

RUSSIA

THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The Russian Federation occupies three-quarters of the area of the former USSR and is heir to a Russian state reaching back, albeit under different names, into the 14th century. Thus the collapse of the USSR has not changed Russian statehood despite causing dramatic changes in the political regime, economic system, and ideological status. Russia's historic pattern of continuous expansion has been reversed. The western borders have retreated to approximately the line of the early 17th century and the southern borders to that of the late 18th century. Only in the Far East has there been no territorial change from the days of the Soviet empire. In addition to its diminished area and population, Russia's international status also has been much reduced. Today, it is no longer a global power with worldwide interests and wide-spread influence. It does, however, remain a potentially major player in three large and important regions: Europe, the Near and Middle East, and East Asia and the Pacific. The Russian Federation is also the dominant power in the 12-member Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) composed of all ex-USSR republics except the Baltic States.

Internal Crises. Internal challenges rather than external threats are of greatest current concern to Moscow as the process of painful economic and social transformation continues to unfold in a highly political environment. The political challenges facing the Russian government are accentuated by President Boris Yeltsin's health uncertainties and the failure to establish a convincing economic recovery. There have been encouraging signs of economic recovery during 1995–96, but opponents to the current government continue to play up the overall decline in living standards over the past five years. Since the end of the Soviet period, per capita income has fallen about 40 percent, industrial production has plummeted, and the government's inability to collect taxes has created perpetual financial uncertainty. Worse still is the failure to invest in future technologies; in 1994, Russia spent only 1 percent of GDP on R&D—one fourth the 1990 level. As economic conditions have become harsher, the ideals of liberal democracy and internationalism which prevailed in the early 1990s increasingly have been called into question. The public is preoccupied with daily survival, and Russian political leaders are becoming more traditional and even nationalistic in their outlook, as illustrated in the December 1995 parliamentary elections in which the communist and nationalist parties attracted the greatest percentage of votes. Although Boris Yeltsin won his reelection bid in

mid-1996, it came after an initial stiff challenge from the communist opposition. Increasingly, Russia's foreign policy reflects a general public consensus that Russia has given away too much and must make greater efforts to defend its national interests.

The threat of further internal territorial disintegration has greatly diminished, but not entirely disappeared. Most regions seek a better deal with Moscow. The republics of the Northern Caucasus are too dependent on federal subsidies and too weak internally to seriously contemplate following Chechnya's lead in seeking succession. In Chechnya, violence subsided with the August 23, 1996 compromise fashioned by former defense chief Alexander Lebed, but the controversial agreement leaves many questions open. As part of this compromise, Russia is withdrawing its troops from Chechnya and consideration of Chechnya's political status has been postponed for five years. Nationalists criticize the agreement as rewarding terrorism and separatism, but it satisfies the strong public desire for peace.

The deteriorating situation of its Far Eastern provinces may prove to be one of the gravest threats to Russian security over the longer term. This far-flung region's links to European Russia have grown weaker, the collapse of the once military-oriented regional economy is virtually complete, and—most troubling of all—depopulation of the region continues. In this situation, the demographic pressure which Russians feel from across the border in China is extremely worrisome.

External Challenges. For the first time in decades, if not centuries, Russia does not feel directly threatened militarily from the outside. On the other hand, the end of the Cold War and break-up of the Soviet Union has resulted in long-term political instability along the southern perimeter of the Russian Federation. In an "arc of instability" from Moldova to Tajikistan, most of the new post-Soviet states are weak, and some may not survive. Ethnic, clan, regional and religious controversies have sparked numerous conflicts. This situation in the "Near Abroad" is contemporary Russia's greatest external security concern, as such conflict could spill over into the Federation by affecting the 25 million Russians living in this area or influencing minorities in Russia. The Chechnyan war, for example, was a consequence of seven years of armed violence, wars of secession, and the general criminalization in the Transcaucasus.

Of the Near Abroad, the Ukraine and Kazakhstan by size and location have particular strategic significance. Thus a close relationship with these two countries is perceived to be a vital priority for Moscow. Russians worried about Ukraine relations with the West, particularly any ties with NATO. But relations

between the two nations have improved, with Russia carefully showing constraint in Ukraine's troubled Crimea and with the division of the Black Sea fleet nearly completed. Kazakhstan has gained special importance due to the perceived threat of Islamic extremism. Russian strategists fear a possible wave of Islamic-based instability arising from Afghanistan and spreading successively from Tajikistan and Turkic Middle Asia to Kazakhstan and finally to the Volga, where some of the Federation's Moslem republics are located. Beyond this arc, Russian analysts generally see the following as the most immediate external challenges to military security: (1) the prospect of NATO's enlargement; (2) competition with the West, Turkey, China and others for political influence in and access to the economic resources of the CIS, especially Caspian Sea oil; (3) perceived attempts of the West to reduce Russia's role in the Balkans; (4) imbalance in conventional armaments in Europe; and (5) the prospect of the United States developing and deploying a ballistic missile defense system that would devalue the Russian nuclear deterrent. Other issues include a possible collapse of the U.S. -Soviet arms control regime and the prospects of nuclear proliferation and conflict in South or Northeast Asia. Of all these security concerns, the proposed NATO enlargement has the greatest potential of sending Russia into a more inward-looking direction and putting Russia's relations with the West on a collision course. The failure to meaningfully involve Russia in the post-Cold War peace settlement would create a sense of isolation within the Russian ruling elite and probably lead to Russia's self-isolation and estrangement.

After toying with the notions of integration into Europe or a turning toward the Asia Pacific, Russian leaders are increasingly inclined to regard their country as an independent center of power in a multipolar world. Relations with the other centers are seen as containing elements of competition and cooperation. Since Russia's interests are not identical with any other actor, a policy of equidistance, not isolation, appears wise. The United States is seen as bent on dominating the other power centers. Moscow has rejected the notion of being a junior partner to Washington, symbolized by the replacement in January 1996 of Andrei Kozyrev by Evgeni Primakov as foreign minister. Even if there are no fundamental conflicts of interest between Washington and Moscow, economic and political rivalries over secondary issues could spoil the relationship. Russia hopes to strengthen its relations with other power centers, including Germany in Europe and China, Japan, and India in Asia.

Russia in Asia. China's rise to world power status presents Russia with problems, challenges, and opportunities. Present relations are stable and very good. The border problem is virtually solved, and official Russian analysts be-

lieve that for the foreseeable future China will be preoccupied with its eastern and southern flanks, leaving quiet the north and west, the areas of greatest concern to Russia. China's relative weakness compared to the United States, in the eyes of Russian analysts, also inclines it toward stable relations with Russia. There may be a danger, however, in China's trying to drag Russia into its own confrontations with the United States or Japan.

Russia's basic China strategy is to expand economic links, especially in border areas, but not so much as to put into question the future economic and political orientation of the Russian Far East. Russia's main security concerns are to preserve Russia's territorial integrity and prevent formation of a Chinese diaspora in the Russian Far East. Through its weapons and technology sales, Russia also hopes to tie the Chinese to the Russian military complex, but it intends to maintain a comfortable technological lead over China.

Relations with Japan continue to be burdened by the territorial dispute over the southern Kurile islands. Some Russians suspect an American hand in this, believing that Washington prefers cool relations between Tokyo and Moscow. The Russians, who want to steer an independent course in a multipolar world, prefer to deal directly with the Japanese on security issues. How Russia manages to use the opportunities and face the challenges arising in the Far East has great implications for the Federation's geostrategic position and role in the coming decades. This task has several dimensions: first, whether Russia succeeds in integrating her own provinces east of Lake Baikal into a national economic and political system built on the principles of market economics and federalism; second, whether Russia can carve out a niche for itself in the highly competitive economic environment of East Asia, and, third, whether Russia can build permanent bonds of friendships with the large powers of this region, China and Japan.

DEFENSE POLICIES AND ISSUES

Defense Objectives. In November 1993 President Yeltsin signed the Main Guidelines of the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation. This transitional document was based on three main principles: (1) Russia does not consider any state to be its adversary; (2) Russia will use force only in self-defense; and (3) nuclear forces remain a deterrent. The doctrine subsequently has been criticized for its generalities and its failure to provide answers to emerging domestic security problems, such as Chechnya. Subsequent defense policy guidelines were issued by President Yeltsin in August 1995. These set forth the following priorities: (1) preserving nuclear deterrence as the main guarantee of military security and giving priority to developing the nuclear triad; (2) further downsizing the

military establishment; (3) streamlining the force structure; (4) centralizing procurement; and (5) improving command and control. The decree called for a five year transition period to build a new military, referred to as "The Army 2005." Because of lack of funding, however, a thorough military reform has not been attempted.

Defense Spending. For many domestic critics, the key defense problem is Russia's grossly insufficient defense budget. The 1996 Federal budget allocated Rbl 80 trillion, compared to the Ministry of Defense's Rbl 134 trillion request. This amounted to about 3.5 percent of gross domestic product, a figure the defense establishment would like to see increased to the 5.2 to 6 percent range. The Chechnyan war greatly exacerbated the already tight budget situation, absorbing ten percent of the 1995 defense budget. The inadequate budget has a devastating impact on weaponry, training, manpower, and, perhaps most importantly, morale, as a result of continuing pay arrears and severe housing shortages.

Personnel. The deployment, organization, and composition of the Russian military forces have gone through wrenching changes in recent years. From 1988-94, Russia withdrew over 750,000 troops and 45,000 pieces of equipment from Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States, and Mongolia. Restructuring of the Armed Forces was also undertaken, although not in a very consistent way. Under the Soviet Union, nearly all military and para-military formations were officially part of the Armed Forces. Since then, Interior Troops, Border Troops, Federal Agency of Government Communication and Information, Chief Directorate of Protection, and troops of the Ministry for Emergency Situations have gained independence. As a result, coordination between the Armed Forces and these other units has weakened.

Russia's defense plans call for the creation of a relatively small but highly capable military force. Downsizing continues to be the main trend in personnel policy. The authorized strength of the regular Armed Forces has dropped from 2.822 million in 1992 to 1.7 million in 1996. Despite these reductions, the Armed Forces remain top heavy, with the number of ordinary soldiers grossly inadequate and the conscription pool dwindling due to a fall in reproduction rates since the mid-1960s. The high command argues that downsizing itself is very costly, and should be stopped. At the same time, the size of the other armed services, aside from the regular Armed Forces, has been increasing rather than decreasing.

Attempts by the Defense Ministry to recruit more contract soldiers in the Armed Forces and raise the level of professionalism has thus far produced disap-

pointing results. During the war in Chechnya, the Ministry had to gather forces from Vladivostok to Kaliningrad, as well as from the Navy and the Strategic Rocket Force. Those hastily constructed units suffered heavy casualties. To remedy the manpower shortage, in April 1995 the law on conscription was amended to increase the number of conscripts by one-fourth, but a growing draft-dodging problem has undermined this effort. In May 1996 President Yeltsin tried another tack in signing a decree abolishing conscription by the year 2000. Although the notion of a professional force has long been popular, there is great skepticism about the ability to achieve this goal within the prescribed time-frame.

Equipment and Procurement. The modernization of equipment has become more urgent as weapons become obsolete and few are being replaced. Russia's political leadership continues to give priority to the Strategic Nuclear Forces, Russia's main deterrent. Qualitative improvement of the nuclear arsenal is being seriously pursued. The SS-25, the first post-Soviet ICBM, was flight tested in December 1994. However, this is the exception to the rule. More generally, since 1991 the Russian military production has declined drastically, as state orders for production of weapons and military equipment were reduced by over 90 percent. Some fear that Russia will be unable to produce advanced weapons and military equipment within two years, and that its weapons will become increasingly antiquated. Thus pressures to reverse the present trend seem likely to build. Given the severe budget constraints on internal consumption, exports are seen as a crucial means of maintaining defense production.

Arms Transfer Policies. In 1995, Russia sold \$3.5 billion worth of arms, the first increase in several years. The importance of exports for the Russian defense industry has grown immensely and there is a dedicated effort to further increase sales. Whereas in the Soviet period rarely more than 5 percent of total defense industry output was exported, now more than half is. China is the main purchaser of Russian hardware. As well as upgrading their land, air and sea forces through equipment purchases, the Chinese show great interest in Russian aircraft, space and missile technologies. In 1996 Russia sold China the technology for producing Su-27 fighters for the first time. Aside from China, other arms markets include India, Iran, and South Korea, and Russia is trying to gain access to growing markets in Southeast Asia and the Persian Gulf. Arms trading, especially with some countries such as Iran and potentially China, has emerged as one of the most serious concerns in Russian-American relations.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SECURITY

The Near Abroad. Russia's principal contributions to regional and global security lie in its effort to stabilize the Near Abroad. The basis of these contributions lie in the 1992 Tashkent Treaty on Collective Security with Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Although the agreement has largely remained a piece of paper because the treaty's Collective Security Council is not functioning, it has served to legitimize a stabilizing and largely unilateral Russian military presence in several troubled CIS states.

The most critical situation is in Tajikistan. Here Russia has continued its efforts to preserve the current government in Tajikistan while promoting negotiations with the opposition, but it has had little success on the diplomatic front. Russian peacekeeping missions are also present in Moldova and Abkhazia. Reflecting the increasingly active Russian diplomatic role in the region, Russia mediated an agreement between Georgia and the break-away province of South Ossetia, confirmed its role as the principal mediator in the Karabakh dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and convened a meeting of all leaders of Transcaucasia and the North Caucasus in June 1996.

From early 1996 the CIS acquired a visibly enhanced importance to Moscow, but its approach to the other post-Soviet states is becoming more selective and differentiated. Categorically rejecting a move by the State Duma to annul the 1991 accord dismantling the USSR, in March 1996 the Russian government concluded a treaty on closer integration with three other CIS states: Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. In the previous year, it had already formed a customs union with these three states and had reached a bilateral agreement to fuse Russian and Kazakh forces, sealing the strategic alliance between the two states. Its closest partner is Belarus, which has had great problems with nation- and state-building. An April 1996 treaty establishing a Russo-Belarusian community falls short of Belarus' outright incorporation into Russia, but this appears to be the one clear case of a natural and voluntary integration process within the CIS.

European Peacekeeping. Russia's participation in the Bosnia peace accords represents its continued desire to be an active contributor to peace in Europe. An airborne brigade was sent to Bosnia in early 1996 as part of a NATO-led force. This brigade is placed under the authority of an American general through his Russian deputy. At the military-to-military level, from Bosnia to SHAPE, Russo-American cooperation has been extremely successful. It remains, however, hostage to the more general political environment between the two countries, which is being poisoned by the determination of Western politicians to press forward with enlargement. Russia itself formally joined NATO's low

level Partnership for Peace Program in May 1995, but this is likely to be put on ice with NATO's admission of new members in central and eastern Europe.

The Asia-Pacific Region. In the early 1990s there was an abrupt reversal in Russia's security policy in the Far East, culminating in the complete withdrawal in 1993 of all Russian forces stationed in Mongolia. The capabilities of the Federation's Far Eastern and Transbaikalian military districts today are far from what they were during the 1980s. Dozens of army camps and garrisons have been abandoned, and the degradation of Russian military power in the region continues. Concomitantly, Russia emphasizes diplomacy, not raw power, in its relations with countries of the region.

This approach has had some rewards. Russia is a security dialogue partner with other Asia-Pacific countries in the ASEAN Regional Forum and the "Track Two" Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific. On the other hand, Russia has felt ignored in the negotiations to deal with the dangerous situation in the Korean peninsula, notably underscored by the April 1996 U.S.-South Korea proposal for four party peace talks including the two Koreas, China, and the United States. Following a 25 year Soviet tradition, Russia has tried to put forward its regional credentials by proposing the establishment of a collective security system in Asia, more or less modeled on Europe. As a first step, Moscow suggests that China, Japan, the United States, and the two Koreas join Russia in a North-East Asian Security Framework. But because any collective security arrangement is unlikely for a long time, the emphasis remains on bilateral relations.

Russia's rapprochement with China has also had significant dividends for regional stability. Since Gorbachev's visit to the PRC in 1989, a continuing Russian-Chinese dialogue has been conducted at various levels. Results include practical arrangements likely to further reduce tensions between the two countries. An agreement on prevention of military incidents was signed in 1994, and confidence building measures along the Sino-Russian border are being discussed with a view of creating a "stability zone" by the year 2000. Thus far, Gorbachev's promised reductions in forces deployed in the designated border zone have been opposed by the military because while China can easily afford to deploy its forces outside the 100-km limit, almost the whole of the Russian infrastructure is located within its 100-km zone. During an April 1996 visit by President Yeltsin to China, Russia, Kazakstan, Kyrgystan and Tajikistan concluded an agreement finally settling the border issue and providing for confidence-building measures along the Chinese border.

Russia continues to support a measure of U.S. military presence in North-East Asia and the Western Pacific because such a presence can be stabilizing

both in terms of the triangular strategic relationship between Russia, the United States and China, and in terms of preventing the renationalization of Japan's security policy. On the other hand, Russian-American differences and occasional conflicts elsewhere may reduce chances for their geopolitical collaboration in East Asia.