1998-01

Russia's National Security Concept

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http://hdl.handle.net/2144/3547
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Toward the end of December 1997 President Boris N. Yel'tsin signed Decree No. 1300 which gave the attached document, titled "National Security Concept of the Russian Federation," the force of law and thus bypassed parliament. He also assigned control over implementation of the concept to the Security Council. An article by Ivan P. Rybkin, secretary of that presidential advisory body, had listed its duties as follows:

- identification of internal and external threats to security
- development of guidelines for a national security strategy
- preparation of federal programs to support the latter

The second of these responsibilities reportedly culminated in a draft national security concept, submitted for discussion at the Security Council session on 7 May 1997 and reportedly endorsed at that time. Rybkin was interviewed less than a week later about this draft document. In the military sphere, defense of Russia's national interests and territorial integrity by force of arms is still relevant, he said, because there remains a risk of armed conflict "on our own borders as well as those around the Commonwealth of Independent States" (CIS). From this statement, it is apparent that Moscow intends to protect external geographic boundaries of the former Soviet Union.

Contents of the Draft Document

An investigative reporter may have obtained a copy of the draft concept, because she used quotation marks for what would appear to be verbatim excerpts. From the section titled Russian Federation Security in the Defense Sphere, the journalist quoted as...
follows: "Russia is not attempting to maintain quantitative parity with leading world states in arms and armed forces." (5) On the other hand, Russia "must possess nuclear forces capable of deterrence, causing unacceptable damage to any aggressor (with secondary and tertiary consequences)." What is in parenthesis, according to Ms. Kalinina, refers to radiation fallout that would affect civilians.

The foregoing was amplified by Boris A. Berezovsky, at the time deputy secretary of the Security Council, who stated over Moscow Radio that "we are not talking about making a nuclear first strike to secure a strategic advantage. However, if we are driven into a corner and are left with no other way out, we will use nuclear weapons." (6) This repeated almost verbatim what Rybkin had stated earlier. The final document itself, as mentioned later, refers to preemptive decisions in defense of national interests.

Ms. Kalinina also reported that the new national security concept would be based on geopolitical considerations that require a Russian military presence in a number of countries throughout the so-called "near abroad." The latter term is used to identify former republics of the USSR, now supposedly independent states. Russian military bases in these countries are required in order "to react in a crisis situation during the initial stage of a conflict."

Another source, who serves as director of the Institute for USA and Canada Studies in Moscow, published a paper in which the draft national security concept is discussed. Sergey M. Rogov stated that this 30-page document had not been released and based his reportage on unnamed experts who worked on the preamble as well as the four chapters. He could have been one of those experts. According to Rogov, threats to Russia's national security include

- economic crises at home
- proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction
- undermining world stability and
- international terrorism
Ensuring national security in the sphere of international relations is based on strategic partners and allies, as well as on a future sub-system of Euro-Atlantic security. (7) Neither strategic partners nor the new sub-system were identified by Rogov.

The previous Defense Council secretary (until 28 August 1997), Yuri M. Baturin, explained the draft national security concept as being based upon five centers of power: the United States, Russia, Germany, China, and Japan. When asked by a reporter whether Islamic countries were considered to be a threat, Baturin responded in the affirmative. Why? Because the West Europeans and Americans were attempting to redirect Islamic aggression toward Russia, away from the United States and Israel. For this reason, the war in Chechnya had been provoked by these enemies of Moscow. Turkey, on behalf of NATO, allegedly plays the role of regional superpower within the vast area between Tajikistan and Bosnia. (8)

The successor to Baturin, Andrei A. Kokoshin, formerly had been the civilian first deputy defense minister. He explained the new Euro-Atlantic security sub-system, envisaged by Moscow, as follows: A treaty on security within this region should be signed by all or most European countries, the United States, and Canada. Such a sub-system "could emerge under the aegis of OSCE" (9) (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe). At the 1994 meeting in Budapest of what was then called the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Russia failed to obtain support for such a metamorphosis which would have subordinated NATO to the CSCE. At that time, Moscow had attempted to equate the so-called Commonwealth of Independent States with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The New Document
The 12,000-word concept begins with a preamble which emphasizes its importance as the foundation of state policy. This is followed by four sections that discuss (1) world trends and Russia's participation therein; (2) national interests, domestic and foreign, including defense; (3) principal threats to national security; and (4) fundamentals of a national security strategy.
Thus, national interests require a proactive foreign policy which will result in Russia again becoming a great power. Prerequisites for such enhanced status include

- integration with the CIS
- equal partnership with other great powers
- international cooperation against trans-national crime and terrorism
- strengthening collective management of world processes, where Russia plays an important role (especially in the UN)
- protection of borders, territorial integrity, and the constitutional system

Threats to national security result from political, economic, and ethnic crises that would adversely affect the CIS integration process. This could become aggravated by local wars and armed conflict close to state borders. Establishment of large concentrations of hostile armed forces adjacent to Russian territory remains a potential threat—an obvious reference to NATO expansion.

Safeguarding national security "as an influential Eurasian power," Russia claims not to pursue hegemonistic or expansionist objectives. It supports a new system of European-Atlantic security in which the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe would become coordinator. Moscow prefers the same kind of system in the Asia-Pacific region. Local conflicts should be settled individually by the CIS, the UN, and OSCE.

Russia does not seek parity in defense with leading states of the world. It will adhere to a posture of "realistic deterrence." Therefore, it must retain sufficient nuclear forces to inflict destruction on any individual aggressor and even a coalition which uses either conventional or nuclear weapons that threaten the existence of Russia as a state. Thus, nuclear missiles could be used in response to a non-nuclear attack or even the threat of one, i.e., in a first strike mode, which is the meaning of the following statement in the concept:
In guaranteeing the national security of the Russian Federation, special importance is attached to establishment of systems to prepare and adopt **preemptive** decisions in defense of the country's national interests. [emphasis added]

To ensure its security, a Russian military presence may be required "in certain strategic regions of the world." Stationing troops there, based on treaties, would fulfill alliance commitments and allow for a timely reaction to crises. This reminds one of Soviet combat operations between 1950 and 1989 from such bases in North Korea, Algeria, Egypt, South Yemen, Vietnam, Syria, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan (see table).

Restructuring of defense industry, based on new technologies and scientific potential; support for and development of research, experimental and design work; as well as modernization of arms and military equipment must be pursued vigorously.

The national security concept ends with a listing of participants in its implementation: the president, parliament, government, and Security Council. This last organization formulates proposals for decisions in the event of a direct threat to the country. Finally, the concept will be "augmented and clarified in the annual messages from the president to parliament."

The underlying theme in this document conveys the admission that Russia can no longer claim major power status. However, it intends to regain such recognition by consolidating and extending its control over the former USSR, i.e., minus the Baltic states. This objective is being pursued by various means, including establishment of military bases on the territory of other CIS member states under the guise of protecting their external borders. If necessary, economic and other pressure is applied to gain such access, a recent example being Georgia. (10)

A robust research and development effort may soon eclipse the defense ministry budget, suggested by trends in allocation of funds since 1994. High technology R & D
has already produced several advanced weapons systems, with others under
development for the 21st century.

For example:

• deployment of mobile and silo-based Topol M-2 or SS-27 began at the end of
  December 1997 at Tatischevo in Saratov province and will replace 90 SS-18
  ICBMs.
• a new tactical system of nuclear weapons, with a range of 400 kilometers,
  successfully completed testing at the end of 1995.
• super-small nuclear warheads, weighing less than 90 kilograms, are already in
  production.
• construction has begun on the first of seven most advanced Boreia-class nuclear-
  powered submarines, equipped with the new D-31 SLBMs.
• R & D centers and design bureaus are perfecting laser as well as radio-frequency
  particle beam weapons. (11)

The above listing of these new projects is based on information from Major General
Vladimir Ivanovich Slipchenko, who had been director of scientific research for the
General Staff until recently, as well as from a senior official at the Rosvooruzheniye
agency for the sale abroad of Russian weapons who preferred anonymity.

It would seem obvious from the foregoing that, in their drive to regain world power
status, Russia's decision makers believe that the quickest way of doing so will be to
restore their influence throughout the former Soviet republics and equip their own armed
forces with 21st century weapons. What will their counterparts in the US government do
in view of these objectives?
## SOVIET COMBAT OPERATIONS ABROAD, 1950-1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Period of Time</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>June 1950 - July 1953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>1962-1964</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Arab Republic (Egypt)</td>
<td>18 October 1962 - 1 April 1963</td>
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<td>1 October 1969 - 16 July 1972</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 October 1973 - 1 April 1974</td>
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<tr>
<td>People's Democratic Republic of (South) Yemen</td>
<td>18 October 1962 - 1 April 1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>1 July 1965 - 31 December 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>5-13 June 1967; 6-24 October 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>November 1975 - November 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>November 1975 - November 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>9 December 1977 - 30 November 1979</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>22 April 1978 - 30 November 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 December 1979 - 15 February 1989</td>
</tr>
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**Note:** It is interesting that neither of the above sources lists Cuba, where combat troops had been dispatched in 1962 to install Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missiles targeted at the United States.

### Future Prospects

Perhaps one should not worry about a first strike by means of intercontinental or submarine-launched ballistic missiles. After all, the 1994 agreement with Russia specifically obligated that country's military leaders to detarget the United States. During the latest summit at Helsinki in March 1997, the same pledge was repeated, even though Yel'tsin reportedly thought he was offering something new. In a different context, US Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen stated at a press conference on 24 April 1997 that certain intelligence is difficult to gather in Russia, because Moscow does not
permit inspection of its ICBMs or SLBMs by Americans. How then can the US really know whether these strategic weapons systems are being destroyed under terms of the START I treaty or even that detargeting has taken place? (12)

That still leaves, of course, the estimated 18,000 to 20,000 tactical nuclear warheads which are either deployed or remain in supposedly safe storage.(13) These will be used only if Yel'tsin decides to eliminate a perceived threat along Russian or CIS borders. Even if we believe he would never give such an order, what about his successors or an army commander acting on his own? Should US policy makers, in the light of these developments, continue to place their confidence in a man who has had serious health problems and twice reportedly attempted suicide?(14) Or should they emulate the Russians who base their approach toward the West on an assessment of capabilities and not on intentions?

On 7 October 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright testified before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee about the strategic rationale for NATO expansion. She said that "questions about the future of Russia" remain and that "one should not dismiss the possibility that Russia could return to the patterns of the past." Secretary Albright subsequently warned in mid-December about the "threat from Eurasia," which could only mean Russia. (15)

The earlier testimony took place before the news that sixteen advanced computers had been purchased by Russia late last year through the IBM office in Germany, without US government permission, apart from those delivered earlier also by IBM and Silicon Graphics. They were all shipped to the Arzamas-16 federal nuclear science center which designs and assembles warheads.(16) The other such installation, Chelyabinsk-70, previously had received similar American computers. Moscow refuses to return the equipment, nor will it allow any inspection by US government officials.

Such behavior indicates that the United States is no longer considered to be a "strategic partner" of Russia. (17) That designation has been bestowed upon such countries as
China and India, both of which receive the latest weapons systems as well as technical advisors from Russia's military-industrial complex to develop their own advanced weapons technology.

Before any of the above will result in strategic relations, however, the Kremlin must reestablish its hegemony throughout most of what had been part of the USSR. The first order of business involves the so-called Commonwealth of Independent States which held its latest summit at Chisinau, Moldova on 23 October 1997. The presidents of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the host country strongly criticized the Russian approach to "peace-making" in their countries. Little could be accomplished at this session.

On the other hand, the prospect for a single CIS currency was discussed for implementation between the years 2005 and 2010. (18) A customs union has been able to attract only Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan in Russia's attempt to strengthen integration. All of those countries also cooperate in mutual defense of external CIS borders. Only Azerbaijan and Ukraine oppose such arrangements.

It is the former Soviet republics of Central Asia and those in the Transcaucasus that represent a buffer between Russia and the Muslim countries of Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey. If Russia cannot maintain its influence throughout this region, conditions may result in penetration of Muslim areas inside Russia itself, beginning with the northern Caucasus. That would certainly contribute to dissolution of the so-called Commonwealth of Independent States, regardless of a national security concept which may never be implemented.

NOTES:
1 An expanded version of this article will appear in Strategic Review (April 1998).


6 Quoted by Vissarion Sisnev, "Za chto v Pentagone borolis'...," Trud, 13 May 1997, p. 4.


12 The March 1997 summit at Helsinki gave the Russians an additional five years to fulfill terms of the START I treaty, regarding destruction of ICBMs and SLBMs. "That Moscow no longer has its missiles aimed at the United States is deceptively reassuring.

13 Signed on 8 December 1987 by President Ronald W. Reagan and Secretary General Mikhail S. Gorbachev in Washington, DC, the Treaty on Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Short-Range Missiles (INF) requires destruction of all ground-launched ballistic missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers, their launchers, and assorted structures as well as supporting equipment within three years after ratification by both sides.

By early May 1991, the US had eliminated all of its ground-launched cruise and ballistic missiles in the above categories; the last Russian SS-20 reportedly was destroyed on 11 May 1991. However, an unknown number of older SS-4 and SS-5 intermediate-range missiles had been installed in the former USSR republics of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as well as certain East-Central European members of the Warsaw Pact. For the text of the treaty, see Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements (Washington, DC: US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1996), pp. 256-266.

The term "tactical" nuclear weapon refers to missiles, used on the battlefield, with ranges of less than 500 kilometers. Note that Russia's new tactical system, already tested, has a range of 400 kilometers.


17 "We have given up the idea of a strategic alliance with our former adversaries in the Cold War," said Foreign Minister Primakov to Yegor Yakovlev in an interview for Obshchaya gazeta, no. 32 (14-20 August 1997), p. 6.