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## **PERSPECTIVE**

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# **Russia's Military Policy**

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[Editor's note: General Volkogonov also serves as chairman of the State Commission on Doctrine and Formation of the Russian Federation Armed Forces.]

The dramatic changes that have occurred throughout the territory of the former USSR necessarily have had major military implications. On the territory of what had been a mighty military power there are now a dozen states which are trying to preserve some links between one another and at the same time to divide up one of the largest armies in the world in a way that is as advantageous as possible for each state. This is turning out to be not only difficult to achieve, but also dangerous for these new states and for the entire world community. The former Soviet armed forces possess large quantities of nuclear weapons which are deployed on the territory of four of the former Soviet republics. Russia is now obliged to define its own military policy in accordance with the new situation that has arisen.

The Russian government displayed great restraint over the question of the former USSR united armed forces, since it did not want to be a pioneer in the creation of its own Russian national armed forces. It fought for a long time to preserve a united army and navy of the Commonwealth of Independent States. When this attempt failed, Russia fought to ensure that at least a portion of the former Soviet armed forces remained unified. However, after Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan decided to set up their own armed forces, it became clear that Russia had no alternative but to create its own national forces.

The President of Russia set up a State Commission charged with developing plans for structuring the armed forces and defining a military doctrine for the Russian state (rossiiskoe gosudarstvo), and with submitting draft policy decisions. On the basis of parliamentary debates and the corresponding resolutions, the commission succeeded in accomplishing substantial work over a limited period of time. As a result, a number of principles for Russia's future military policy were established and the necessary organizational measures were undertaken.

On May 7, President Boris Yel'tsin signed a decree under which all units, formations, military schools and other defense facilities located on Russian territory were declared to be part of the armed forces of the Russian Federation. In addition, forces still stationed in Germany, Poland, Cuba, Mongolia, the Baltic Region, and in some commonwealth republics are included in the Russian Federation forces. In total, this represents an extremely large force strength of about 2,500,000 men. It is quite evident that Russia does not require such a large army for a number of different reasons, including a great reduction in the military threat and the country's limited economic ability to maintain military forces. However, the principal reason is the new policy that the Russian state has adopted and intends to pursue in the future.

From the outset, Russia initiated proposals for the conclusion of a defense treaty with the other republics of the former Soviet Union. Ultimately this treaty was signed by six republics. However, this security alliance remains open to membership by all the partner states of the commonwealth. In order to benefit from other countries' experience in combining their forces to ensure mutual security, Russian parliamentarians and military officials regularly visit NATO facilities in Brussels and elsewhere. On several occasions, the Russian government has declared itself ready to participate in the construction of a global security system. It would seem appropriate that at this stage such discussions be conducted by highly qualified specialists such as political scientists, engineers, and military experts.

Nuclear issues occupy a special place in Russian military policy. The Russian Federation, as the legal successor to the USSR, has decided to pursue a most vigorous policy of nuclear disarmament. I had occasion to be present at the meeting between President Yel'tsin and President Bush at Camp David during which cuts in nuclear weapons were among the topics discussed. I was particularly impressed by the determination of both presidents to ensure progress toward a more stable and secure world, including a rapid rate of nuclear disarmament.

There can be no question of the strength of the political will with which the Russian government is approaching this issue. The only difficulties are of an economic and financial nature. The destruction of nuclear arsenals involves great costs. Russia hopes that the community partner states concerned, i.e., Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, will sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as states which are moving toward a nuclear-free status within a strictly defined time frame. It seems that this would be in the interests of these sovereign states, as well as of the entire world community. It is Russia's hope that, on the territory of the former Soviet Union, Russia alone will retain nuclear weapons. It is of course on Russian territory that these monstrous instruments of destruction are produced. Russia intends to make radical cuts in its nuclear arsenal and progressively make even deeper reductions over time on an internationally agreed basis. At the same time, reliable controls to ensure the nonproliferation of nuclear technology and materials are of the highest importance.

Another important plank in Russia's military policy is its plan to create its own forces while simultaneously carrying out profound reforms of the military. What are the essential features of these reforms?

The first objective is to carry out major reductions in the size of the armed forces, with the result that over the next three to four years they will be cut to a maximum level of 1,500,000 men. In later years the numbers may be reduced even further. The reforms will involve changes in relationships between different types of forces and the different services with a view to the radical reduction of offensive capabilities. The political

organs in the army and navy have been abolished outright. The system of military recruitment will be changed as the result of the progressive move from a conscription-based system to a contractual system, in conjunction with other reforms.

Naturally, the reform planners are faced with major economic and social problems. For example, currently there are 198,000 officers stationed in Russia who are without housing. After the completion of force withdrawals from other regions this number may rise to 260,000. The president and the Russian government are currently seeking additional funding for large-scale construction of accommodation as well as subsidies for the purchase of housing by servicemen who are retired from the armed forces. For the first time since 1917, expenditure for the social welfare of military personnel comprises over one-half the Russian military budget. Courses are being set up for former servicemen in entrepreneurship, business, and marketing. In other words, social questions effectively occupy a key place in the reforms being initiated in the Russian military.

At the same time, a new Ministry of Defense and a new General Staff are being created. Naturally, the size of these institutions will be considerably smaller than was the case in the former USSR. A substantial proportion of the best qualified officers currently serving in them will find employment within the new structure. However, for the first time civilian officials will fill a large number of official posts as a result of the decision that has been taken gradually to "demilitarize" the ministry. For example, a 46-year-old academic expert, Professor Andrei Kokoshin—who, incidentally, is a prominent specialist on the U.S.—has been appointed first deputy minister of defense. Kokoshin has never served as a professional military officer.

[For insight into the new first deputy minister's views on supervision of the armed forces and on developing military doctrine, please see **From the Database**] The new minister of defense, Army General Pavel Grachev, who until recently held a top command in the airborne forces, is similarly young and energetic. Together they are now setting up the Russian Ministry of Defense—and they have more than enough work ahead of them.

In particular, a new military doctrine is being developed. Clearly, the pivotal aspect of this doctrine will be the tasks of defending Russia's sovereignty and preventing global and local military conflicts in close cooperation with Russia's allies. The army of Russia is no longer watching "potential opponents" (to use the old expression) through the cross hairs of a gunsight. A new humanistic world view is slowly but irresistibly winning over the minds of the officers and men of the Russian military. It is significant that a new Russian Army Humanistic Academy (*Gumanitarnaya Akademiya Rossiiskoi Armii*) has been set up to replace the Military-Political Academy. The old corpus of generals has to a large extent been retired. In future, the Russian army definitely will be a new and younger army.

It is still too early to speak of the success of the new reforms. However, an impressive start has been made. The main achievement is that the Russian armed forces are not a threat to anyone. The man in Russian uniform finally has been freed of the influence of the party. In turn, this is a clear sign that the reforms under way in Russia, however agonizing and difficult they may be, ultimately will lead the country out onto the path of civilized and democratic development. The basis is already being laid for this future.

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