

Russia's National Security Concept

Vladimir Putin

Vladimir Putin is acting President and Prime Minister of Russia. These extracts were selected and edited by Tony Simpson.

On 10th January 2000, acting President Vladimir Putin signed Russia's revised National Security Concept. It was published in the Russian press a few days later. These short extracts provide new evidence that the NATO war against Yugoslavia was a bridge too far for the increasingly fragile international balance of power. In particular, the threshold for using nuclear weapons is being lowered on all sides. First, the Americans failed to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty whilst continuing their research into Star Wars Mark 2. And now the Russians have issued this statement, which needs careful scrutiny, not least by peace movements. Peace activists have registered their concern about the war in Chechnya, which has received ample coverage in the West. By contrast, this important statement has been little reported, although what it says is of crucial interest to us all.

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'I Russia in the world

...Russia's shared common interests with other states are implicit in many international security problems. These include opposing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the settlement and prevention of regional conflicts, fighting international terrorism and the drugs trade, and resolving the acute problems which threaten the global environment, including those posed by nuclear radiation and safety.

At the same time, a number of states are stepping up their efforts to weaken Russia politically, economically, militarily, and in other ways. Attempts at ignoring Russia's interests when trying to solve major problems of international relations, including conflicts, risks undermining international security, stability, and the positive changes which have been achieved in international affairs...

II Russia's national interests

...Russia's national interests in the international sphere consist in upholding its sovereignty, strengthening its position as a great power and as one of the influential centres in a multipolar world, in developing equal and equitable relations with all countries and associations of countries, in particular with the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Russia's traditional partners, in universal observance of human rights and freedoms and the impermissibility of double standards in this respect ... Russia's national interests in the military sphere lie in the protection of its independence, sovereignty, state and territorial integrity, in preventing military aggression against Russia and its allies, and in ensuring conditions for the peaceful and democratic development of the state...

III Threats to the Russian Federation's national security

...The fundamental threats in the international sphere are brought about by:

- the desire of some states and international associations to diminish the role of existing mechanisms for ensuring international security, principally the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe;
- the danger of a weakening of Russia's political, economic and military influence in the world;
- the strengthening of military-political blocs and alliances, especially Nato's expansion eastwards;
- the possible emergence of foreign military bases and the presence of major military forces close to Russia's borders;
- the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery;
- the weakening of the process of integration within the Commonwealth of Independent States;
- conflicts breaking out and escalating near to the borders of the Russian Federation and the external borders of CIS member states;
- territorial claims on Russia.

In the international sphere, threats to the national security of the Russian Federation can be seen in the attempts by other states to oppose Russia's strengthening as one of the influential centres of a multipolar world, to hinder its exercise of its national interests, and to weaken its position in Europe, the Middle East, the Transcaucasus, Central Asia, and the Asia-Pacific region...

...The level and scope of the military threat are growing. Now elevated to the rank of a strategic doctrine, Nato's transition to using military force outside its zone of responsibility, and without the sanction of the UN Security Council, could destabilise the entire global strategic situation. The growing technical advantage of several leading powers, and their enhanced ability to develop new weapons and military equipment, could provoke a new round of the arms race, and radically alter the forms and methods of warfare...

IV Ensuring the national security of the Russian Federation

...The foreign policy of the Russian Federation should be designed ...

- to achieve progress in nuclear arms control, and maintain strategic stability in the world through states' compliance with their international obligations in this area;
- to fulfil mutual obligations to reduce and eliminate weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms, and to carry out confidence and stability-building measures, and to ensure international supervision of the export of goods and technologies, and over the provision of military and dual-purpose services;
- to adapt existing arms-control and disarmament agreements in line with the new climate in international relations, and to develop new agreements when necessary for enhancing confidence and security-building;
- to assist in the establishment of zones free of the weapons of mass destruction;
- to develop international co-operation in the fight against transnational crime and terrorism.

It is a crucial aspect of state activity to ensure the Russian Federation's military security. The main goal in this respect is to ensure, through rational spending on defence, an adequate response to the threats which may arise in the 21st Century. The Federation prefers political, diplomatic, economic and other non-military means to prevent war and armed conflicts. However, the Federation's national interests require the possession of military power sufficient for their defence. The Federation's armed forces have the main role in ensuring Russia's military security.

The vital task of the Russian Federation is to deter aggression against Russia and its allies on any scale, nuclear or otherwise. The Federation should possess nuclear forces which guarantee to inflict the desired degree of damage on any aggressor state or coalition of states under any circumstances.

In peacetime, the armed forces of the Russian Federation must be able to provide effective protection against aerial attack; to perform missions to repulse aggression in a local war (armed conflict) jointly with other troops, military units and entities; and to carry out strategic deployments for missions in a large-scale war. The Federation's armed forces should also ensure Russia's ability to carry out peacekeeping duties.

Effective collaboration and co-operation with members of the Commonwealth of Independent States is a vital component in providing for the military security of the Russian Federation. Russia's national security requires, in appropriate circumstances, its military presence in certain strategically important regions of the world. Stationing limited military contingents (military bases, naval units) in these places, on a treaty basis, must ensure Russia's readiness to fulfil its obligations, and to assist in forming a stable military-strategic balance of forces in the regions, and must enable the Russian Federation to react to a crisis situation in its initial stages, and to achieve its foreign policy goals.

The Russian Federation considers the possibility of employing military force to ensure its national security, based on ...

- **the use of all available forces and means at its disposal, including nuclear weapons, in the event of the need to repulse armed aggression, if all other measures for resolving the crisis have been exhausted or proved ineffective...'**

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Spokesman Editorial Note

*We have highlighted two extracts from Russia's new National Security Concept which refer to nuclear strategy. The first could already be found in the 1997 doctrine, which the new doctrine replaces. But the second reads differently. The 1997 doctrine said: 'Russia reserves the right to use all forces and means at its disposal, including nuclear weapons, in case an armed aggression creates a threat to **the very existence** of the Russian Federation as an independent sovereign state.'*

But the new doctrine is very different. It no longer reserves nuclear weapons solely for extreme situations which threaten the Federation's 'very existence'. Instead, they can be used in smaller-scale wars. This is reminiscent of the discussion of so-called 'theatre nuclear war' in the 1980s, which accompanied Nato's original plans to deploy Cruise and Pershing nuclear missiles in Western Europe, alongside the deployment of Soviet SS20 missiles.

The key to this change can be found elsewhere in the new Concept. It states that peacetime organisation and deployment of armed forces 'must be able to provide dependable protection against aerial attack'. This concern clearly reflects the result of the United States bombardment of Yugoslavia. The technological sophistication of American weaponry is only part of the problem: in Kosovo the Americans showed a very low tolerance before they abandoned diplomacy for brute force. The crisis in Russia undoubtedly weakened its conventional forces. Could they stand up to a large-scale conventional attack by Nato? Are nuclear weapons seen as a necessary deterrent in these circumstances?