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Changes in Russia's Military and Nuclear Doctrine

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1993

Overview

- Russia's 1993 doctrine was a return to older, more aggressive doctrine as a result of stability concerns surrounding the recent collapse of the USSR
- Russia turned from Gorbachev's "defensive defense" to aggressive defense with the option of preempting or striking back against an aggressor
- Russia was deeply concerned about how nationalism would affect the former Soviet Republics, particularly in respect to the ethnic Russians still living abroad
- Nuclear doctrine pledged to not be the first to use nuclear weapons but provided for the potential for escalation from a conventional to a nuclear war

Introduction

In 1993, the Russian Federation set out a new military doctrine that would determine the direction of its armed forces until President Putin set out the next doctrine in 2000. The Russian Federation creating the doctrine was new; the USSR had recently collapsed, Gorbachev—the creator of the predecessor to this doctrine in 1987—was out of office, and the new Russian military had only been formed in May, 1992.¹ The analysis of the 1993 doctrine is as follows: a definition of how doctrine is defined; a short history of Russian military doctrine leading up to the 1993 doctrine (officially the Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation); and finally, what the doctrine established.

Doctrine

[A] formal political-military consensus of the external threats facing the state, the ways by which these threats are countered, and the resources and organization needed by the armed forces to eliminate them. It is viewed as a "contract" between the government and the military which defines a state-approved system of views on the essence, goals, and character of a future war; on the preparation of the armed forces and the country for war; and on the means of conducting war. Ultimately, it reflects the political goals of the state, as well as, the military, economic, social, and legal means of achieving these goals during a future war.²

Russian Doctrinal History

In order to understand the development of the 1993 doctrine, it is necessary to know Russia's previous doctrines. In the 1960s, government statements asserted that war might begin as conventional and turn into a full-out nuclear war.³ They viewed this as entirely possible and survivable. By the 1970s, nuclear parity resulted in the USSR seeing war as likely to remain in the conventional sphere with no nuclear exchanges due to the destructiveness that would result

¹ Maj. Mark E. Kipphut (USAF), "Re-Clawing the Bear, Russia's New Military Doctrine," GlobalSecurity.org, 1993, accessed June 1, 2012, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/1993/KME.htm>

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

from any exchange.⁴ In 1987, Gorbachev published the USSR's final doctrine. An important feature for the 1987 doctrine is that, unlike in the past, it was Gorbachev rather than the military who determined the military doctrine. It stressed that "any nuclear exchange would 'assume a global character' and attempting to limit the use of nuclear weapons to a single region was untenable."⁵ Thus, at the point of Gorbachev's presidency, the USSR had changed its nuclear doctrine from seeing nuclear war as survivable to seeing it as an immensely destructive event that would be impossible to restrict to any one continent or war. Along the same lines, in earlier doctrines up to Gorbachev's presidency, doctrine stated that aggression could be readily used for both offense and defense. A theoretical example for offensive defense is that Saddam Hussein, rather than waiting for the coalition forces to strike in Desert Storm, could have preemptively attacked first.⁶ Previous Soviet doctrine approved of and might have even encouraged such a scenario in which it, rather than the original aggressor, would strike first. Gorbachev's doctrine changed that stance to "defensive defense," or the idea that the USSR would only defend itself and would not strike outside of its territory. (During the creation of the 1993 doctrine, Russian officers studied the operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and drew from them that "defensive defense," with its abandonment of preemptive strikes, was a flawed and broken idea.) The 1987 doctrine also championed "defensive sufficiency," the goal of restricting Russia to only the necessary forces—both conventional and nuclear—required to defend Russia, thus limiting the size of both its military forces and nuclear armaments to a reasonable and minimum size. On the verge of the 1993 doctrine, Russia's military was wholly on the defensive both in military and nuclear policy, something that the military was not fond of for obvious reasons.

The 1993 Doctrine

The 1993 doctrine revived certain pre-Gorbachev ideas at the same time as it focused on new issues that developed from the collapse of the USSR. Among the most important points were: the mission and goals of the new doctrine, the nation's prescribed response to threats, and the change in nuclear policy.

Russian military leadership believed that it had to protect "the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and other vitally important interests of the Russian Federation in the event of aggression launched against it or its allies."⁷ However, unlike in the past, the focus would not be specifically on the clashing ideologies of the East and West. Russia would still be concerned about the West but would be just as focused on local and regional issues such as conflicts involving the former Soviet Republics.⁸ Russia was also trying to reform its military. The doctrine intended to reshape the forces from being "relatively unwieldy" to a "smaller, more mobile and modern military" that could fight multiple types of conflict rather than only an all-out war with Europe.⁹ The plan was that, in five-to-ten years, the military could be more aggressive along the aims of certain nationalist military and political officials.¹⁰

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶ (Colonel) James H. Slagle (USAF), "New Russian Military Doctrine: Sign of the Times," *Parameters*, 1994: 94, accessed June 1, 2012, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/parameters/Articles/1994/1994%20slagle.pdf>

⁷ "The Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation," *Federation of American Scientists*, accessed June 1, 2012, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/russia-mil-doc.html>

⁸Kipphut, "Re-Clawing the Bear"

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*

The doctrine stated that there were two main threats to Russia at the time: foreign troops in adjacent states—that is, in former Soviet Republics—and the buildup of military forces near the Russian border by its neighbors.¹¹ The largest change from its past doctrine is that it not only aimed to defend itself but also to strike back at any aggressor.¹² This was a large alteration from the 1987 policy of solely defending itself.

A further problem that was created by the dissolution of the USSR was how Russia and its neighbors would handle the 25 million ethnic Russians living in the former Soviet Republics.¹³ Russia's response to this was that it “[Drew] a line at any retaliation taken against any of the 25 million ethnic Russians living in states of the former Soviet Union.”¹⁴ This approach made it so that a local conflict, driven by nationalists in a country like Ukraine, could result in Russian intervention if ethnic Russians were being hurt or threatened. This part of the doctrine expanded Russia's role in the region to what certain politicians and members of the military probably hoped for: a return to being the protector of the Slavs. But it could have complicated matters, too, because it gave Russia the option of increased regional intervention.

In terms of nuclear policy, the 1993 doctrine returned to the possibility that nuclear weapons could be used; it also stated that it would not reject the policy of first-use. The doctrine said that “The evolution of conventional war into nuclear war is not ruled out”¹⁵ Military officials were prepared to see a small-scale nuclear war. They also wrote that Russia:

will not employ its nuclear weapons against any state-party to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, dated 1 July 1968, which does not possess nuclear weapons except in the cases of: a) an armed attack against the Russian Federation, its territory, Armed Forces, other troops, or its allies by any state which is connected by an alliance agreement with a state that does possess nuclear weapons; b) joint actions by such a state with a state possessing nuclear weapons in the carrying out or in support of any invasion or armed attack upon the Russian Federation, its territory, Armed Forces, other troops, or its allies¹⁶

In this, the doctrine declared that first-use was possible by Russia because the attacking state only had to be allied with a nuclear state; it did not have to have used nuclear weapons first. Even though the doctrine pledged not to be the first to introduce nuclear weapons, it allowed for the escalation from a conventional conflict.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Slagle, “New Russian Military Doctrine,” 90

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 90

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 91

¹⁶ “Basic Provisions”

2000

Overview

- The 2000 doctrine was a return to a more defensive posture; the threat of nuclear retaliation, rather than that of preemptive force, would be its deterrence
- In order to strengthen its nuclear deterrence, Russia extended and redefined the cases in which nuclear weapons could be used to include a wider range of conflict types and a larger spectrum of attackers
- Russia's threats changed to reflect its latest fear of engaging in a limited conflict with no prospect of the use of nuclear deterrence

Introduction

The 2000 doctrine (officially the Russian Federation Military Doctrine) was created in a more stable world than the 1993 doctrine was. The Russian Federation had survived independence and the "threat of direct military aggression against the Russian Federation and its allies" had diminished.¹⁷ It had secured all of the nuclear weapons from its neighbors Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan, and had elected a new president, Vladimir Putin, to replace Boris Yeltsin. Yet, even as the doctrine took more defensive tones than the 1993 doctrine, it expanded its nuclear options. Below are a new definition of what doctrine meant in 2000 and an outline of the 2000 doctrine.

Doctrine

In 2000, the definition of doctrine was redefined from the 1993 definition—"a formal political-military consensus of the external threats facing the state... [which] reflects the political goals of the state"—to the following:¹⁸

[T]he aggregation of official views determining the military-political, military-strategic and military-economic guidelines to provide military security of the Russian Federation.¹⁹

It is important to note that the change in definitions revealed a change in purpose of the doctrine. In 1993, the new Russian Federation was being formed and was still heavily concerned about both "external threats facing the state" and reorganizing the government and the military ("the political goals of the state"). The new doctrine chose a language more secure and sure of itself; it was now "to provide military security" rather than to face threats. Thus, the definition of doctrine itself showed the new assuredness and the focus on defense rather than potential aggression that the state had adopted.

The 2000 Doctrine

The 2000 doctrine, while related to the 1993 doctrine, changed in a number of ways. As seen in the definition of the doctrine, its focus was modified from fear of aggression to that of defense of the nation. Its language on its nuclear doctrine transformed from vagueness to one in which it firmly defined and expanded the cases in which it might use nuclear weapons. Finally,

¹⁷ Ivan Safranchuk, "Russia's New Military Doctrine," Arms Control Letters, May 15, 2000, accessed June 1, 2012, <http://www.bu.edu/globalbeat/nuclear/PIR0500.html>

¹⁸ Kipphut, "Re-Clawing the Bear"

¹⁹ Safranchuk, "Russia's New Military Doctrine"

the motivation—and subsequently purpose—behind the doctrine adjusted from being guided by the events surrounding 1993 to those of the later 90s.

In its opening lines, the 2000 doctrine stated that “The Military Doctrine is defensive in nature, which is predetermined by the organic combination within its provisions of a consistent adherence to peace with a firm resolve to defend national interests and guarantee the military security of the Russian Federation and its allies.”²⁰ This signified a more defensive posture than the 1993 doctrine. The doctrine also changed from deterrence in which it threatened to preempt aggression to deterrence in which it threatened retaliation. Even though Dmitry Rogozin, the Chairman of the Duma Committee for International Affairs, stated that “Russia will not be waiting for the aggressor to seize a part of its territory or to destroy its nuclear potential,” signifying that Russia retained the option of preemption and was still not willing to return to Gorbachev’s “defensive defense,” the change of language portrayed a country that was more willing to rely on deterrence than on threatening to maintain its safety.²¹ Russia would turn primarily to nuclear deterrence for its security which allowed it to retain language of threats without the interventionist stance of the 1993 doctrine. The new doctrine also allowed it to better “deter (prevent) aggression against... its allies” because while it could not preempt every strike that might have been made against its allies, it could threaten to bomb any state that did go so far as to strike an ally.²²

The policy that the doctrine set for its future nuclear policy is among the most important aspects of the document. The doctrine increased the role of nuclear weapons in Russia’s security while also redefining and extending the circumstances in which they could be used.²³ In particular, the doctrine changed for two situations: first, mirroring the United States, Russia could respond to any attack using weapons of mass destruction with its nuclear weapons; second, any group of states threatening the Russian state, regardless of whether or not any of them had a nuclear weapon, could suffer a Russian nuclear counterattack.²⁴ These changes were important because the doctrine removed the need for conventional forces by stating that any threat to Russia’s integrity could be responded to with nuclear forces instead. It established nuclear weapons as “an effective means of deterring aggression.”²⁵ The policy aimed to allow Russia to deter not only other nuclear states, but also WMD and nonnuclear states. This stance differed from the 1993 doctrine in which Russia restricted itself to large conventional or nuclear attacks and to using nuclear weapons only against those states which had nuclear weapons or were allied with such a state.

The doctrine also broadened the types of wars that nuclear weapons could be involved in. Previously, nuclear weapons were only intended for global wars (“attack by a coalition of states; survival and sovereignty of Russia are at stake”).²⁶ The doctrine changed to allow nuclear weapons to be used in both global and regional wars (“attack by a state or a coalition of states

²⁰ “Russia’s Military Doctrine,” Arms Control Association, May 2000, accessed June 1, 2012, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2000_05/dc3ma00

²¹ Nikolai Sokov, “Russia’s 2000 Military Doctrine,” *NTI*, October 1, 1999, accessed June 1, 2012, <http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/russias-2000-military-doctrine/>

²² “Russia’s Military Doctrine”

²³ Nikolai Sokov, “Overview: An Assessment of the Draft Russian Military Doctrine,” October 1999, accessed June 1, 2012, <http://www.bu.edu/globalbeat/nuclear/CNS1099.html>

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Sokov, “Russia’s 2000 Military Doctrine”

pursuing significant political goals").²⁷ While in 1993 there was a vague policy towards nuclear weapons, 2000 set out a larger and more exact list of all of the potential areas in which nuclear weapons could be used.

These changes in doctrine happened because the threats to the Russian Federation had changed. No longer was Russia a fledgling nation, threatened by both the West and Russia's own former satellite states. Instead it had developed and grown and, by the time of the 2000 doctrine, felt fairly secure. This change in feelings, as well as the conversion from aggressive threats in 1993 to nuclear deterrence in 2000, was in part represented by the wars happening around the time of each doctrine. In 1993, Desert Storm was in the Russian generals' minds. They saw that because Saddam Hussein waited—in other words, practicing Gorbachev's solely defensive stance (although, of course, Iraq had just invaded Kuwait, something not solely defensive)—even as coalition forces built up outside of Iraq and Kuwait, he lost any advantage over the coalition forces and was quickly overwhelmed. This led the generals to craft the 1993 doctrine to be a rebuff of solely defense in favor of stating that, conventionally, Russia would turn back any aggressor and take the offensive against them. By 2000, NATO actions in Serbia and then Kosovo were fresh in the minds' of the generals. They saw NATO successfully use limited forces that devastated their opponent's army; Russian generals wanted to be sure that the same could not happen to Russia.²⁸ This led Russia to change its plans because it was now limited engagement with the likes of NATO, rather than foreign or nationalist troops on Russia's borders, that concerned it. In response to this new threat, the chief of the Russian Strategic Rocket Forces, Vladimir Yakovlev, created "expanded deterrence" as a method of using deterrence to de-escalate limited conflicts.²⁹ The different threat caused Russia to expand the mission of nuclear weapons so that they could deter not just massive nuclear attacks but also smaller incursions.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*

2010

Overview

- The new doctrine emphasizes the political centralization of command both in military policy and the use of nuclear weapons
- Nuclear doctrine remains the same in many aspects including the retention of first-use
- At the same time, doctrine was narrowed to using nuclear weapons only when the Russian state's existence is in danger; to continue strong deterrence, Russia also opted to follow the United States by introducing precision conventional weapons
- NATO is defined as Russia's primary external threat because of its increased global presence and its attempt to recruit states that are part of the Russian "bloc"
- The 2000 doctrine's defensive stance was left out of the doctrine; rumored options for use of nuclear weapons in local wars and in preemptive strikes were also left out

Introduction

In 2006, the defense minister and deputy prime minister Sergei Ivanov announced that the government was starting on a draft of a future doctrine.³⁰ Four years later, in 2010, the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation was put into effect with the intent of determining Russian doctrine until 2020.³¹ The 2010 doctrine, like all previous doctrines, was a product of the times in which it was written. Gone were many of the fears that had followed Russia for the past two decades. Below are an examination of the 2010 definition of doctrine as well as a brief analysis of the 2010 doctrine and its deviations from past doctrines.

Doctrine

The 1993 definition of doctrine focused on outside threats and building the state while the 2000 doctrinal definition concentrated on security and defense. The 2010 doctrine defines itself as:

[A] system of the views officially adopted in the state on preparations for armed defence and on the armed protection of the Russian Federation.³²

The doctrine further elaborates that "Implementation of the Military Doctrine is achieved through the centralization of state control in the military sphere"³³ While brief, this new definition sheds light on the motives behind the new doctrine. One change is that, although subtle, it takes a more aggressive stance. The 2000 doctrine was for "military security."³⁴ The new one "for *armed* defence" and "*armed* protection" [italics added].³⁵ The emphasis is that no longer is it just for security from a potential threat; it is now a heightened alert that focuses on

³⁰Danila Galperovich, "Much Has Changed Since Russia's Last Military Doctrine," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 3, 2010, accessed June 1, 2012,

http://www.rferl.org/content/Much_Has_Changed_Since_Russias_Last_Military_Doctrine/1973713.html

³¹Volha Charnysh, "Russian Nuclear Threshold Not Lowered," Arms Control Association, March 2010, accessed June 1, 2012, http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2010_03/RussiaNuclear

³² "Text of the newly-approved Russian military doctrine," Carnegie Endowment: 1, accessed June 1, 2012, http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/2010russia_military_doctrine.pdf

³³*Ibid.*, 1

³⁴Safranchuk, "Russia's New Military Doctrine"

³⁵ "Text of the newly-approved Russian military doctrine," 1

the fact that Russia is now stable with a confident army. Additionally, the 2010 doctrine abandoned the voice of consensus and aggregation of views from the past doctrines in favor of an official, centralized view that would be achieved “through centralization of the state”³⁶ This centralization of the military takes place in other parts of the doctrine, too, and shows that the president and a few key people—politicians—took charge over the heads of the military officers. This centralization is also shown by the fact that the doctrine reserved the decision for use of nuclear weapons solely with the president, something past doctrines had not done.³⁷

2010 Doctrine

The 2010 doctrine retained much of the same language of the 2000 doctrine while also elaborating on certain aspects and narrowing the focus on others. Several key points made in the 2010 doctrine include the constriction of nuclear use, the naming of NATO as a specific threat, and the non-inclusion of certain aspects that could have been in the doctrine.

From the 1993 doctrine, the 2000 doctrine had expanded the range of options for use of nuclear weapons. It increased its use from only global wars to include regional wars and opened up the option of using nuclear weapons against nonnuclear states that threatened Russia’s security. The 2010 doctrine slightly contracted from the wider uses of the 2000 doctrine.³⁸ It retained the option to use nuclear weapons in global and regional wars.³⁹ It also kept the option of escalating from a conventional to a nuclear war meaning that Russia has retained its option of first-use. However, although nuclear weapons kept their deterrence aspect, Russia limited the cases in which nuclear use could be considered. No longer could simply a military defeat introduce nuclear weapons to a battle; instead, Russia now required “the very existence of [Russia to be] under threat.”⁴⁰ This withdrawal from expanded use also coincided with a reliance of strategic over tactical nuclear weapons; that is, Russia came to focus on weapons for retaliation and deterrence—strategic weapons—over those that might be used against conventional forces—tactical weapons.⁴¹ Russia also replicated the United States by introducing high-precision conventional weapons as another factor of its deterrence.⁴² The reason that Russia turned away from its broader use and came to focus on strategic nuclear weapons and high-precision conventional weapons was because in 2000, Russia was going through military reform and had to rely on nuclear weapons as its main defense.⁴³ With the military restructured by 2010, Russia could come to rely less on a wide nuclear shield in favor of a narrower nuclear defense enhanced by the reinvigorated capability of conventional defense.

In addition to narrowing its nuclear doctrine, Russia specifically named its main opponent—which had only been vaguely referred to in the 2000 doctrine—as NATO.⁴⁴ This is important because it demonstrates what forces Russia fears the most: not its neighbors (after all,

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Charnysh, “Russian Nuclear Threshold”

³⁸Sokov, “The New, 2010 Russian Military Doctrine”

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴ “Text of the newly-approved Russian military doctrine,”3

Russia included Belarus in a special security guarantee in the doctrine), not China, and not specifically the United States.⁴⁵ The doctrine lists NATO as the first external threat because of

the desire to endow the force potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with global functions carried out in violation of the norms of international law and to move the military infrastructure of NATO member countries closer to the borders of the Russian Federation, including by expanding the bloc.⁴⁶

Russia views NATO at a threat because of its increasingly global role, such as its part in the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan, and because its membership recruitment is slowly moving into the former Soviet Republics, threatening Russia's security and risking the loss of members of Russia's domain. Russia has a continued fear of NATO's intervention in Russia's affairs—Chechnya in the 90s, Georgia in 2008—and NATO's missile shield that could neutralize Russia's ability to deter. Russia also feels threatened by foreign troops on its border, a feeling recurrent in the 1993 doctrine. It would impact Russia's ability to influence, through economic or military force, its neighbors. If Georgia had been part of NATO in 2008, Russia could not have behaved as it did.

An important—if seemingly contradictory—aspect of the document is what was not included. One facet in particular that was missing from the 2010 doctrine which was present in the 2000 doctrine was its defensive stance. There is no mention of the end of a defensive stance, but at the same time, the doctrine omits its previous language with no reference to its previous stance.⁴⁷ While the exact reason for this is not known, it could be for the same reason that Russia expanded its nuclear doctrine in 2000 and narrowed it in 2010: it felt particularly vulnerable but, since then, has been able to build up its conventional forces to feel more secure, thus having less of a need to be defensive. Also omitted was any mention of an expansion of the nuclear doctrine, despite rumors that such a change would be included. Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of the Security Council, hinted that the range of nuclear use might be expanded to local wars (“a war between two or more states pursuing limited military-political objectives in which military actions are conducted within the borders of the warring states and which affects primarily the interests [territorial, economic, political, and other] of only these states”).^{48,49} Another aspect left out of the final document was the use of nuclear weapons for preemptive strikes. Both of these uses of nuclear weapons—local war and preemptive strike—would have caused the 2010 policy to veer drastically away from previous policy and, instead of narrowing the uses of nuclear weapons as it did, would have broadened them to a level that would have likely perturbed NATO and many of the countries near Russia.

⁴⁵Galperovich, “Much Has Changed”

⁴⁶“Text of the newly-approved Russian military doctrine,”3

⁴⁷Galperovich, “Much Has Changed”

⁴⁸Sokov, “The New, 2010 Russian Military Doctrine”

⁴⁹“Text of the newly-approved Russian military doctrine,”2