

Russia's Military Doctrine – Expected News

On 5 February, President Dmitrii Medvedev informed the inner circle of the Russian Security Council that a new Military Doctrine had finally been adopted. The Kremlin published the open section of the doctrine the same evening. Its contents were basically what could be expected. Overall, the ambition appears to have been to limit the number of central concepts used and clarify their meaning. This is evident not least from the reduced list of military threats. An all-encompassing list of threats tends to provide little concrete guidance.

The threat of nuclear war or a large-scale conflict is not regarded as imminent. The criticism directed at NATO and US plans for anti-missile defence in Europe is harsher than in the Military Doctrine published in 2000. This was to be expected given the recent statements by leading Russian officials and politicians as well as the wording in security policy documents (such as the Security Strategy to 2020 and the Foreign Policy Concept, published in 2009 and 2008 respectively). The increased emphasis on military protection of Russian citizens outside Russia's borders was also anticipated. During 2009, the Duma adopted the necessary changes to legislation for this to be in accordance with the Russian law on defence. These changes also made it possible for Russia's president to circumvent the constitutional requirement for approval from the upper chamber of Parliament, the Federation Council, before deploying Russian troops abroad.

When it comes to nuclear arms, Russia still states that it will adopt a first-use policy, but only in response to an attack that 'threatens the very existence of the state'; in other words, Russia will not resort to nuclear arms following a conventional attack against one of its allies or even in response to a limited attack on Russia proper. As before, Russia will respond to attacks with weapons of mass destruction against itself or its allies with nuclear weapons. This should be analysed in the light of the suggestions made at times by high-ranking officials and politicians to test the air during the debate in the years between the two doctrines, to the effect that Russia could resort to tactical nuclear arms, for example, in order to contain a local conflict or in response to a massive information operation against Russia. The new Military Doctrine spells out that the position stated in the Military Doctrine in 2000 stands. This is of course good news. However, it should probably not be interpreted unequivocally as a Russian move towards détente. In fact, the frosty nature of relations between Russia and the West could make it even more important to send a precise and well-calibrated message outlining a narrow first-use policy in a document of this kind to the outside world and to the defence establishment at home.

The specifics of what the document refers to as 'modern armed conflicts' together with the priorities spelled out for the Armed Forces provide some insights into how Russia looks at modern warfare. Among other things, there is an emphasis on the speed with which developments take place on the battlefield as well as on the need to use non-military means of warfare in close conjunction with military ones. Furthermore, the document underlines the importance of efficient systems for command and control together with modern weapons systems to make it possible to keep the initiative and establish command over the ground, sea and air space. Russia also notes the importance of information warfare during the initial phase of a conflict to weaken the

command and control ability of the opponent and then in the form of an information campaign during the actual battle to create a positive view within the international community. These are all areas of modern warfare where Russia feels that its capacity is limited and lags behind that of the West.

The idea of mobilization is very much alive and kicking in Russian defence planning according to the new Military Doctrine. This is contradictory taking into consideration that the document states that the risk of grand-scale war has diminished, as well as the goal of the ongoing restructuring of the Armed Forces towards contract Manning and standing readiness units. Keeping the mobilization option alive while at the same time reforming in order to be able to keep up with the demands of modern warfare will signify a considerable challenge to both the Russian Armed Forces and the defence industry as they continue to straddle two paths of development for their future military organization.

Compared with the earlier military doctrines adopted in 1993 and 2000, the new document is more closely integrated with the overarching security policy objectives of Russia. As in the Security Strategy and the Foreign Policy Concept, the clearly stated aim of preventing further NATO enlargement is highlighted, as is the goal of giving Russia a deciding voice in the drafting of a new security architecture – mainly in Europe. Furthermore, Russia would like its regional security creation, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), to be regarded in the future as NATO's natural counterpart and equal.

From a strictly military point of view, however, it is worth noting the distinction that the Military Doctrine makes between 'military dangers', on the one hand, and 'military threats' on the other. Military danger is described as a situation that 'could lead to a military threat'. This is a clear difference from the earlier Military Doctrine, and the change was probably not made because of a last-minute whim. The danger of NATO expanding its power and 'global functions' tops the list of military dangers, which makes it obvious that it is a high priority in Russian security policy thinking. But the fact that it does not make it into the list of 'military threats' could be interpreted as giving Russia the chance to emphasize the issue without making it a main determinant of the structure of its military organization. In other words, the difference in intensity between military dangers and threats provides Russia with the opportunity to underscore its displeasure with NATO without saying that it is the number one military threat facing Russia at the moment.

Overall, the Military Doctrine gives the impression of a Russia that is determined not to abandon its ambitions to remain at the very least a regional power, but also a Russia that is painfully aware of the limitations it is struggling with and the dangers involved in pursuing this goal. The 'reset' in Russia's relations with the West should not be overemphasized; however, as mentioned above, the tensions present in political relations have underscored the importance of sending the precise message both internationally and domestically.

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This briefing is based on an initial analysis made of the new Russian military doctrine in Swedish (see the project web page for the full Swedish analysis: http://www.foi.se/FOI/templates/Page_7672.aspx)