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Russia's New Military Doctrine

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[The following article contains excerpts from an interview with Maj. Gen. Yuri Ya. Kirshin, former head of the Strategic Department, USSR Armed Forces General Staff by Keith Armes, editor of *Perspective*.]

Perspective: The text of the Military Doctrine that is available is only a published "account" (*izlozhenie*) of the original text of the document with major omissions-- according to one report, a total of five pages are missing. This incomplete paraphrase of the doctrine, promulgated by President Yel'tsin on November 2, 1993, on the basis of the text prepared by the Security Council, provides for the president as Commander-in-Chief to exercise general direction (*obshchee rukovodstvo*) of the armed forces and other forces of the Russian Federation, while the Council of Ministers-Government bears responsibility for the condition of the armed forces, and the Minister of Defense carries out immediate direction of the armed forces. The published text does not provide for the creation of parliamentary bodies to implement a "system of civilian control of the activity and the use of the military force of the Russian state. "

Do you believe that the provisions of the doctrine provide adequately for civilian control of the armed forces?

... The creation of a system of civilian control of military policy and the armed forces is under way. Problems of civilian control are reflected in the new constitution and in the "Law on Defense." In these documents the functions of the President, the Council of Ministers, the Parliament, the Minister of Defense and the General Staff are all defined.

The military doctrine itself consists of a system of guidelines on the sources of military danger, the missions entrusted to the state in the area of national security, the missions of the armed forces, and the principles in accordance with which the armed forces are to be structured and employed. The military doctrine is not supposed to define a system of civilian control. Nevertheless, some principles relating to civilian control in fact are reflected in the military doctrine (e.g., the interaction of the military administration with public and religious organizations, the prohibition of the activity of political parties and movements within the armed forces, openness in relations with the public and the mass media, relations with Federation "subjects" [Russian Federation republics and regions] and local administration bodies.)

... A fully developed system of civilian control of the army is only in the process of being created, but there can be no doubt that ultimately such a system will be established. Certainly, a commission or committee of the Duma will be formed that will be responsible for national security issues and the armed forces.(2) The functions of the commission will include issues of civilian control.

The head of the Russian government plays a major role in the control of the armed forces. This role is described in detail in the "Law on Defense." It should be noted that at the same time the head of the government is a member of the Security Council. At the present time, Russian experts are discussing the desirability of creating the post of Vice Prime Minister, who would then be responsible for the so-called "power ministries," which include the Ministry of Defense. If such a post is indeed established, the role of the head of the government will only become more important.

Would it be possible to have a civilian Minister of Defense in Russia? In the past, Russian ministers of defense have always been drawn from the professional military. However, it is possible that this tradition will be broken in the future, with the result that the new Russia will have a civilian Minister of Defense...

However, in my view at the present time it is highly advisable that the Minister of Defense be a military professional. Essentially, what is taking place in Russia at the moment is not so much a military reform as the creation of a new army. To head this new army a person is needed who knows all the armed services intimately. Moreover, as yet there are very few civilians in Russia who have a sound grasp of military issues or strategy.

Perspective: It has been suggested that the nuclear provisions of the published paraphrase of the military doctrine that leave open the possibility of first use of nuclear weapons by Russia if certain conditions are not met are intended: 1) to encourage Ukraine to dismantle or transfer to Russia its nuclear weapons; and 2) to deter the East European (former Warsaw Pact) nations from joining NATO, since in this case they would be allied with nuclear powers. What is your view of the intended effect of the provisions regarding nuclear weaponry?

. . . According to the military doctrine, there are two cases in which Russia may use nuclear weapons against another state that itself does not possess nuclear weapons... The aim of Russia's nuclear policy is not to produce new nuclear weapons directed against non-nuclear states, and even less to employ such weaponry. Instead, the goal of national policy is to eliminate the danger of nuclear war and the use of nuclear weapons by means of deterring any unleashing of aggression against the Russian Federation. This principle embodied in the military doctrine magnifies the effectiveness of nuclear weapons as a political deterrent against possible aggression. . .

The principles relating to the use of nuclear weapons laid down in the military doctrine are not intended to encourage Ukraine to dismantle its nuclear weapons or to transfer them to Russia. It is true that serious conflicts have arisen between Russia and Ukraine, including in the area of nuclear policy. However, these disputes undoubtedly will be resolved by political means, without the use of armed force--least of all nuclear weapons.

The provisions contained in the military doctrine are not aimed at deterring the East European states from becoming members of NATO on the grounds that were they to do so they would then be allied with nuclear powers. We do not deny the right of these states to make arrangements for their own security.(3) Further, Russia does not regard any of the East European states as a possible opponent. However, let us make the most unlikely assumption that one of these countries commits an act of aggression. I do not believe that there is a single madman or eccentric to be found in Russia who would admit the possibility that Russia, with her vast population and mighty army, would use nuclear weapons to defend herself against any of the East European nations.

Military Blocs

Perspective: The expansion of military blocs and alliances to the detriment of the interests of Russian Federation military security is also referred to in the published account of the doctrine as a source of military danger. If East European countries were to conclude an association with NATO (in accordance with their proclaimed desire) evidently they could be considered as coming under this provision (this interpretation appears to be confirmed by the strong warnings expressed by Foreign Intelligence Service(SVR)director Yevgeni Primakov and the recent SVR report "Perspectives of the Expansion of NATO and the Interests of Russia").

The implications of the formulation in the curtailed paraphrase of the doctrine seem to go considerably beyond the views on the undesirability of the expansion of NATO advanced by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID). Does this suggest a difference of views between the Security Council (where the "power ministries" play a dominant role) and MID?

According to the military doctrine, the expansion of military blocs and alliances to the detriment of Russian security interests constitutes a source of military danger. Our military doctrine is based on the principle that NATO is not a source of military danger

for Russia. An expansion of NATO as a consequence of East European states joining the alliance will not change this situation: An enlarged NATO still will not constitute a source of military danger for Russia.

Europe needs a new security system. A NATO that has been expanded to include the East European states will not resolve the problems of European security. Principally, the solution of these problems is to be found within the framework of the UN and the CSCE. At the same time, while an expansion of NATO would not represent a military danger for Russia, objectively it would cause Russia political and economic harm, and to a certain degree it would also contribute to the isolation of Russia in the European region.

With regard to this, there is a further very important aspect that needs to be taken into consideration. The military doctrine defines not only possible sources of military danger, but also factors that may contribute to a military danger developing into an immediate military threat to Russia. Individual consideration of each of these factors makes it possible to carry out a more profound analysis of a given military-political situation.

It is certainly true that an expansion of military blocs to the detriment of Russia's security interests constitutes a source of military danger. Such a source of military danger may represent an immediate military threat in the following cases: 1) if a massing of armed forces occurs on Russia's borders; 2) if border conflicts arise or armed provocations are incited; 3) if foreign forces are introduced into the territory of foreign states contiguous with Russia. Given the above criteria, it is not difficult to define situations in which the expansion of military blocs and alliances may affect Russia's military security.

...It should be borne in mind that the possible expansion of NATO continues to be a subject of discussion in Russia, while at the same time NATO itself; has not yet determined its policy on the issue. Consequently, there is nothing surprising about the fact that some Russian politicians and military officers hold differing views on particular aspects.

Perspective: One of the principal existing and potential sources of external military danger referred to in the published version of the military doctrine is the suppression of the "rights, liberties and legitimate interests" of Russian Federation citizens in foreign states. Some commentators have seen this very broad formulation as providing carte blanche for armed intervention against states of the "Near Abroad" that are seen as discriminating against Russian residents. Attention has been drawn to proposals that Russian-speakers in the Near Abroad receive dual citizenship--so that by definition they would be Russian citizens.

An earlier draft of the doctrine (published in *Voennaya mysl'*) referred to the violation of the rights of "persons who identify themselves ethnically and culturally with (Russia) in the former republics of the USSR " as a possible source of war .

Could you comment on whether the original draft text published in *Voennaya mysl'* may have provided the basis for the complete uncensored text of the doctrine? Can you confirm the accuracy of the account of the doctrine in the article by V. Petrovsky (mentioned in footnote 1) which cites the statement that "Russia has the right to undertake measures of defense appropriate to the threat...[measures] even of a military character...[in regions] of dense residence of the Russian-speaking population outside of the territory of Russia."

It is true that according to the doctrine the suppression of the rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of citizens(4) of the Russian Federation in foreign states is considered to be a source of military danger. This doctrinal principle is intended to cool down nationalist hotheads who violate internationally recognized human rights. This is not something new that we have [invented]. Powerful civilized countries have taken this approach.(5) However, this does not mean that the Russian military is being given carte blanche for military intervention against states of the near abroad which, in the view of

some foreign commentators, discriminate against Russian residents. Russian law gives the military leadership no such rights. These issues are to be decided by the politicians.

Russians in the Near Abroad

The military doctrine does not provide for the Russian speaking population in the states of the near abroad to be protected by the Russian armed forces.(6) Nor is anything said about this in the unpublished portions of the doctrine. If the need arises for the protection of the Russian-speaking population, there are two means of achieving this: first, action undertaken by the UN and the CSCE; second, political and economic action taken by Russia herself.

Perspective: The situations referred to in the published account of the doctrine in which the armed forces can be employed for the suppression of internal conflicts appear to give very broad scope for their use, i.e., internal conflicts and other actions with the use of means of armed force on the territory of the Russian Federation threatening its territorial integrity, other interests of society and of Russian (*rossiiskikh*)citizens. Has such a broad formulation encountered resistance within the army in view of the reluctance of many senior officers to see the army used in internal political conflicts? Is it correct that many generals were strongly opposed to formalizing internal functions for the army in the military doctrine and hold that exclusively MVD and internal troop special subunits should fulfill this role?

The only restriction in the published account of the doctrine on decisions regarding the use of troops in connection with internal conflicts is that it be according to a procedure (*poryadok*) established by the legislation in force. Would it not have been desirable to provide that a precondition for the employment of troops would be the presidential proclamation of a state of emergency (*chrezvychainoe polozhenie*), in accordance with appropriate legislation, possibly including a provision that such employment of troops be

approved within a fixed period of time by a stipulated majority of the Federation Council and/or Duma ?

... Russia's national interest is to build a democratic, lawbased, peace-loving state based on a variety of different forms of property ownership. However, Russia is confronted with obstacles that may hinder achievement of these goals-- notably, both internal and external threats. At the present time, for Russia the internal threats are more dangerous than the external threats. These internal threats are also of different kinds, including military threats.

First, some of the Russian opposition political parties and movements (e.g., the radical communists and the profascist organizations) want to achieve power by the use of armed force. Second, these political forces possess a social base in the country (as do various nationalist and separatist groups). Third, the radical opposition has weaponry at its disposal and controls armed units, as well as possessing its own "generals," such as Achalov and Makashov, etc. Fourth, the radical opposition relies on the theory of force, embodied in various different forms, from the Black Hundreds that originally arose under Nicholas II to violence of the Marxist-Leninist variety. In fact, the ideology of force has penetrated deep into the consciousness of large numbers of people.

There is the recognition that democracy should be protected by peaceful political means--that such peaceful methods must constitute the principal instruments to be employed. However, in the case of the use of armed force by the radical political opposition, peaceful means may prove to be insufficient. As a result, the democrats may be compelled to respond to the use of armed force by employing military units. However, if such recourse to the military proves necessary, the following principles must be observed:

- Clearly written legislation must be adopted dealing with the use of armed force on the part of the political opposition, as well as the employment of the army in such situations;

- The civilian control of the army must be assured;
- The army must not be used in the interests of individual political parties or regional "subjects" of the Russian Federation;
- The army's performance of internal functions must be temporary, i .e., solely for the duration of a transitional period; ~ As a rule, any action undertaken by Russian army units should be reactive in nature and also appropriate in view of the nature of the actions of the opposition.
- The troops to be used for armed combat against the opposition need to be properly trained in order to ensure that civil war is avoided, as well as to reduce to a minimum the losses suffered by both sides.

Indeed, there was psychological resistance on the part of generals and other officers to the use of the military for domestic functions. There are several reasons for this. First, as a result of Gorbachev and his team giving orders for the shooting of peaceful civilians, the army suffers from the "Vilnius, Tbilisi, Baku syndrome." The actions that were undertaken in these cities resulted in great damage to the Soviet Army' s prestige in the eyes of the people. Second, the generals and other officers do not possess the skills required for the suppression of internal uprisings and disorders. Third, the officer corps overestimated the capabilities of the MVD internal forces. Fourth, the officer corps was inhibited by the absence of clear comprehensive legislation regarding the army's internal functions.

I believe that, as a result of the adoption of the new constitution, approval of the military doctrine, and a revision of the "Law on Defense," everything will fall into place. Generals, officers and enlisted men will all grasp the need for the armed defense of democracy in Russia, should the radical opposition use armed force against it...

Perspective: With regard to the localization and termination of internal conflicts, attention has been drawn to the breadth of the definition of forces that may be employed, according to the published portions of the doctrine, i.e., individual (otdel'nye) formations of the armed forces and troops of the Russian Federation.

This could include formations of divisional strength or larger, airborne assault and armored units, etc. Do you find that this absence of any restrictions on the size or composition of forces is appropriate?

I believe that specifically military questions and methods of combating the armed radical opposition will be decided by the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff.

Unquestionably, they will determine appropriate limits to be placed on the size and composition of the forces that may be employed.

Perspective: Some commentators have claimed that the vital role played by the military during the October events enabled the army to insist that broad provisions justifying employment of the army in internal conflicts be included in the doctrine as a "pay off for services rendered ... " Do you agree with this view?

I disagree. The internal functions of the army must be determined by the threats which I discussed earlier. The use of the army within Russia does not represent an aim in itself. The employment of the military domestically was a measure to which the country was compelled to resort, and it was undertaken with the goals of assuring political stability and of building a new Russia. Accordingly, neither Yel'tsin nor Chernomyrdin paid the army anything "for services rendered." During the October events, the missions that the army fulfilled were in the interests of the new Russia--and consequently in its own interests.

Of course, all of this now needs to be properly explained, not only to the Russian people themselves, but also to world public opinion.

Notes:

1 See V. Petrovsky, "What Will Russia's Military Doctrine Be Like," *Rossiiskie vesti*, 26 October 1993, p. 2

2 These two committees have now been established in the Duma. 3 While President Yel'tsin used similar language in August 1993 concerning possible Polish and Czech

accession to NATO, subsequently the Russian Foreign Ministry and the president, in a policy reversal, in essence vetoed any such NATO membership for former Warsaw Pact members.

4 In this context, publications on Russian military doctrine since 1992 have referred variously to "ethnic Russians," "Russian speakers," and "Russian citizens," although these terms are not interchangeable.

5 The US and European powers in recent decades occasionally have taken armed action when the lives of their citizens were at risk or had already been lost, but no such intervention in the post-World War II period seems to be on record to prevent "the suppression of the rights, freedoms, or legitimate interests" of such citizens.

6 The Foreign Policy Doctrine Promulgated in April 1993 and the Military Doctrine draft of 1992 specifically refer to the use of Russian military power in support of ethnic Russians in the "Near Abroad," and the question is whether the Military Doctrine promulgated recently maintains or changes this approach.

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