woeful ignorance of the history of the states involved, or even a degree of callous indifference to the legitimate security concerns of those states. Ukraine and Russia are Slav nations: they have much in common, therefore it should not be too surprising that Russia would be extremely concerned by the prospect of Ukraine joining NATO, its one time opponent. If NATO seriously does not understand that, then Russia has every right to be concerned by NATO's future actions. Similarly, events in Georgia post-August 2008 must again have strongly upset the Russians. As Gareyev pointed out in January 2007, they didn't have to make anything up, the situation was/is bad. Given this recent historical and geopolitical background, how else could the Russians have reacted but not to place NATO back at the top of the list of “military dangers and military threats facing the Russian Federation” in the new MD?

⁴⁴ Gareyev, “Struktura i osnovnye...”, *ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁵ *Voennaya doktrina Rossiyskoi Federatsii, 5 fevralya 2010*, (http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/461/print, downloaded, 10/2/2010), 1-15; 2.

In this particular context, one other point worth making is that some of the criticism levelled against the new MD, given its renewed emphasis on the danger represented by NATO, is a feeling that the MD represents Russia as taking a step backwards that, potentially at least, further progress with both NATO and, by extension, the USA, will become more difficult. However, it could be worse than that. If the MD was drafted and published, less as a belated, historical “blame” document and more in terms of a genuine interpretation of events post-1991, then NATO has a lot of very serious thinking to do if it is to convince the Russians, in advance of the next Russian MD, that NATO is not a threat to Russian security well into the middle part of this century.

In his first major interview after the publication of the new MD, despite the initial criticism coming in from many senior quarters, including NATO’s Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Patrushev showed that Russia’s senior leadership, for its part, was unrepentant in its interpretation of recent events in Europe – and elsewhere:

“the expansion of NATO represents a significantly serious threat to Russia. Earlier they stated that there will be no expansion of NATO. Now they tell us that those who promised that are no longer in power. And if at the beginning there were only 12 member-states, currently, there are already 28. And that includes former Warsaw Pact states and individual countries, which had earlier been part of the Soviet Union. Behind them are other states – Georgia, Ukraine [interview was conducted before the election of V Yanukovich to the post of President of Ukraine in early February 2010] which may potentially become members of NATO.

The Secretary General of NATO states that we are mistaken to include NATO in our list of possible threats. And yet a whole number of NATO countries armed the Saakashvili regime, which unleashed a war against South Ossetia, where Georgian soldiers murdered civilians, including our own. Even today they continue to arm Georgia. For what purpose – it is incomprehensible. We are not attacking them [Georgia] and have no intention to.”⁴⁶

In drafting the new MD, those directly involved took their time (depending on what you read, either five years or two) and, therefore, made an assessment based on recent history and an analysis of potential, future trends. This was not simply a knee-jerk repackaging of old Soviet style thinking about NATO pre-1991; the worrying thing is that if their criticism of NATO now looks redolent of the old Soviet style rhetoric which used to be trundled out about NATO, then how much, in Russian eyes, has NATO **not** changed since the collapse of the USSR? That is something which we in the West should be very mindful of. There is no need for Russian military, or political, strategists to re-invent any old bogey ideas concerning NATO, or the West. Russia needs the West in a whole range of areas, not least being economic and security. However, if they still genuinely feel that NATO is back on the list, never mind top of the list, of “foreign threats”, then it simply is not good enough for NATO’s leadership to throw its hands in the air and simply argue that “Russia has got it wrong.” NATO will have to be a lot more constructive in its future dealings with Russia, if it is to succeed in convincing the Russians that NATO is not a significant military threat to Russia. If, as seems likely, Russia does get round to writing and publishing another new MD within the next five-ten years, then it is incumbent on NATO to try and persuade the Russians that they have got it wrong but not simply by words, either, but by deeds.

As one respected Russian military observer, V Litovkin, commented not long after the publication of the new MD:

“NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen is considerably upset at the way this issue is framed [deployment of theatre missile defence systems in Poland and Rumania]. He believes that ‘the new doctrine does not reflect the real world, and this is clearly contrary to

⁴⁶ B Yamashov, I Egorov, “Doktrina bez agressii”, *Rossiyskaya gazeta*, 10/2/2010.

all our efforts to improve mutual relations.’ The Secretary General repeated once again that ‘NATO is not Russia’s enemy.’ But the military takes account not of words and the intentions they express but actual actions and combat potentials. And the North Atlantic Alliance has for the time being a three-four-fold preponderance over Russia even in the list of conventional arms, and it is not about to reduce them to levels equal with Moscow and expecting Russian generals’ trust in Brussels to be the same as before the bombing of Yugoslavia and the Georgian adventures on South Ossetia would evidently be naïve.”⁴⁷

In terms of other threats facing the Russian Federation, other than NATO, the MD spoke about “attempts to destabilise the situation in individual states and regions and to undermine strategic stability; the deployment of contingents of troops of foreign states ... on the territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation and its allies and also in adjacent waters; the creation and deployment of strategic missile defence systems undermining global stability and violating the established correlation of forces in the nuclear missile sphere and also the militarisation of outer space and the deployment of strategic non-nuclear precision weapon systems; territorial claims against the Russian Federation and its allies and interference in their internal affairs; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missiles and missile technologies and the increase in the number of states possessing them; the violation of international accords by individual states...; the use of military force on the territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation in violation of the UN Charter; the emergence of seats of armed conflict...; the spread of international terrorism; the emergence of seats of inter-ethnic (inter-faith) tension...”⁴⁸

Whilst the MD may not be the Bible for Russia’s political and military leadership, nonetheless it has to be seen as an important indication of the mind-set of the leadership in the Kremlin and the Arbat and how they view the outside world, therefore it is wrong to simply dismiss it out of hand.⁴⁹ *These are the official views of the senior political and military leadership of still the world’s second largest nuclear power and, therefore, have to be taken seriously. To argue otherwise would, in effect, simply compound the arguably mistaken analysis which provided the doctrine writers with the material to form their ‘mistaken’ views in the first place.*

From a wholly official Russian perspective, looking back at developments over the past ten years, has the world become a safer place for Russia to operate in? Whilst Russian forces have not been involved in any large-scale military conflict, nevertheless, the military danger facing Russia is real and, although we in the West, especially in NATO member-states may wish it to be otherwise, wishing it to be different will not help make the Russian realise that NATO is not the threat to Russia’s security which it clearly thinks NATO is. In short, despite the fall of the Wall over 20 years ago, *however unpalatable the thought may be, Russia plainly sees NATO, in practical terms, not much more differently than when the USSR was still a serious player on the global geo-political map.* The basic premise behind the thought of the leader writer of *The Times*, quoted at the very beginning of this paper, would serve to underline the fact that, despite ten years of increasing co-operation and inter-dependency between Russia and the West, as revealed in the current MD, there is still a fundamental distrust in the relationship between NATO and Russia and no amount of verbal handwringing is going to remove that uncomfortable fact. Both Western politicians and analysts may not like, or even fundamentally disagree, with the views expressed and formulated in the MD, but the real battle is not with the words on paper, but with the mindset which thought them and put them on paper. That is the real issue which Western politicians must redress.

⁴⁷ “Pundit surprised USA not mentioned directly in new military doctrine”, BBCM, 8/2/2010.

⁴⁸ Voennaya doktrina Rossiyskoi Federatsii, 5 fevralya 2010, (http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/461/print, downloaded 10/2/2010, 1-15; 2

⁴⁹ Charnysh, *ibid.*, 38.

Deterrence: Nuclear and Non-Nuclear

Nuclear (Strategic Deterrence)

In an article which appeared not long after the publication of the MD, President D Medvedev stated the following:

“currently, there is no need for us to further increase our strategic deterrence potential, however, [our] possession of nuclear weapons is a determining condition for Russia to conduct its own policies to maintain its sovereignty, policies, aimed at supporting peace and forestalling any military conflict, as well as assisting the regulation of post-conflict situations.”⁵⁰

Similarly, in the new MD itself, despite the advanced speculation about Russia lowering its nuclear threshold, the MD simply stated that:

“nuclear weapons will remain an important factor in preventing the outbreak of nuclear conflict and military conflicts using conventional strike means, (large-scale war, regional war).

In the event of the outbreak of a military conflict employing conventional weapons, (large-scale war, regional war), placing in doubt the very existence of the state, the possession of nuclear weapons may lead to such a conflict becoming a nuclear military conflict.”⁵¹

Further on, in the section entitled, “the military policy of the Russian Federation”, the MD stated “the most important task of the Russian Federation is to prevent the outbreak of nuclear conflict, or any other military conflict” and, one of the ways that this could be achieved was “to maintain strategic stability and the potential of nuclear deterrence at the necessary level.”⁵²

Given the importance of deterrence to Russia, both in the MD and in terms of its overall military-political stance, an examination of current Russian thinking on the subject would go a long way to better understand Russia’s geo-political mindset. The Russian word for “deterrence” is the exact same one that is also used to mean “containment” (*sderzhivaniye*), therefore, we already have a flavour of a difference in meaning between how deterrence is viewed in Russia, as opposed to how we view it in the West. “Containment”, in English, implies more than just preventing an action from happening: once the action has been undertaken, the question arises on how best to contain it, either within a specific geographical space, or limiting the damage inflicted. Deterrence, of course, unlike containment, implies steps being taken in advance of any aggression being undertaken in order to dissuade the potential aggressor from carrying out aggression, in the first place. One comprehensive Russian definition of the term was published in the leading military theoretical journal, *Voennaya Mysl'*:

“strategic deterrence is a complex series of measures in political, economic, military and other spheres, taken by the state either unilaterally, or on a coalition basis, aimed at impressing on the opposing side the impossibility [*nevozmozhnost'*] of him achieving his military-political aims by force because of the unacceptable consequences to him as a result of retaliatory operations.”⁵³

⁵⁰ D Medvedev, “Ne kolebatsya i dvigatsya vpered”, *Rossiyskoe Voennoye Obozreniye*, No.3, March 2010, 6-7; 6.

⁵¹ “Voennaya doktrina...”, *ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ A L Khryapnin, V A Afanas'ev, “Kontseptual'nye osnovy strategicheskogo sderzhivaniya”, *Voennaya Mysl'*, 1, 2005, 8-12; 8.

Accordingly, the “main aim” behind strategic deterrence is:

“not to allow any form of aggression against Russia and its allies but, in the event of aggression being undertaken – a guaranteed defence of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and other vitally important national interests of the Russian state and its allies. Thus, the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation are not only a political means of deterrence, but also an effective means of decisively defeating the aggressor’s armed forces. Consequently, strategic deterrence has the following aims: in peace time – not to allow force and aggression against Russia and its allies; in war time – to de-escalate aggression and end hostile operations on terms acceptable to Russia.”⁵⁴

In terms of the actual decision-making process, i.e. who does what in terms of deterring the potential aggressor, Khryapnin and Afanas’ev listed the main “players” as being the President, the MoD and the General Staff and, of course, the main “component” parts of the deterrent forces themselves, be they nuclear, or conventional:

“a necessary precondition for maintaining strategic deterrence is the existence of combat-ready general purpose forces and nuclear forces, operating under an effective combat command and control system...with sufficient combat potential to inflict the desired damage on the military and military-economic potential of any aggressor under any circumstances.”⁵⁵

At a global-level, this could only mean one thing: *the threat* of the mass use of conventional and/or/ nuclear weapons; at the regional-level, primarily, conventional weapons, but with the possibility that nuclear weapons may be used. There must always be a degree of ambiguity in the theory and practice of deterrence, otherwise deterrence fails:

“the basis of deterrence at the global-level is the threat of a mass use of conventional (precision guided) strategic and nuclear weapons, the [resulting] damage of which will turn whatever advantage the aggressor hoped to achieve by the use of military force [into nothing]; at the regional-level, the threat of using conventional and, in the event of necessity, nuclear, weapons, in the first instance, non-strategic, in any regional wars unleashed against the RF and its allies.”⁵⁶

In a further article examining Russia’s nuclear deterrent posture, one of the most prominent strategic deterrence theorists, V Burenok, expanded on an earlier thesis, concerning the “heart” of strategic deterrence, by outlining the essential structure, as he saw it, of the deterrence system. He postulated three “means” (*sposoby*) of deterrence: deterrence through fear; deterrence by the limited use of the Armed Forces and, finally, deterrence by means of (all-out) defence. In the first, deterrence through fear, he envisaged that the planners would work out the “vitally important targets” of the potential aggressor, as well as the means to attack them and then demonstrate to the potential aggressor exactly how this would be achieved, if the aggressor was fool hardy enough to proceed with his intention to attack. In deterrence through the limited use of Armed Forces, again, you demonstrated “the potential means and possibilities of attack” and analysed “the desired effect” on the potential aggressor. In deterrence through (all-out) defence, you ascertain the list of potential targets, which would have the greatest significance to the aggressor country and attack them either individually, or in blocs, in order to de-escalate the conflict.⁵⁷

Similarly, a couple of specialists from the prestigious General Staff think tank, the Centre for Military-Strategic Research, (Tsentr Voенno-Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy, TsVSI), recently stated that the essence of strategic (nuclear) deterrence was its reliance on force, that there

⁵⁴ Khryapnin, Afanas’ev, *ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ V Burenok, “Voennaya bezopasnost’ Rossii – problemy i resheniya”, *Vozdushno-kosmicheskaya oborona*, 3, 2008, 54-59; 57.

was a “hierarchical chain” at work, the three links in the chain being “fear – the threat of retaliation – consequences (deterrent damage).”⁵⁸

Their assessment of the development of strategic (nuclear) deterrence theory of the most recent period, (from the middle of the 1990s onwards) would appear to clearly demonstrate, from their point of view, that the strategic deterrence basis of past decades has significantly changed and not in Russia’s favour, as a result of a weakening of Russia’s conventional military force, and a strengthening of the military capabilities of the USA and NATO:

“the fourth stage [in the development of nuclear deterrence theory] (covering the period from the mid-1990s of the last century to the current period) has been characterised, on the one hand, by the reduction in nuclear hostility between the USA and Russia...but, on the other hand, by a growth in the power of the general purpose forces...of the USA and its NATO-bloc allies and a reduction in the combat capabilities of the Russian general purpose forces. During this period, on the one hand, the Treaty on Reducing Strategic Nuclear Potential (2002) has been concluded but, on the other hand, the USA did not renew the 1972 ABM Treaty and has begun creating a multi-layered ABM defence system...In military conflict, the significance of precision-guided weapons has increased.”⁵⁹

Ever mindful of the near debilitating strike of Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union on June 22nd 1941, even today Russian nuclear military planners are mindful of the near fatal consequences of a full blown *conventional* military assault against the state, never mind a nuclear strike. *The US has never come close to dealing with the consequences of such a massive attack on its infrastructure.* Precision guided weapons – as demonstrated in recent military conflict – do not now need to carry any form of nuclear warhead to render great damage on a country’s infrastructure.⁶⁰ Therefore, it is no accident that precision guided conventional weapons, as far as the Russians are concerned, now do represent a threat to the survival of the RF and have been treated accordingly in the new MD. The latest military exercise (Vostok-2010, part of which included air defence operations, based on the experience garnered from studying the air operations which had been carried out against Belgrade/Baghdad), as well as the decision by Moscow city council to buy 5,000 bomb shelters for Moscow and the surrounding district to be in place by 2012, would appear to indicate that Russia, rightly or wrongly, is preparing for all types of military operations, including air assault on its own cities.⁶¹ It is not going to be decapitated as it nearly was in June 1941.

Non-Nuclear

In examining non-nuclear deterrence, Burenok and Achasov defined it as follows:

“a demonstration of readiness to carry out the threat of causing, by non-nuclear means, retaliatory or warning actions, damage to the vitally important interests and targets of the potential aggressor state, far exceeding any gains made by undertaking aggression.”⁶²

Arguing that non-nuclear deterrence was possible, owing to comparatively recent technical developments in improving the long-range accuracy of conventional weapon strikes, the authors discussed how non-nuclear deterrence could be carried out:

“non-nuclear deterrence has become possible only recently as highly effective [and]

⁵⁸ Col V V Matvichuk, Col (retd.) A L Khryapnin, “Sistema strategicheskogo sderzhivaniya v novykh usloviyakh”, *Voennaya Mysl'*, 1, 2010, 12-16; 13.

⁵⁹ Matvichuk, Khryapnin, *ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁰ “Official says high precision missiles become close to strategic weapons”, BBCM, 15/7/2010

⁶¹ “Moscow government plans to upgrade, expand city’s bomb shelters”, BBCM, 12/7/2010; “Bombubezhishche dlya Moskvyy”, *Oruzhie Rossii*, 12/7/2010.

⁶² V M Burenok, O B Achasov, “Neyadernoye sderzhivaniye”, *Voennaya Mysl'*, 12, December 2007, 12-15; 12.

destructive capabilities (very accurate precision-guided weapons, weapons based on new physical principles, etc) have appeared and the technological developments of the leading countries have reached such levels that destruction of individual elements of the infrastructure, including communication and control systems, can lead to catastrophic consequences capable of throwing back the country's development for many years...non-nuclear deterrence can be carried out *by several methods* [emphasis as in original]: first of all, by developing, demonstrating and accumulating to the necessary level conventional strike weapons, capable of overcoming the enemy's defences and inflicting on him unacceptable damage, (this method of deterrence, demonstrating the threat...is called 'deterrence through fear' [intimidation]); secondly, creating a highly effective defence system [safe] from conventional means of attack, (we have in mind here aero-space defence), excluding the possibility of inflicting sudden, disabling damage to the national infrastructure and the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and, by analogy with the previous term, 'deterrence by defence'; thirdly, launching (due to a clear inevitability of aggression, or with the aim of de-escalating aggression against vitally important targets of the enemy highly effective selective strikes ...the so-called 'deterrence through demonstration of force'; fourthly, developing and producing conventional weapons, both in terms of numbers and quality, (combat potential) equal, if not surpassing the military technology of the enemy, (however, due to the obvious weakness of the Russian economy, there is no point in examining this method."⁶³

Given the advancement in the capability and accuracy of precision guided weapons, to all intents and purposes, a non-nuclear strike could have consequences similar to those of a nuclear strike in being able to inflict considerable long-term damage both on a nation's infrastructure, as well as against a country's Armed Forces. The "hierarchical chain", described earlier, has been fleshed out: the links between threat and demonstration more clearly defined.

In terms of the types of weapons to be acquired, both authors outlined the following general parameters:

"weapons which can ensure the destruction of infrastructure targets without inflicting civilian casualties have a high deterrence value...anti-satellite systems (killer satellites, systems designed to destroy satellite operations, systems designed to attack satellite communications, etc.); precision-guided weapons, with a great potential of penetrating the PRO [anti-missile defence] and PVO [anti-air defence] systems of the potential aggressor-country; weapons able to attack [specific] energy targets and power-supply lines (shells made of metal fibres, dispersive graphite, adhesive compounds, etc); weapons able to suppress communication systems, (radio-electronic weapon systems, weapons based on powerful electro-magnetic impulses, computer viruses, etc)."⁶⁴

In the opinion of both authors, Russia's non-nuclear deterrence system should be based on "non-lethal, precision-guided weapon systems". They further argued that Russia should also employ a degree of "flexibility" in weapon systems to be deployed in order to best meet the varying and emerging threat.⁶⁵ They pointed out that, given the physical size of Russia, as well as the large number of states which border the Federation, Russia could not have "one size fits all" security posture, describing non-nuclear deterrence as a "very complex issue" for Russia:

"surrounded by states, distinguished by their [different] political orientation, different levels of socio-economic development, military potential and combat capability of their armed forces, population resources, etc. The economic possibilities of our country are still limited for the

⁶³ Burenok, Achasov, *ibid.*, 12-13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

time being and do not allow improving the weapon systems of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation within the parameters equal to those of the leading states.”⁶⁶

In summary, Russia has a well-articulated approach to deterrence, both nuclear and non-nuclear, one which has developed and changed since the height of the Cold War and, as much as possible, has taken into account both the increasing power of others and the decreasing power of itself, including, in particular, its conventional forces. It has also taken into account the development of modern weapons and their impact on the ever changing nature of war: with the increasing accuracy and fire-power of modern weaponry and, just as important, the practical use of modern weapons technology over the past 20 years, Russian deterrence writers are very acutely aware of the potential strike nature of such weapons if ever used against their own country, making it even more expedient that their own deterrence doctrine reflected the increasing complexity of the prelude to any form of armed conflict, either on Russia’s borders, or located further away. They know the weaknesses of their own military force better than anyone else but, as is common with all deterrence doctrines, they will hardly publicly testify to this in their officially endorsed MD. Deterrence does not work if there is no ambiguity. In a sense, aggression can be bluffed out: if the potential aggressed-state can demonstrate that any form of military action against it will only ensure that the aggressor-state will end up worse off, forcing the aggressor-state to re-think and back down, then deterrence wins. If not, then as far as Russia is concerned, it has the necessary nuclear muscle – still – to ensure that the aggressor-state will not long enjoy the sweet fruits of an ultimately Pyrrhic victory.

The Foundations of the State’s Policy in the Area of Nuclear Deterrence to 2020

Although this has not been formally published, this new document is also worth mentioning as, to all intents and purposes, like the MD, it is crucial to understanding Russia’s potential conduct during a time of major international crisis. This document helps to ensure the necessary degree of guesswork in understanding EXACTLY how Russia will react in a time of severe international crisis. Deterrence needs a degree of ambiguity, if it is to succeed in its preventative role in forcing the aggressor-state to re-think the outcome of any potential aggression to be undertaken, especially in relation to the Russian Federation. Thus, although the document has not been published yet, nevertheless, there have been a number of references to it in the open access literature.

Although no direct quotes from “The Foundations of the state’s policy in the area of nuclear deterrence to 2020” (hereinafter simply referred to as simply “The Foundations...”) have been published, from what little has been made known about the document to the general public, it would appear to be a key document in analysing Russia’s nuclear deterrence posture, along with the MD. According to the Deputy-Chief of the General Staff, Colonel-General A Nogovitsyn, the “closed” section of the MD, i.e. “the Foundations...”, “clearly defines issues relating to the legal application, (*pravoprimeneniya*) of the Army and Navy, including the use of nuclear forces.”⁶⁷

Similarly, General Yu Baluevskiy, stated that:

“Moscow wants [the world] to understand that nuclear weapons and their development is one of the priorities of the state. This was stated in the closed to open debate, the Foundations...It is proposed to develop further the land, naval and air components of the

⁶⁶ Burenok, *ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁷ “Doktrina strategicheskogo sderzhivaniye”, *Nezavisimoye voennoye obozreniye*, No.4, 5/2/2010.

nuclear triad. Russia must guarantee its gradual democratic development by having a guarantee of stability – nuclear weapons as a form of strategic deterrence.”⁶⁸

Amazing! Could this be the first time that nuclear weapons are being used to promote democratic development, rather than simply defend it?

The most detailed public pronouncement and comment on “the Foundations...” was published by RIA Novosti on 10th February 2010. It stated that:

“Russia may use nuclear weapons if its sovereignty and territorial integrity are threatened a source from the Russian Security Council told RIA Novosti...with reference to the document, ‘Foundations of the Russian Federation’s policy on nuclear deterrence’...The Foundations define the Russian Federation’s position regarding the essence of nuclear deterrence...’the conditions are defined for the Russian Federation’s move towards using nuclear weapons. The main one of these is the threat of the state losing its sovereignty and territorial integrity...’ According to the source, the Foundations emphasise that the Russian Federation guarantees the openness of its policies [despite this crucial document being ‘closed’ to public scrutiny!] in the sphere of nuclear deterrence and that it will observe the international commitments which it has accepted in the sphere of strategic offensive and defensive weapons.”⁶⁹

Speculating further on the content of “the Foundations...”, the Chief Editor of the magazine, National Defence, Colonel I Korotchenko, opined that “the Foundations...” “probably” regulated the responses of Russia’s nuclear forces to any incoming nuclear attack. Again, Korotchenko’s list would appear to fit very much a nuclear version of a 22nd June 1941 attack:

“obvious grounds for Russia to move towards using nuclear weapons in response to aggression even using ordinary [conventional] weapons are when strikes are made on vital political, administrative and economic centres in the country, on facilities containing warning systems of missile attacks and on the orbital group of military satellites, on the system of central command points of the General Staff of Russia’s Armed Forces...on position areas of the Strategic Missile Troops, airfields of strategic air force bases, strategic nuclear submarine bases...He [Korotchenko] noted that nuclear weapons may also be used by Russia during an invasion by an enemy’s ground troops...if Russia does not manage to stop their progress deep into the country through conventional methods of waging war.”⁷⁰

In effect, given the non-public nature of the Foundations, it helps add another layer of ambiguity to Russia’s nuclear deterrence stance: by the sound of things, the Foundations would appear to concretise exactly under what circumstances, and at what levels, Russia would use its nuclear arsenal. In effect, Russia is making a virtue of its traditional secretiveness: by not detailing exactly when it will use its nuclear arsenal, the potential aggressor-state is left in the dark and, as part of deterrence strategy, this could help to dissuade any potential aggressor-state from attempting to launch a strike into Russia, either nuclear, or conventional. Not knowing the exact detail of the Foundations helps strengthen what is undoubtedly a weakened hand.

⁶⁸ “Doktrina...”, ibid.

⁶⁹ “Security source outlines main provisions of nuclear deterrence document”, (BBCM, 10/2/2010)

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Conclusion

In the words of one experienced commentator on Russian military affairs the new MD is 'harmless':

“so, one way or another, the Security Council has given birth to another mouse. But it will not interfere with military reform. And it will only slightly spoil relations with the West. Basically, this new-born mouse that is needed by no one is practically harmless.”⁷¹

Thus, the new MD is a “mouse” and will have little, if any, practical effect, especially in the overall process of military reform. And this one can say after only a couple of days after the publication of the new MD?! Far too many commentators were too free and too quick in their condemnation of the new MD, for whatever reasons, and did not wait for the dust to settle and then look at it more closely. Nothing is born in a vacuum and, like most things in life, the new MD had history, it had a past all to itself. Its parents may have been the obvious previous incarnations of 1993 and 2000, but the world in 2010 was a very different place and so was Russia, and there were a number of influences on the development of the new MD, not least being the overall change in Russia's strategic position, the growing power of neighbouring states, the wars of the past decade, the continuing development of precision-guided weapons and their impact on changing deterrence posture, etc. Of course, only time will tell if the new MD will, for instance, have any practical effect on the weapons which the Russian Armed Forces will acquire in the years ahead; the continuing development of the country's strategic nuclear arsenal; the country's development of precision guided weapons; the development of the country's unified air-space defence system, etc. In short, it is far too early to tell what impact the new MD will have, for instance, on weapons procurement but what one can say, from the outset is that, as a statement of how the senior Russian military/political leadership view the current state of the world, it is an important and invaluable statement and, as such, should not be lightly dismissed, or ignored.

Of course, one of the other major influences on the development of the new MD was the major conference, held in early 2007 to debate the content of the future MD, under the auspices of the Academy of Military Science. Almost to a word – and certainly to a thought – the various senior Russian military figures there present told us what the new MD was going to include and gave us more than enough advanced warning that, for example, NATO had climbed its way back to “No.1” foreign military threat to the Russian Federation. Patrushev's remarks – when he wasn't discussing lowering the nuclear threshold – simply confirmed what others had been saying more than two years previous. Gareyev, Baluevskiy – experienced military officers and noted intellects – as well as many of the other speakers at the January 2007 conference not quoted here – forewarned us about the content of the new MD. Not only in a general way, but also very specifically in relation to Russia's changed perception of events over the past decade. As detailed elsewhere in this paper, their perception of the US, NATO, China, had all changed since the publication of the last MD in 2000 and so had Russia. Russia in 2010 was not the same country it had been in 2000. Ten years of comparative economic growth had assisted Russia in its continuing attempts to get back to the top table of world powers. It may be some way off from reaching that particular goal, but there is no denying the fact that is where it strives to be.

The country, back in 2000, was coming out of one economic crisis, as it is in 2010. However, with its huge natural resource wealth – both a blessing and a curse – it has not suffered as badly as others due to the financial crisis of 2008. The new MD simply is an expression of the mind set of the current regime in power and should be viewed more in that light, than as a concrete road map for the future reform of the country's Armed Forces. Russia borders many countries and, unlike many other states, Russia's MD has to partially reflect that “one size does not fit all”, therefore it needs to think about, potentially, fighting both local wars,

⁷¹ “Defence analyst sees new Military Doctrine as ‘meaningless’”, (BBCM, 8/2/2010)

regional wars and, in the case of China, even a large-scale war – and its allies are few and far between. If the new MD is vague on certain points, in some respects, this does not have to be an indication of poor thinking on the part of the doctrine writers: it could be deliberate, deterrence needs ambiguity, or simply not every single scenario can be planned for to the exact detail required. Occasionally, there can be strength in NOT saying too much, thereby leaving a bit more “wriggle” room should it be required. No need to be too descriptive – or prescriptive.

Deterrence is a key factor in Russian military policy and, as shown, the country’s Strategic Deterrence Forces will play a key role in ensuring Russia’s security and territorial integrity in the years ahead. As far as Russia is concerned, cooperation with the West is vital BUT the actions of the NATO countries since 2000 have been the cause of genuine concern and, once again, to dismiss their now publicly stated concerns as simply some sort of rehash of the past says something about our Cold War mentality as it does about theirs. What if Russia’s distrust of NATO has nothing, or very little, to do with the old Soviet mindset and is a real concern, based not on NATO’s actions from 1949-1991, but 1991-to the present day?

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this paper are entirely and solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect official thinking and policy either of Her Majesty's Government or of the Ministry of Defence.

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