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Issues

- Physical Environment
- The Political Environment
- The Criminal Challenge
- The Kosovo Factor
- The Criminal Challenge
- The Economic Challenge
- Threat Perceptions
- State of the Russian Military

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In February, the Army War College brought together nearly 20 specialists from academia and government in the United States and Western Europe and over 30 individuals from the policy and intelligence communities to examine the state of the Russian military. The workshop examined Russia's domestic environment, perceived threats and Russia's response to those threats, in terms of policies and force structures.

- ***Physical Environment***

Russia's environmental conditions highlight the immense challenges facing Russian leaders. The Soviet legacy is one of pervasive chemical and radiological contamination from industrial, agricultural, and military sources throughout the Russian Federation. The impact of this legacy has been compounded by government failure to address the problem in a systematic manner, in part due to a lack of understanding of the problem and to a lack of resources.

Environmental neglect contributes to a growing demographic crisis marked by low life expectancy, high rates of infant mortality, high incidences of communicable diseases, and, most recently, a decline in the population of the Russian Federation. One of the long-term implications is a decline in population by as much as 50 percent over the next half-century, resulting in declining labor and manpower pools for the military. Concern was also expressed about the impact of environmental pollution, particularly

that of heavy metals, on the intellectual development of children in Russia, with serious implications for the country's future "intellectual capital." At present, however, these problems are beyond the resources of Russia to address effectively in the near- and mid-term, even if the leadership made them a high priority. Environmental conditions and their impact on demography will have a negative impact on Russia's military and economic potential for an extended period.

- ***The Political Environment***

Several factors were identified as paramount in recent Russian political developments.

First among political factors is that Russia appears to be nearing the end of the transition from the USSR to a "fully-conscious" Russian Federation. Former President Yeltsin, a transitional leader instrumental in the collapse of the USSR, was not able to formulate

new policies to effectively govern Russia. Power relationships among individuals and institutions are not yet fully defined. Vladimir Putin, Acting President and virtually guaranteed the Presidency in the late March elections, will have the opportunity to define anew these relationships. Russia may be on the verge of emerging from its latest "time of troubles."

- ***The Criminal Challenge***

Russia must address pervasive organized crime, described as "not a threat to the Russian Government, rather it is an integral part of the Government." Comparison with the American "Robber Barons" was rejected based upon capital flight, the lack of motivation for investment, and the low level of charitable inclination in Russian society. Criminal activity has a corrosive effect throughout society, and there are close ties between prominent political figures and criminal elements. Criminal activity has had very serious implications for the country's economic development. Given the Russian desire for order and predictability, a Putin Presidency is likely to promise strong measures against criminal activity, but whether it will actually deliver on those promises is unclear.

- ***The Kosovo Factor***

In the Russian view, NATO operation in Kosovo confirmed U.S. efforts to pursue "unipolarism" in contrast to the Russian goal of multipolarism. Thus, the NATO campaign in Kosovo should be regarded as a "watershed" in Russian perceptions of the United States and a key event influencing the evolution of Russian security policies.

- ***Civil-Military Relations***

Discussion of Russian civil-military relations prompted the observation that the West must carefully define its terms when discussing civil-military relations to avoid "mirror-imaging" on this subject. In the Russian context, civil-military relations are quite different from the Western concept.

There is civilian control of the military in Russia, but it is not exercised by a democratically elected government with a strong sense of responsibility to the governed. Russia is a "statist" society with institutions of civil society that are weakly developed or absent, and the oligarchic government has only a low degree of accountability. While responsible to the political leadership, the military has wide discretion in its sphere of activity. This sphere, however, has been shrinking in practical terms as the government relies on "benign neglect" to reduce resources available to the military, forcing continued downsizing of Russian forces.

The likelihood of a military coup was considered very low, as the military is neither disposed to dominate politics nor does it have a historical record of such action. Perhaps equally important is that the multitude of military organizations ensures that the Ministry of Defense does not have a monopoly over the use of force in the society. Still, under Putin, the military appears to be gaining influence, and the new national security doctrine enhances its role in the identification of threats and the determination of resources to be allocated to force structure.

This influence is evident in Russia's Chechnya campaign, with some perceiving an 'understanding' between Putin and the military, a deal providing more resources for the military in exchange for sure support for Putin. Alternatively, the military leadership may simply perceive in Putin a man who can restore order to Russia. One side effect of the Chechnya campaign appears to be restriction of the media and further restraints on the emerging institutions of civil society, which serve the interests of an oligarchic and authoritarian leadership.

- ***The Economic Challenge***

Russia's economy also suffers from a Soviet legacy, that of a centralized, command economy focused on the generation of an industrial-age military. Compounding the impact of this legacy, the effort to convert to a market-based economy has been incomplete and has put much of the economy in the hands of oligarchs. Russia faces high rates of unemployment, an obsolescent capital stock, extensive capital flight, and a host of other economic problems. By official Russian standards, roughly 40 percent of the population lives below the subsistence level. These factors motivate expanded foreign arms sales in an effort to use the military industrial complex to "jump start" the economy.

Russia is unlikely to become a market-driven economy, nor is a return to a centralized, command economy seen as viable. Instead, Russia is more likely to follow an economic course described as "state capitalism." However, Russia will face serious challenges in competing in the highly competitive world economy and may end up as an arms merchant and provider of minerals. This would seriously impede Russia's future development as a major military power.

- ***Threat Perceptions***

Russia sees the U.S. role in the NATO operation in Kosovo as an element of a larger effort to limit Russia's role and influence in foreign affairs and to dominate world events on terms defined by the United States. Russia still sees itself as at least a "great power," and it believes that its nuclear arsenal still gives it claim to the title of superpower. Russia has described recent U.S. policies as calculated to create a "unipolar world," while it is seeking, according to its most recent national security policy, to create a "multipolar world." There are other points of contention in the U.S.-Russian relationship, as well, including arms

sales, technology transfer, and nonproliferation. Many workshop participants expressed concern that some key Russian leaders still appear to regard the U.S.-Russian relationship as a "zero-sum" game, and it should be expected to increasingly adopt positions that put it at odds with the United States and its allies.

Russian leaders regard U.S. actions in the Caucasus as an effort to expand its influence at Russia's expense. The military campaign in Chechnya serves several purposes, both foreign and domestic. It is intended first to reestablish firm Russian control over an area that has been part of Russia since the 19th century. It also serves notice to regional states, especially Georgia and Azerbaijan, that Russia will defend its interests (as it describes them) in the region.

Success in Chechnya also is perceived as a vehicle to restore the credibility of the Russian military after its defeat there in 1996. As such, the campaign has an element of revenge, and to some degree it might even be regarded as an effort to regain some of the aura of power of the Soviet military.

One Russian response to its threat perceptions and the implications of unipolarity has been cultivation of relations with the People's Republic of China. There appears to be a current coincidence of views between China and Russia on the threat posed by the United States. Since 1996 Beijing and Moscow have characterized their relationship as a "strategic partnership." Most outstanding border issues have been resolved, bilateral trade has been expanded, and Russia has become China's key supplier of military hardware. There are, however, limits to how far strong Russian-Chinese relations can be expected to develop. Russia is definitely the junior partner at present, but it does not want to consign itself to a subordinate status indefinitely, and there are key elements in the Russian security community that continue to view China as the most serious long-term threat, a threat heightened by negative demographic trends on the Russian side. Both sides have used a normalization of relations as leverage in their dealings with the West, and, in both cases, relations with the West remain a primary concern. Strategic alignment between Russia and China has been a logical response to mutual alienation from the West, but it is unlikely to proceed to the level of full-blown alliance.

- ***State of the Russian Military***

One prominent action has been the publication of a new security doctrine, seen as an effort by the General Staff to control the country's defense agenda. To a large degree, the new doctrine appears to have drawn on a traditional Russian approach of a "zero-sum" correlation of forces, amounting to a worst case evaluation of the international situation. In response to NATO enlargement, perceived NATO aggression in Kosovo, and its own conventional forces that are considered relatively weak, Russia is compelled to rely upon nuclear weapons for the full range of deterrence and as a war-fighting instrument.

The traumatic transition from the Soviet Army, personality and institutional conflicts, poor performance in the first Chechen war, downsizing, and a consistent lack of adequate funding are among the many factors that have contributed to the very poor state of Russia's conventional forces today and led to this increased reliance on nuclear weapons.

One result has been that military reform has not been realized, and the military continues to operate under heavy pressure due to financial shortfalls, lack of direction, and the latest war in Chechnya. This has led to the employment of temporary operational groups of units cobbled together, resulting in reduced effectiveness and higher losses of men and materiel. There is little prospect of achieving a professional army anytime soon, given all the obstacles to reform.

Acting President Putin has promised increased funding for the conventional forces, but it is unlikely that the Russian economy can support the development and production of the types of weapons and equipment in requisite quantities to ensure that Russian forces are comparable to the European or American armies.

Russian threat perceptions and conventional forces' weakness are instrumental in driving Russian cooperation with China in the military sphere. Russian arms shipments to China have increased significantly in recent years, with the transfer of two Sovremenny guided missile destroyers being the most recent example of cooperation.

What lies ahead is unclear, but in the strategic arena two possible outcomes were identified. First, if the U.S.-Russian relationship improves, further cuts to strategic arms through a variety of arms control measures and confidence building measures to reduce ambiguity and misunderstanding are possible. Alternatively, relations could remain seriously troubled, deteriorating into renewed strategic competition with serious implications for strategic and conventional arms control. One factor will be how the two countries address the issue of an American national missile defense directed against rogue nations.

Fundamentally, however, a deeper problem was identified: Russian leaders appear to be fixated on maintaining the perception that Russia is at least a great power — one that also aspires to recoup its status as a superpower. They

Russia Workshop Authors with Army War College Commandant, Major General Robert H. Scales, Jr.

believe that Russia's voice must be heard in every international forum and on every key international issue. Russian leaders appear to be prepared to dedicate significant treasure to rebuilding military forces appropriate to that perceived status. This course, however, fails to address the underlying economic and environmental problems that are impeding Russia's economic development and that are, quite literally when it comes to the country's environmental problems, killing them. If Russian leaders continue to regard military power as the key indicator of Russia's standing, the required investment will absorb resources needed to rectify these problems. As a result, they will lead Russia further down a blind alley, ensuring it remains economically noncompetitive and in decline demographically.

- ***"What is to be Done?"***

The ability of the United States – and the West as a whole – to influence developments in Russia will remain very limited. Foremost among the factors that limit Western influence are the scope of the challenges Russia faces and Russia's xenophobic attitudes that contribute to a "siege mentality."

The challenges for the West are to continue to reach out to the Russians to try to assure them we do not seek to diminish their security, that security concerns are not at play in a "zero-sum" environment, and that our relationship can be a "win-win" experience. This requires that Western decision- makers have an appreciation of valid Russian security concerns. Simultaneously, we should not concede to expansive definitions of Russian security concerns and should work to ensure pluralism in the former Soviet Union and Central Europe.

It was proposed that the United States should actively engage Russia in a comprehensive arms control dialogue to ensure continued communications if relations between the U.S. and Russia deteriorate further. The example of the 1980s, when U.S.-Soviet relations were chilled by the invasion of Afghanistan – and later by the killing of a U.S. military officer in East Germany, when the arms control dialogue was virtually the only open avenue of communications between the USSR and the United States, was offered as an example.

- ***Future Collins Center Efforts***

Papers from the Russia Workshop will be published in the mid-summer, 2000 and planning already has begun for a follow-up workshop to address issues centered on the Russian "national security community," how it defines Russia's national interests, and threats to those interests.

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