

Conflict Studies Research Centre

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Military Threats To Russia And Development Problems

In Her Armed Forces

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Experience world-wide convinces us that military strength remains one of the most significant instruments of policy among states. It is important to determine its place and role and beware of extreme conclusions in assessing it. In today's conditions, despite the objective growth of peaceful tendencies, the threat of an outbreak of armed conflict still exists. The policies of the foremost states of the world are still directed to qualitative enhancement of their armed forces and are not undergoing cardinal changes of view in spite of the new realities that have arisen in the wake of the collapse of the USSR. Consigned now to the past is the confrontation of the two 'poles' of military power - NATO and the Warsaw Pact. At the same time the changes have in the first place concerned the standard polemics of external propaganda but not the basic views of the role and significance of military power. We saw in effect the immediate 're-orientation' of the NATO Bloc from its opposition to the Warsaw Pact Bloc into 'an instrument for peace', primarily in Europe. But obviously, however, the armed forces of the majority of the Bloc states continue to improve and expand their degree of readiness and their capability.

Russia, now outside the framework of the former USSR, is deprived of many of the geopolitical and geo-strategic advantages she once commanded. The destruction of that defensive alliance, the Warsaw Pact and the departure of Russian troops from the European states led to a lessening of geopolitical influence. This effectively reduces the scope of military-political manoeuvre and shifts the boundaries of possible military conflicts in Central Europe directly on to the Russian frontier. In the last four years alone in the CIS countries and in their close vicinity there have been approximately 30 cases of military conflict and over 70 incidents arising from them.

Moreover, the infrastructure of the whole defensive complex has significantly altered. Russia cannot accept with indifference the headlong bloc re-orientation of former allies and near neighbours (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and the Baltic countries) towards permanent membership of NATO. A true assessment of the character and degree of danger from military threats must be one of the main factors **determining the pattern of military construction**.

Over a long period the armies of the majority of the world's states have based the level of this on their political aims and tasks with regard to the capabilities of one or other potential enemy. It was the same with us during the confrontation between the two political systems. Today, however, in a new historical period, a period of change from confrontation to co-operation and partnership, the use of the 'probable enemy concept' of the political lexicon is incorrect. It has become necessary therefore to distinguish between the political assessment of likely threats and potential enemies, and the purely professional, strictly military factors.

At the present time along the whole frontier of Russia there are over 500 divisions deployed from other countries, relations with which are not as yet unequivocally of a peace-loving character. This is more than

an impressive level of threat and, as politics might decree, it presents a problem with many unknowns. Of course it is not advisable to go to extremes since it is equally dangerous to inflate an 'image of the enemy' artificially as it would be to regard this military power with apathy. In the practical world, staffs must concentrate not on the propagandist rhetoric, but on the scope of military activity, the thrust of operational preparation, deployments of foreign forces and several other indicators, the analysis of which will enable them to plan the right structure for Russia's Armed Forces.

Threats to our interests are classified by various indicators. We will consider the more important of them:

First, are the threats from long-standing differences between East and West and now between the West, USA and the 'new' countries formed from the former USSR states and the countries of the Warsaw Pact. The gigantic military-political, two-polar system has now become multi-polar. At the same time, the military authority of the USA has been strengthened and the power and stability of NATO have increased.

Second, the threats arising as a result of the rebirth of traditional military confrontation among Russia and certain states. There was a distinctive 'recoil' in the past when among the countries capable of mounting damaging attacks on Russia were USA, Germany, France, Turkey, Japan and China. Now Pakistan and Iran can be added to this list.

The national interests of Germany, as claimed by her Government, do not at present give cause to suppose that she could again threaten Russia. Furthermore, she is experiencing difficulties with re-unification. At present her specific gravity in the European scene is rising sharply and in the near future she will play an even more active role, gradually squeezing out the USA. It is expected therefore that Germany will in several directions alter her course. East Prussia will continue to be the object of her historical ambitions. And it is here, hidden from Russia, that there lies the possibility of a new threat of future conflicts and she must be prepared to resolve them.

The case of Turkey calls for especially close attention, this country having achieved notable economic and political successes. She can play an active part above all in achieving her historic claims in relations with the Black Sea basin governments, as witness her urge to establish there a system of economic co-operation and to play a part in the solution of Transcaucasus problems.

Third, with regard to new threats to Russia arising from the increase of 'inter-ethnic' and 'inter-confessional' antipathies, the growth of influence in certain states and regions of 'fundamentalist' forces, ensures distinct geopolitical problems between the north and the south.

The situations in both the Far East and Middle East are characterised by the exacerbation of the rivalry between West and East in the battle for influence in the former Soviet republics.

Fourth, the threats stemming from potential conflict situations among certain states which have achieved the latest scientific and technological capabilities. So far, only the first steps have been taken towards controlling such conflicts world-wide. The problems of uncontrolled expansion of weapons, including even nuclear weapons, have not yet been solved and, in the event of attacks from unstable or totalitarian regimes, situations might be greatly exacerbated.

It must be noted that armed conflict might be provoked in any of the examined groups of threats or also in a combination of them. The significance of this is that there is a clear choice of solution - a settlement by peaceful means, or by armed conflict. In the end all will depend on the willingness of the parties to reach a compromise and to take genuine steps to abide by any agreement concluded. However, military power will always play a fundamental role.

In every armed conflict the choice of weapons is determined by concrete, operational-strategic or tactical tasks. Thus, in westerly directions Russia would more quickly come to grips with an enemy having a defined military-technical superiority and would pay particular attention to the principle of war aimed at minimising losses. Therefore **the means of the armed struggle** would correspond to contemporary views on the conduct of air-ground operations. It is expected therefore that in such conflicts ground troops will in general engage only after serious damage has been inflicted on the enemy by means of long-range weapons including aerospace attacks with a massive use of high accuracy systems.

Military operations towards the south would develop differently. It is not excluded that they would take on the character of gradual infiltration by the enemy on a wide-scale which would include partisan action. In

that case it would be necessary to meet the threat with many, well-armed, self-contained groups acting as, for example, they do in Tadjikistan. Thus, under the defined conditions of an armed conflict unleashed against Russia in the south, only well equipped armies, predominantly of ground troops, would take part.

To repel aggression on a local scale it would be most effective to employ groups of the Russian Federation's Armed Forces, deployed in good time in potentially dangerous directions. **The particular forms of military action** for which troops should be trained are ? the frustrating of enemy airborne attacks and the repulse of the enemy's high-accuracy weapons, the conduct of intensive manoeuvre battles, operations with simultaneous heavy destruction of all elements of tactical, operational-tactical (depending on the particular situation) groups of forces. Experience of local wars teaches that the side able in the course of military actions to use the means of radio-electronic warfare, aviation, fire suppression and airborne troops, can carry out most important tasks with a comparatively small quantity of general purpose formations.

What then are the priorities for the building of armed forces? One of the most important in the opinion of the author must be a **balanced development of all arms of our forces and categories of troops**. The various branches of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the conditions of the then existing ideological and political circumstances, with the vast volume of financial funding, called for extensive development along many lines. The situation gave rise to the development of each arm of the Armed Forces in isolation with no account taken of the possibilities for integration of weapons of similar function and role in various sectors of the Armed Forces.

As far then as Russia is concerned, in accordance with a general tendency, it is envisaged that in the near future the fourfold structure of the Armed Forces will become a threefold one.

The requirement for balanced development of the Armed Forces is affected by several factors. First, Russia has a unique geographical position ? she has the most extended land and sea borders in the world. This demands the availability in sufficient strength of first-class land and sea forces. Second, for the foreseeable future our country will stand alongside the USA as a leading nuclear power, which calls not only for the necessary finances but also for the qualified human resources for the reliable operation of strategic nuclear forces (SyaS). And third, in view of the importance of the aerospace sector of the armed struggle the role of aviation will be enlarged, as will the aerospace system of air defence. Thus it becomes expedient to develop all elements of the Armed Forces.

But at the same time there is today a need to determine the proportion of the civil population to the manpower strength of the Armed Forces and to develop a conceptual approach to its applicability in the various types of likely military conflicts. In this regard every available method and methodology must be used: a *priori*, a generalised assessment of the effectiveness of proposed groupings, the modelling of scenarios of likely use, the calculation of the numbers involved depending upon the quality and quantity of the basic types of weapons involved ? and all the host of other factors involved.

We will examine the role and function of the strategic nuclear forces and other branches of the Armed Forces in the system of State security.

The development of strategic nuclear forces at the present time is based on principles of parity, mutual control and gradual reductions to the levels agreed with the USA. This, of course, is a positive process demanding great efforts from us nevertheless, since the size and condition of these forces must remain such as to guarantee inflicting the required degree of damage on an aggressor under any circumstances. In examining the future of Russia's strategic nuclear triad, reliable deterrence will be the factor to consider

Ground forces in local conflicts on any scale will play the main role. Out of the multiplicity of tasks which will fall to them, the most typical will be: the destruction of the enemy's ground forces, the seizing and holding of key regions and political/administrative centres; participation in airborne or anti-airborne operations etc. The means of fulfilling these tasks will be determined by the particular theatres of operations and by the capabilities of the forces involved.

The creation of mobile groupings able effectively to carry out their tasks in local wars and armed conflicts will have a positive influence on the achievement of military-political aims. Furthermore, for the successful conclusion of a military engagement, extraordinary measures will be needed, in particular the use of new, highly effective means of destruction (for example super high explosives and super mines), based on the

size and destructive power of the explosions. These means might be deployed along vulnerable directions at different distances from the frontier or held in readiness to be unleashed to meet an actual threat.

To increase the effectiveness of ground troops they have to be backed by contemporary army aviation, especially with helicopters that increase their firepower, afford high mobility and allow them to fulfil their tasks. These are to concentrate forces and firepower in decisive sectors, to seize advantageous positions, contain enemy penetrations, and prepare and mount counterattacks including airborne operations.

It follows that many of the tasks laid on Russian Federation Armed Forces in local wars and armed conflicts will be decided on the basis of combined and unified formations held at permanent readiness. It is necessary therefore to raise the training state of such forces for action in the most difficult of situations.

In the event of operational-strategic commanders being restricted in deploying their forces or if troops in the conflict area have taken significant casualties and it has become impossible to complete the operation swiftly and more battle-trained reinforcements have to be introduced, then it will be necessary to introduce airborne units and fully trained troops from other military districts

As we have learned from armed conflicts in the past **air forces** will have a significant contribution to make. Aviation is the fundamental weapon capable of attacking the enemy's groupings throughout the whole depth of the theatre of operations.

Its likely tasks are to establish air superiority; to provide air support to land and sea forces; to disrupt the enemy's military-economic potential; to transport troops and equipment by air; to carry out air reconnaissance and, finally, to insert airborne forces.

The achievement of air superiority will retain its decisive importance in the future insofar as it offers positive advantages and in many circumstances creates opportunities to gain the strategic initiative. As experience proves, it is able to suppress the enemy's air defences (**PVO**) and to destroy his aircraft both on the ground and in the air. And obviously, in smaller armed conflicts there will be a need to conduct air operations.

Close air support of ground forces' operations continues to be one of aviation's prime tasks.

The isolation of the battle area to prevent the flow of troop and materiel reinforcements requires wide use of aviation in reconnaissance-strike and reconnaissance-fire complexes (RUK and ROK) as well as in anti-tank helicopter formations, units and groupings.

Traditional aviation tasks will continue to feature in future conflicts for the neutralisation of airfields and deterrent attacks against the most important enemy targets. We saw in the local war in the Persian Gulf how the allied air forces neutralised a large number of Iraqi airfields, attacked installations producing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and, also, sundry priority military targets (PVO command and control systems, including underground hangars).

Analysis of armed conflicts shows that aviation also has its uses in deception operations and armed provocation in terrorist situations.

Reliable *air defence* in the conduct of military actions under today's conditions has become one of the most important factors in the achievement of success. The basic tasks include the battle for air supremacy; defence against air attack of important political-military and economic centres, regions and targets; the protection of ground troops from enemy air and missile attacks on the battlefield and throughout the whole operational depth; communications, areas of deployment and concentration of reserves in the rear. The list also includes the prevention of enemy air attacks on airfields, naval bases, ports and control centres, etc.

The first requirement for the fulfilment of these tasks is a reliable air defence system for the protection of installations, communications and troop units in the conflict area organised on an operational-strategic basis, not based solely on unit resources. Second, in a conflict with an enemy strong in the air, having massive, highly accurate means of destruction, it is necessary to combine the efforts of all branches of the Armed Forces in a system of the closest co-operation for mutual support. The engagement of fighter aircraft to counter enemy air attacks is also necessary. Their functions include the suppression of enemy radio counter-measures, the interception at the frontier of high-accuracy missiles and formations of strike

aircraft, to prevent unhindered concentration of enemy air attacks against our anti-aircraft defence complexes. Third ? the directorate of PVO forces must achieve an automated system and ensure maximum use of their capabilities in the execution of their tasks. Fourth ? the general system and each of the PVO component elements must be interference-resistant, versatile and responsive, able without interruption to execute swift, covert manoeuvres, set up ambushes and direct ?nomadic? anti-aircraft artillery units.

As far as the **Navy** is concerned, its commitments are likewise defined by the actual conditions of military-political situations. They might include the bombardment of military and industrial targets, of ground forces troops and their communications: the insertion of naval landing forces and contributing air and artillery support during the deployment of ground forces. The blockading of coastal areas from seaward would also be its responsibility, as would the protection of naval transport and the re-deployment or evacuation of ground troops. And the destruction of enemy naval forces at sea or in port would also fall to the Navy along with the defence of the sea coast, participation in anti-airborne operations and the conduct of raids in connection with major operational-strategic tasks. The analysis of wars shows that the volume of actions undertaken by naval forces in the interests of ground troops tends to increase. In peacetime the Navy?s formations have to ensure ?the increase of convincing deterrence? and an ?armed presence? in those parts of the globe where it is demanded.

The majority of local wars and armed conflicts became testing grounds for new weaponry, demonstrating the possibilities of their use in future wars. This factor allows the optimum directions of development of the Armed Forces.

Outbreaks of armed conflict arise when the ambition of one or both antagonists cannot be resolved by negotiations leading to agreement, but only by war. Therefore the wishes of Russia to solve differences by peaceful means, without the support of her Armed Forces cannot, in our view, at the present time be fulfilled. Our intention therefore is to settle any such disputes through the United Nations process and the other international organisations, firmly defending our national interests while examining the possibilities for the development of new technologies and means for the conduct of the armed struggle.

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