A New Military Doctrine?

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In April 1993 the Supreme Soviet announced that it had adopted a Russian military doctrine. True, this occurred only at a first reading; there will still be a second and a third reading, corrections and changes. The parliamentary hearings on the issue were held behind closed doors. Although there was a press briefing, the only information provided to journalists was that the basis of the doctrine was "reasonable sufficiency and reasonable need"--which could mean anything or nothing. The vagueness of the statement allowed the neocommunists to accuse the democrats of a complete capitulation to the Pentagon. In turn, the democrats accused the military of wanting to continue the arms race.

In my opinion, both sides are quarreling over nothing. Russia never has had a [workable] military doctrine, and it is unlikely that it will soon have one.

At the turn of the century Russia already knew perfectly well that her potential enemy was Germany. A future war--indeed the inevitability of such a war--was discussed both in the Duma and in the czar's entourage. However, this did not prevent Russia from maintaining extremely close economic relations with Germany--in fact, over 50 percent of Russia's foreign trade was with Germany. Naturally, the Russian military machine ended up dependent upon German industry. Right from the start of World War I, Russia was forced to buy armaments from abroad, even though some types of Russian weaponry were considerably superior to their foreign equivalents, because the production lines were of German origin and, therefore, spare parts were obtainable only from the enemy. During the final months of 1916 and the first months of 1917, bullion
valued at 187 million gold rubles was sent to Great Britain in payment for arms purchases. Subsequently, on the very eve of the Bolshevik coup d'etat in October 1917, bullion worth 4.85 million gold rubles was delivered to Sweden to pay for munitions.

Russia's performance during World War I demonstrated the sad truth that, instead of a military doctrine, Russia possessed only a single idea--"ideology" if you will--aimed at a breakthrough of the Black Sea Fleet into the Bosporus and the Dardanelles.

Objectively, it has to be said that during the 1930s the outlines of a military doctrine that envisaged a potential opponent (Germany once again) began to emerge. At major Red Army exercises, Marshal Tukhachevsky simulated a German offensive with a maximum of 70 divisions. At the same time, however, he warned that Germany had the capacity to deploy double that number. (As it turned out, he was only too correct, and the German forces overwhelmed the Soviet Union's defense lines.) His reward was to be shot on Stalin's orders. In place of a [realistic] military doctrine, the Soviet Union adopted the idea of warfare on foreign territory, with only limited casualties. The top commanders were taught this concept and the troops were trained correspondingly. As a result, Soviet losses were eight times greater than Germany's.

Aiming at Military Superiority

During recent decades, the idea of parity in armaments between the Warsaw Pact and NATO officially served the function of a military doctrine. In reality, however, the objective was to achieve complete military superiority. Why again an "idea" instead of a "doctrine"? The reason is that as early as the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s it became clear to all leading Soviet scientists that, even with its militarized industry, the USSR was not capable of "catching up and overtaking" the West. The catastrophic technological backwardness of the Soviet Union was becoming manifest. To be sure, there were unique concepts that were ahead of anything in the West, and impressive priority research and development projects were undertaken; however, that was the full extent of the progress. It was difficult to produce advanced equipment in significant volume. Academician Andrei Sakharov told me personally that it was for this
very reason that during the 1950s President Eisenhower's very reasonable "Open Skies" proposal for air surveillance of Warsaw Pact and NATO territory was rejected by the Soviet Union. Aerial photography would have demonstrated objectively that the USSR was simply bluffing with respect to a number of different military categories.

After his lengthy exile, Sakharov wrote Mikhail Gorbachev a letter in December 1987 in which he tried to persuade the General Secretary of the necessity of a 50 percent reduction in nuclear strategic forces, pointing out that "under no possible circumstances could this disturb the overall strategic balance." Sakharov included in his letter the relevant scientific calculations and arguments. However, this missive aroused only mockery and indignation. At the time, Gorbachev's military adviser, Marshal Akhromeyev, called Sakharov's disarmament program "the jottings of an armchair strategist," although no scientific proof refuting the feasibility of Sakharov's plan was ever forthcoming.

**Military Spending into Bankruptcy**

Petr Groza, former director of the KGB's Scientific Forecasting Institute, maintains that any convincing refutation would in fact have been impossible. Starting in the 1980s, even such a conservative organization as the KGB began to send reports to the Politburo analyzing the uselessness and destructiveness of the arms race: "The West is largely aware of Soviet technological potential and is deliberately drawing us into a 'competition' which is exhausting the country and leading it to economic catastrophe... Our intelligence is consciously being fed supposedly 'promising research initiatives' which in fact have already been pursued and assessed to be dead-ends... However, the Soviet military-industrial complex then begins research and development in these areas, spending billions and billions of rubles which ultimately are completely wasted..."

The party never responded in any way to the threatening warnings it received from its "armed division," as the KGB was termed. Instead, the party's ideology called for always talking from a position of strength.
Another KGB officer, Col. Vladimir Rubanov, has stated that all of the professional security officers--apart from those whom the CPSU itself seconded to the KGB from its own central apparatus as watchdogs--understood that the military was bluffing not merely in order to cover up their own earlier mistakes, but to justify in advance the mistakes they would make in the future. The "oboronka" (defense industry) wanted to be the mightiest and the richest state within the state.

"Unreasonable Supersufficiency"

Yet another former KGB colonel, Nikolai Sham, who for a time served as a KGB deputy chairman, asserts as one who is in a position to know that the cult of secrecy in the military-industrial complex did not so much ensure the security of the state as conceal incompetence, blundering and corruption in the defense industry. The industry never had anything like a specific doctrine, even in the broadest outline, to guide its operations. Instead, the sole foundation for everything was the idea of "unreasonable supersufficiency."

The revelations of these former state security officers have come extremely late in the day. However, not everyone is capable of speaking out as openly as Sakharov did. It must also be borne in mind that the KGB officers were bound by an official oath not to reveal secrets.

Chemical Warfare Production Continues

These officers' statements have been substantially confirmed by information that can no longer be kept secret, such as details of the senseless overproduction of tanks (a surplus of which still exists) and the creation of a large amount of toxic substances (which, incidentally, are still being produced despite the scandal that blew up in the Russian press after the publication of an article by two experts in the field). After their sensational statements that Russia was continuing research and development on new chemical weapons, the "troublemakers" were arrested by the Ministry of Security, only to be released later under the pressure of public opinion. Meanwhile the Ministry of Defense, the government, and the Supreme Soviet maintain an embarrassed silence.
In the opinion of Col. Yegor Kharitonov, an advisor to the relevant Supreme Soviet committees and participant in the initial discussions of a new military doctrine, the endeavor was doomed to failure from the beginning, since the principal responsibility for producing the new doctrine was entrusted to the Institute of Strategic Research of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff. No independent experts were called upon to give their views, nor were any authorities in management theory invited to participate. In the latter field, it would have been possible to enlist the help of highly reputable figures.

**Russian Armies Abroad "Uncontrollable"**

A prominent military expert who is particularly skeptical about the feasibility of producing a new military doctrine in present circumstances is Major General Vladimir Dudnik. General Dudnik points out that an enormous number of army corps and army groups has ended up stationed outside Russia's borders, i.e., in the Baltic Region, Transcaucasia, and Central Asia. As a result of poor communications and the questionable political status of these forces, they have become virtually uncontrollable. Any missions assigned them by higher command authorities, i.e., the General Staff, are inevitably subject to the restrictions imposed on these forces by the situation in which they find themselves in the given region. Consequently, until the Russian Army is brought back within the borders of Russia, it will be impossible to talk seriously of adopting any kind of military doctrine.

General Dudnik's views have been completely confirmed by the statements of another general--General Vladimir Lebed', commander of the 14th Army stationed in Moldova. In a press interview, General Lebed' said that he was not aware of any perestroika in the army, or of any planning for the immediate future, let alone long-term planning. Citing his own experience of the war in Afghanistan, the general went on to say, "Without objectives or a mission, without specific orders, a soldier is an idiot!"

The Russian army has been afflicted by the "Afghan syndrome." This attitude is reflected not only in bitterness at defeat, not only in memories of a pointless war, but
also in the competition between the different generals--between those who sent officers
to serve in Afghanistan and those who actually fought there. At present, the top
command positions are filled by combat generals with first-hand experience of the war
in Afghanistan. However, these high-ranking officers have an inferior grasp of military
science and theory. At the same time, the specialists in military theory have been
retired. It is pointless to argue whether this is good or bad. It is, however, an
incontrovertible fact that, given the present situation and the state the army is in, it will
be impossible to produce a [realistic] military doctrine, especially, as has been
attempted, within a relatively brief period of time. All that is feasible at present is to
decide on basic principles for the reorganization of the armed forces, to determine a
schedule for the withdrawal of forces from the newly independent border republics ("the
near abroad"), and to initiate the process of developing an overall security concept.
Nothing more is possible at this time.

In the opinion of many military specialists, the Russian army will be incapable of a major
offensive for the near future. At the same time, it still is strong enough to thwart
aggression from any quarter. One may conclude that the document [before the
Supreme Soviet could have been] at most an outline of a concept of national defense--
something very far from being a military doctrine.

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