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## Translating Russia's Military Reform

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Following Russia's incursion into Georgia and its energy standoff with Ukraine, there has been a rising perception that Russia's increased vigor is a stark reminder of the Cold War days of East-West competition. The BBC has exemplified this message running a special report titled "Resurgent Russia".<sup>1</sup> Even during the US presidential campaign, the situation took center stage as the candidates debated on how to deal with the awakening of the old beast. This "Resurgent Russia" – a term that has recently caught fire and has a line of rhetoric that has led the media to stroke old thoughts of the Soviet Union once again repainting the world red with its military might and autocratic agenda – incorrectly defines Russia's actions as being irrational when, in fact, these actions are quite rational from the Russian perspective.

Further calls for speculation regarding Russia's intent are inflated given the fact that ties between the Washington and Moscow have grown colder over recent years, while many analysts have been focused on Russia's position in the world and the role that the "new" Russia will play militarily. This discussion has become increasingly vocalized since President Medvedev announced a renewed effort to overhaul and modernize the Russian military. In fact, if Medvedev's vision is realized, the future Russian military will be completely different from the military that is operating today. The question is why is the Russian Government proposing such an overhaul? What are its intentions? In answering these questions, we find that Russia is acting in support of her own national interests, whether it is protecting energy supplies to its south or thwarting internal threats from terrorists, and in doing so, acting in a rational manner.

To understand Russia's military reforms one must understand Russia's national interests. Today, Russia is in the midst of implementing military reforms that would drastically reshape and reform its doctrine, training, technology, materiel and organization. As it has started this process, many analysts and policymakers have become concerned with the direction that the Russian Government is seeking to bring its military. Questions that often arise over the purpose of the reforms, include whether Russia is seeking to renew another nuclear arms race with the West, how it will position itself militarily within its near-abroad, and exactly how far is it willing to go to defend its interest in the self-proclaimed sphere-of-influence.

Governments initiate military reforms as part of the pursuit of obtaining or defending their national interests, which can be found across the world today. For example, the United States

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<sup>1</sup> British Broadcasting Company. "Resurgent Russia". 2007. BBC News. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_depth/europe/2007/resurgent\\_russia/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/europe/2007/resurgent_russia/default.stm).

is currently having an internal debate as to how to best prepare for large-scale state-state operations and small-scale counterinsurgency operations; or the term de jour, “full-spectrum operation” in a climate of “persistent conflict”. The Czech Republic and Slovakia made great progress throughout the late 1990’s and early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to match NATO accession requirements with each country amending their force structures and military capabilities to comply with the Alliance’s standards. Iraq and Afghanistan must work to establish a competent national force to provide for greater internal security and stability. Finally, Turkey’s military has had to politically reform as a consequence of the potential accession of Turkey into the European Union and the continued westernization of the Turkish political system. In every country throughout the world, governments must translate their national interests into military reform and have done so throughout history. Here, we focus solely on Russia’s military reforms, which have been of great focus recently throughout the policymaking and analytical communities.

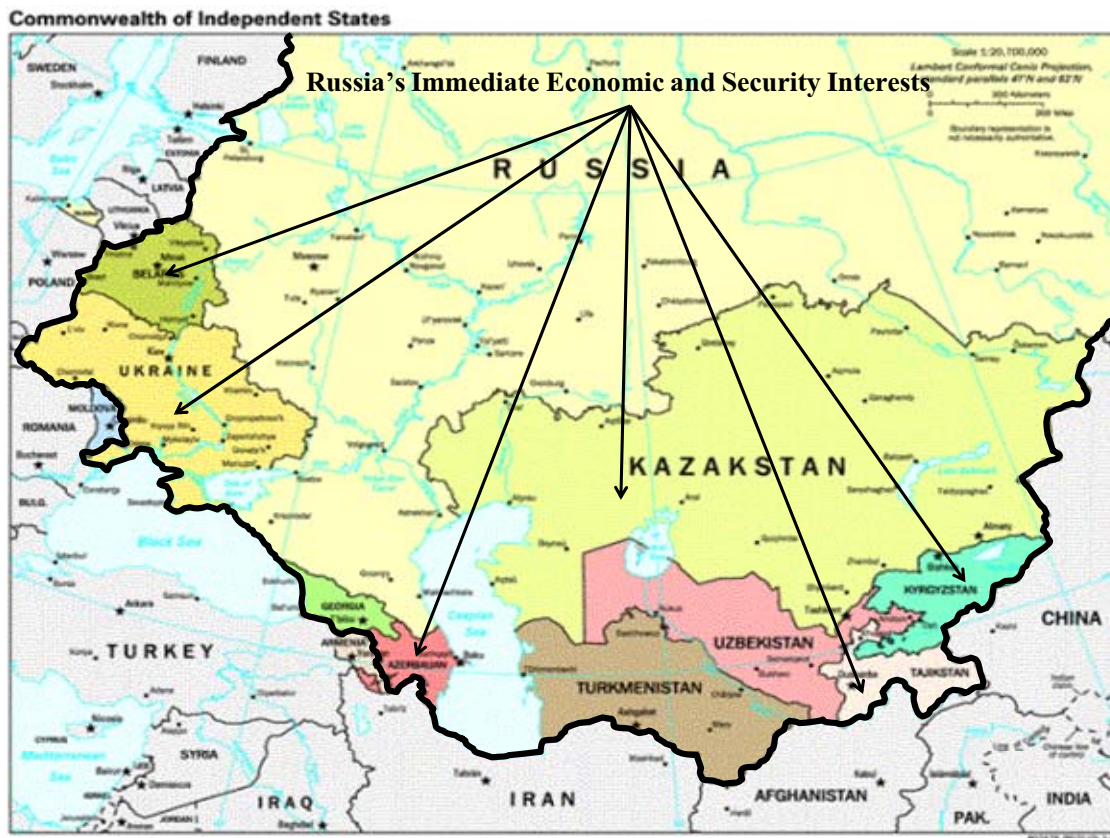
To translate Russia’s military reforms, there foremost must be a review of Russia’s national interests and the security environment in which Russia must defend these national interests. Historically, governments seek to instill military reforms in a rational manner and with the intention of defending their respective national interests. This is why it is necessary to first identify Russia’s interests. Following this review will be an analysis of Russia’s efforts to reform its military over the period of the last thirty years in an effort to understand where Russia’s military stands today. Finally, there will be a brief review of where Russia’s military is today and how the 2008 reforms seek to better prepare the military to defend Russia’s national interests today and in the future.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian Government has repeatedly worked to reform the structure of its military forces. Beginning with Mikhail Gorbachev’s efforts to reform the Soviet military to provide for “reasonable sufficient defense” to ex-President Putin’s multiple efforts to introduce modern military reforms, government leaders have been largely unable to overcome military norms and imbedded Soviet style structures.<sup>2</sup> As this study focuses on the most recent reforms that the Russian Government would like to implement, it is not yet clear that it will be able to do so. However, while the success of this process is uncertain, it remains critical to the United States and broader international community as it also provides insight into what the Russia Government *would like* achieve. Whether the government is successful or not with the reforms, understanding Russian interests are critical for U.S. and international policymakers. By focusing on the military reforms in Russia, this paper will also seek to explain exactly what Russia defines as its national interests and how it seeks to defend them.

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<sup>2</sup> Larrabee, Stephen. “Gorbachev and the Soviet Military”. Foreign Affairs. Summer, 1988. <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19880601faessay7906/f-stephen-larrabee/gorbachev-and-the-soviet-military.html>.

## Russia's National Interests and its Security Environment



Russia's traditional national interests remain largely unchanged since the end of the Soviet Union, but with one exception: the new importance of economic prosperity as it relates to oil, natural gas, and vital minerals (coal, iron ore). Traditionally, as with most governments, Russian interests are to bolster demographic health and security, to maintain security on its borders and within the near-abroad, and to ensure that it remains the primary actor within the region, specifically in Central Asia. Speaking to the last point, Russia remains concerned with the encroachment of the West in the Central Asian region, but it should be noted, that this national interest is only a byproduct of Russia's direct interest in the region, not to seek tension with the West per say.

What has changed and become more graphic today than in the last sixteen years since the fall of the Soviet Union are Russia's direct economic interests internally and within the near abroad. The graphic above is intended to illustrate Russia's economic "borders", i.e. the extent to which it sees the near abroad as an economic extension of its national borders. Today, more than ever, the Russian Government has made economic development and control within these new borders (illustrated by the bold black line) a direct national interest. Therefore, when considering the future development of Russia's military, it is critical to consider this region and its economic relevance to be in Russia's direct national interests.

## *The Strategic Environment*

What are its national concerns in relation to its national interests? To adequately identify and define this environment, it is useful to understand it within the context of a three-tier system.

- Tier I is understood as factors that if threatened, the Russian Government would consider immediate military retaliation or defense.
- Tier II incorporates national interests that, if threatened, the Russian Government's response would mainly be political or economic; however, if gravely threatened would potentially lead to a military response from the government.
- Tier III encompasses those interests by which the Russian Government would unlikely use military force, relying primarily on political and economic responses.

The top priorities, or Tier I factors, for the Russian government today are the maintenance of security internally, to include the areas of Ingushetia and Chechnya, the ongoing demographic crisis which can potentially have spillover effects with regards to the military's ability to conscript healthy soldiers, and the maintenance of the general security environment on its borders and in the near abroad. On each of these Tier I issues, Russia definitely considers the use of military force in order to confront any threats that emanate from these factors. This fact has been illustrated by Russia's military operations in Chechnya in 1994 and 1999 and the special operation at Beslan in 2004 that threatened Russia internally. Furthermore, since insecurity in the near abroad can spillover into Russia, specifically in the south, there is clear concern within Russia that Central Asia does not become the next safe haven for terrorist organizations.

In addition, demographic and health concerns and ethnic and regional factors, are very much related when considering Russia's national interests. The biggest long-term issue facing the country is decline in both average age and size of the general population.<sup>3</sup> Though in the long-term, this may very well change, in the short-term it should be expected that the decline in the number of eligible males for military service will greatly affect the military reforms in Russia. Moreover, health issues, both in and out of the military, have an impact on military readiness and overall capabilities. For Russia to continue to prosper as a country, it will have to ensure the health of its overall population. National leaders have been slow to recognize this fault, perhaps due to national pride, but the recent public recognition of a health crisis by the State Duma's Health Committee indicates that, at the very least, the government is recognizing the problem.<sup>4</sup>

Moving beyond these Tier I interests and into Tier II interests, there is now a new factor that has been introduced into Russia's national security agenda mainly since 2001. Of increasing importance today is the economic situation in Russia. Russia's economy has been badly hit by

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<sup>3</sup> Cohen, Ariel. "Domestic Factors Driving Russia's Foreign Policy". The Heritage Foundation: November 19, 2007. <http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/bg2084.cfm>

<sup>4</sup> Goble, Paul. "New Born Death Rate Now Five Times Higher in Russia than in Europe". Georgian Daily. February 17, 2009. [http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=9985&Itemid=83](http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=9985&Itemid=83)

the global economic crisis in all sectors, specifically those in Russia's vital industrial sectors in the southern and eastern parts of the country (industries including automotive, minerals, and natural energy resources). As a result, the Russian Government has had to take a strict tone to protect its own industries, namely its energy sector which was riddled by decreasing prices since the onset of the economic crisis. To date, there is no solution in sight for the economic crisis, and while the Russian government has taken steps (right or wrong) to hinder the crises' impact, it is not yet clear that the international community as a whole has found a way out. Therefore, in the short-term, Russia's economic interest will be to maintain the status quo, while also ensuring that its critical economic sectors have both short-term and long-term successes. Moreover, it will be the state of Russia's economy that will ultimately allow for it to make the grandiose military reforms that would be as transformative in nature, one may say, as the transformation of U.S. forces after the implementation of the 1986 Goldwater Nichols Act. Finally, with regards to Russia's near abroad, Russia will increasingly seek to defend its economic interests and infrastructure in Central Asia, as they represent the key to Russia's financial security in the near term. As the diagram at the beginning of this section seeks to illustrate, Russia will increasingly become focused on maintaining security in Central Asia in an effort to secure its financial assets there. Therefore, its military must be able to quickly deploy to these regions and must have the specialized training to respond to threats that may arise.

Tier III factors mainly rest in Russia's position within the international security environment and are concerned with external factors that influence Russia's perception of its own security environment. These factors are also largely traditional, whether it is the continued expansion of NATO into Russia's near abroad, the deployment of the U.S. missile defense system, China's development of a military-cyber capability, or the spread of international terrorism, Russia will utilize diplomatic means to ensure that it positions itself as a critical player on each of these issues. This is primarily due to the understanding that a large scale confrontation between NATO-Russia, the United States and Russia, or China and Russia would be catastrophic for the international security environment. Therefore, these issues, while important for Russia, are considered Tier III.

Once national interests have been established, one can then better understand the nature and purpose of the need for military reforms. While a government and its populace may agree on their national interests, the state must be able to protect these interests. As Ismail Kemal, a leader of the Albanian independence movement in 1922, once reflected on the importance of Turkey's military in protecting the state, "by propaganda and publications alone a revolution cannot be made. It is therefore necessary to work to ensure the participation of the armed forces in the revolutionary movement."<sup>5</sup> While Russia is not undergoing an internal revolution, the same holds true when a country must protect its national interests – the military must be involved and prepared to deal with any crises that confront the country's vital interests whether they are internal or external. To this end, we can now translate Russia's national interests into its internal military reforms.

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<sup>5</sup> Kemal, Ismail referenced in Bernard Lewis. The Emergence of Modern Turkey Third Edition. Oxford University Press: 2001. Pg. 202.

## A Transitional Military Faces Reforms

The failures of defense reform and the destruction of the Russian military became quite clear as war in Afghanistan, beginning in 1979, came to a close in 1989. The massive show of force that the Soviets thought would intimidate the insurgents in Afghanistan did not initially work, drawing the Soviets into a ten year war. Moreover, the massive Soviet military was ill-prepared and not trained for a small-scale counterinsurgency mission, relying on their ineffective heavy artillery to combat the evasive targets. The failure in Afghanistan should have made reforms a top priority for the Soviet and then the Russian government; however, it is clear that in the first Chechen War from 1994-1996, the Russian's again were unable to effectively combat a small-scale insurgency. The failed storming of Grozny beginning in December 2004 until January 2005 clearly demonstrated that the Russians were again unprepared and untrained for the mission.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the lack of sufficient salaries for Russian soldiers led many to even sell their weapons while deployed to Chechnya.<sup>7</sup> While the transitional Russian Government did issue its first review of the military doctrine in 1993 to bring its forces in line with the internal and external environments facing the country, it was understandably unsuccessful in transforming the long history of Soviet military mentality. Moreover, the very demise of the Soviet Union left Russian forces scattered throughout the former USSR with a lack of general strategy and organization.

Following the campaigns in Afghanistan and Chechnya, the Russian's did begin to institute reforms, some more successfully than others, namely the efforts of force reduction mentioned above. During the 1990s and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the government issued, the "Concept of National Security", "The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation, the "Basis of the State Policy of the Russian Federation on the Military Building for Period up to 2005", the "Concept of Building Armed Forces up to 2005, "the "Plan on Building and Development of Armed Forces from 2001-2005" and the "State Program from 2001-2005", all in an effort to transform Russia's Soviet-style force structure. The primary purposes of these reforms were to retain sufficient forces and facilities to deter aggression by outside forces or internal unrest, to maintain troops in the Southwest of the country and Central Asia, and to limit expenditures. While the government was able to begin decreasing the size of the forces, the overall structure of the Russian military remained top-heavy, inadequately trained, and highly unspecialized. Then Deputy Chairman of the Defense Committee said in 1998 on the status of the military, "Not since 1941 has the Russian military stood as perilously close to ruin as it does now."<sup>8</sup>

The failure of the Russian government and the Defense Ministry to focus on training rather than the development of heavy artillery still hindered the Russian military in 1999 when the second

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<sup>6</sup> Faubry, Ib and Marta Lisa-Magnusson. "The Battle(s) of Grozny". *Baltic Defense Review*. No. 2, 1999, pp. 75-87. <http://www.caucasus.dk/publication1.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Relief Web. "Investigation: North Ossetia's Arms Bazaar". Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) . August 10, 2005. <http://reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/0/c598fa861959c8644925705a0025c3e5?OpenDocument>

<sup>8</sup> Arbatov, Alexei, "Military Reform in Russia: Dilemma, Obstacles and Prospects," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1998,p. 83.

Chechen war began. Though the Russian military was clearly better funded, prepared, and trained for the mission, there was a clear shortage of weaponry and corruptive practices by the military still ensued. More importantly, the second war in Chechnya was marked by the issue of ‘overkill’ of Chechen civilians due to the Russian military’s use of heavy artillery in a mission that required small arms and strategic planning.<sup>9</sup>

The reforms of the Russian military have been largely ineffective, however, ex-President Putin made it clear that he was seeking to modernize and support the development of the country’s forces. The main problem was that support for the development of heavy artillery and the lack of focus on the man-power of the military led to a lack of training and development of military forces. In order to address this problem, the government needed increase and direct the budget specifically towards the development of the armed forces. The budget was to enable the military to prepare and train for both counterinsurgency and small scale missions, such as in Chechnya, as well as, large scale combat operations. The size of the armed forces also needed to decrease and become professionalized. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, the government needed to continue to press the Defense Ministry and military institutions to become more amenable to change. The Russian military sociology, many experts believe, has remained largely unchanged from the Soviet era.<sup>10</sup> The idea that the Russian military needs to be a massive force to counteract the West is no longer applicable in today’s world. The Military Doctrine clearly laid out what reforms were necessary to modernize and develop the military; however, remained necessary for the Russian President and the defense institutions to proactively implement these reforms.<sup>11</sup> Today, the government continues to pursue these ambitious reforms.

### **Translation: Today’s Military Reform**

The two main trends in Russia today are an increasing concentration of power in the Kremlin and that Russia is increasingly connected, economically and politically, to Europe. Simply put, it is more globally connected, though still considered a medium economic power. There are no “real” security threats to Russia, though as a “sovereign democracy” it continues to worry about the implications of the “colored revolutions” in bordering nations.<sup>12</sup> It operates, economically, with the understanding that what is good for its domestic industries is good for the country, namely in its energy industries.

Within the foreign realm, Russia is seeking a seat at the international table and wants to be viewed as an equal and opposing force to the leaders of the international community, namely the United States, Europe and China. As the Russian Government has increased its defense budget,

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<sup>9</sup> Faubry, Ib and Marta Lisa-Magnusson. “The Battle(s) of Grozny”. *Baltic Defense Review*. No. 2, 1999, pp. 75-87.

<sup>10</sup> Pantelgiannis, Fanourios. [The Russian Military Reform](http://www.iehei.org/bibliotheque/memoires/pantelogiannis.pdf). Institut European Des Hautes Etudes Internationales: May, 2003. Pg. 10. <http://www.iehei.org/bibliotheque/memoires/pantelogiannis.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Sokov, Dr. Nikolai. “Russia’s 2000 Military Doctrine”. Nuclear Threat Initiative: July 2004. <http://www.nti.org/db/nisprofs/over/doctrine.htm>

<sup>12</sup> The colored revolutions refer to the Bulldozer Revolution in Serbia (2000), Georgia’s Rose Revolution (2003), Ukraine’s Orange Revolution (2004) and Kyrgyzstan’s Tulip Revolution (2005).

it is mainly addressing internal concerns in Chechnya, Dagestan, North Ossetia and Ingushetia while preparing its armed forces for small-level conflicts, mainly in the realm of special operations and counterinsurgency. The Russian Government will also seek to improve its deterrence force, which has largely shrunk from 1,398 ICBMs in 1991 to 430 in 2008.<sup>13</sup>

Within this context, the Russian Government is currently working to professionalize its military, a process which has been slowed recently due to the strains on its economy, to increase its ties to India and China as an arms trader, and maintain an operational local war capability. It is taking these actions to ensure that it can protect the vital interests that have been identified in the previous section. Russia's concern with the control of the Central Asian oil and gas sector will drive it to have a military force capable of responding and to protecting these resources. To do so, it will require both a large-scale deterrence factor, primarily through the maintenance of its nuclear arsenal, coupled with a rapid response capability that can respond to non-conventional threats such as terrorists and other non-state actors, both domestically and abroad.

The Russian Government will also seek to garner greater political and military influence with the region, as has been illustrated by its maritime forces still deployed in Crimea and the continued presence of the Russian peacekeepers in Georgia. By recent estimates, Russia has two garrisons deployed to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, a radar station in Kazakhstan, a radar station and naval communications site in Belarus, army and air force assets in Kyrgyzstan, approximately 5,500 Army forces in Tajikistan, and a coastal defense force 13,000 strong and the Black Sea Fleet deployed in Ukraine.<sup>14</sup> Coupled with a political agenda, such as the most recent deal with the Kyrgyzstani Government that directly or indirectly led to the potential expulsion of U.S. troops from a supply-base, Russia's footprint in the region will allow it to garner greater political and economic influence in the region, again specifically with regards to protecting its economic interests in the oil and gas sector. In turn, the Russian government has placed itself in the valuable position of being a partner of the international effort in Afghanistan, by providing supply route access to NATO forces. This regional footprint also is a key indicator that the Russian Government continues to be concerned with the potential ethnic and regional conflict that may occur through greater political and economic stability and the spread of international terrorism.

To defend against regional conflict, Russia will not only strive for greater access and influence over its near-abroad, but it will need to ensure that its military is capable of transferring assets over a vast territory. To accomplish this, again will require highly specialized military manpower, but also increases in strategic airlift capabilities and precision strike capability. While the most recent conflict with Georgia highlighted areas of great deficiency within the Russian military, such as a lack of precision strike capability or even the lack of tanks equipped

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<sup>13</sup> Chipman, Dr. John. "The Military Balance 2009". The International Institute for Strategic Studies: Routledge. January 2009. Pg. 214.

<sup>14</sup> Chipman, Dr. John. "The Military Balance 2009". The International Institute for Strategic Studies: Routledge. January 2009. Pg. 226-227.



with night-vision capabilities, the Russian military did display the ability to quickly transfer assets from multiple regions in country to the area of operations.<sup>15</sup>

More specifically, the ambitious military reforms that the Russian Government has announced will seek to greatly transform its manpower assets, modernize technical capabilities, and reform each of the individual services, namely the army and air force.

### *Manpower Assessment and Reforms*

The Russian military has been plagued with cases of corruption, mismanagement and a lack of resources. Since 1991, the Russian military has been able to reduce the size of its forces drastically, decreasing the number of soldiers from around three million to approximately 1.1 million.<sup>16</sup> This is a major accomplishment, however, it should be noted that since January 1999, no major troop reductions have taken place even when there were repeated calls by ex-Defense Minister Ivanov to do so.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the Russian military has been characterized as internally corrupt, impoverished, demoralized, largely ineffective, poorly trained, and having outdated equipment. The Human Rights Watch has also highlighted the lack of substantive food and supplies for conscripts, leading to an increase in health problems in the forces.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* reported that the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office admits that "1,200 noncombat deaths for the armed forces in 2002, reporting that 2,000 noncombat deaths were suffered by all persons in uniform from the "power ministries," with 10,500 soldiers and officers killed in the last three years and an additional 75,500 wounded on noncombat duty".<sup>19</sup> One report from a source in the UK provided such details as the basic lack of education in conscripted forces, low cohesion and morale and healthcare in the forces and within the officer ranks high levels of corruption and crime.<sup>20</sup>

To ensure that its military forces are better prepared for the current and future internal and external security environment, the Russian Government will seek to decrease conscription and increase professionalization of its forces. Moreover, it will build a Non-Commissioned Officer Corps to ensure for proper training, an area in which the current armed forces have been plagued.

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<sup>15</sup> "The Georgia Campaign as a Case Study". StratFor: February 12, 2009. [http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090211\\_part\\_4\\_georgian\\_campaign\\_case\\_study](http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090211_part_4_georgian_campaign_case_study)

<sup>16</sup>Barany, Zoltan. "Resurgent Russia? A Still-Faltering Military". Hoover Institution: February/March 2008. <http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/14830596.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Aron, Leon. "The Battle Over the Draft". American Enterprise Institute: July 28, 2005. [http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.22914/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.22914/pub_detail.asp)

<sup>18</sup> "To Serve Without Health". The Human Rights Watch: Vol 15, Num 9, November 2003. <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/russia1103.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Fitzpatrick, Catherine. "Hazing and the Draft Decried, Chechen Deportation Remembered on Red Army Day in Russia. Center for Defense Information. Vol. 4, No. 2, 26 February 2003 <http://www.cdi.org/russia/246-14.cfm>.

<sup>20</sup>Dick, CJ. "Russian Military Reform: Status and Prospects". The UK Ministry of Defense: c100. [www.da.mod.uk/colleges/arag/document-listings/russian/C100.pdf](http://www.da.mod.uk/colleges/arag/document-listings/russian/C100.pdf).

The government will also seek to streamline the manpower system as a whole, decreasing the number of empty billets, eliminated warrant and junior officer slots, decreasing conscription, and increase the level of contracting. Finally, as it works to decrease the number of central staff, it will also seek to meet the housing requirements of the current and retired military officers. While these cuts are a direct indication that the government has recognized the need to streamline its military forces to better prepare for the nature of current and future military conflict, it is also a reflection of the continued demographic crisis in the country and the decrease in the number of eligible recruits.

The facts are not all negative however. Defense spending has increased from \$3.9 billion in 1998 to \$16.9 billion in 2005, and is expected to continue to increase through 2011.<sup>21 22</sup> The problem is that the government is investing in a New Armament Program from 2007 to 2015.<sup>23</sup> This new program includes the development of the new SS-27 ICBM, Iskander tactical theater missile system, and SS-NX-30 (Bulava) ballistic missile (Navy). This is all heavy artillery, mainly focusing on missile systems, and does not address the needs of the military. The New Armament Program allocated 60% of the Defense budget towards heavy artillery; however, it is clear from the examples above that the military does not require new ICBM's or tanks, but training and focus on troop development.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Modernization, Maintenance and Doctrine*

The most ambitious aspect of Russia's military reforms is the overall national defense doctrine. The current reform process is reviewing the full operational spectrum, which works under the premise that war escalates as a consequence of low intensity conflict, namely in the near-abroad, where Russia continues to have vital national interests. Historically, the Russian government has on numerous occasions tried to reform its military doctrine, beginning with 1993 and again in 2000, of which both versions were fairly similar but with some diverging viewpoints. In 1993, the doctrine was more introvert, focusing Russia's military on the near-abroad, while the 2000 version focuses more on the continued expansion of the West into Russia's near-abroad, primarily through NATO, and also on the increasing power of the U.S. military. As the military reviews its doctrine, it will likely focus on both internal and external interests, though will likely now have much more of a focus on the near-abroad, as it did in 1993. However, as with many of the efforts to reform Russia's military doctrine, what is written must also be translated into policy, an area in which the government has faced much difficult. In 2000, for example, even ex-President Vladimir Putin acknowledged at a National Security Council meeting that many of

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<sup>21</sup> Wolf, Charles and Thomas Lang. "Russia's Economy: Signs of Progress and Retreat on the Transitional Road". The RAND Institute. 2006. [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND\\_MG515.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2006/RAND_MG515.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> "Russian Defense Spending Increased 25 Percent". Pravda RU: September 19, 2008. [http://english.pravda.ru/news/russia/19-09-2008/106406-russia\\_defense\\_budget-0](http://english.pravda.ru/news/russia/19-09-2008/106406-russia_defense_budget-0)

<sup>23</sup> Lantratov, Konstantin. "Russia Chooses its Future Armament". Russia & CIS Observer: No. 3 (14) July 2006. <http://www.ato.ru/rus/cis/archive/14-2006/def/def4/>.

<sup>24</sup> Barany, Zoltan. "Resurgent Russia? A Still-Faltering Military". Hoover Institution: February/March 2008. <http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/14830596.html>

the doctrinal military reforms of the past were not being implemented and budgets were being wasted on “peripheral issues”.<sup>25</sup>

In terms of modernization, the Russian military must be able to respond to an aerospace attack, repel regional and local actions (internally and externally), and mobilize in the event of large scale operations. The current reform effort will reduce the officer corps, eliminate a number of air assets by 2012, create four regional commands, increase the number of airbases and move multiple operational ground force commands (mainly as lessons from the war with Georgia), will streamline command and control, and ensure that the military is more adaptable having more advance systems, such as its microwave capability, deployable to the field.<sup>2627</sup> In sum, the new doctrine seeks to drastically streamline Russia’s antiquated military system, bringing it more in line with Western standards of a smaller, professionalized and mobile force.

### *Assessment of Services*

To make any of the above stated reforms, the Russian military will need to improve the quality of life of its personnel. This has been and continues to be the largest complaint among Russia’s military. As stated earlier, forces continue to be impoverished, demoralized and largely ineffective with outdated equipment. The ground forces still have a lack of qualified engineering personnel. Moreover, in the past, adequate training for military personnel has lagged, though these reforms would ensure that the number of training exercises for the ground forces would increase. Even with recent billet cuts announced, the forces remain top-heavy.

Russia’s air force has been riddled with stagnation, with aviation development greatly decreasing after the fall of the Soviet Union. Training time for pilots has increased, from twelve hours a year in 2000 to forty hours per year in 2007, though is still at very low levels.<sup>28</sup> The war with Georgia did display that the Russian air force is not overpowering, quickly losing ten planes at the hands of Georgian air defenses.<sup>29</sup> Moreover the air force continues to utilize the Soviet SU-27 plane, while selling its best technologies to foreign militaries, namely China and India. While this has hindered the development of the Russian air force, it has allowed the Russian Government to have international governments essentially build Russia’s industrial complex.

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<sup>25</sup>Tyler, Patrick. “Under Pressure, Putin Postpones Military Cuts”. The New York Times: September 28, 2000. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A0CE3D7113AF93BA1575AC0A9669C8B63>.

<sup>26</sup>Felgenhauer, Pavel. “Russia’s Radical Military Reform in Progress”. The Jamestown Foundation: November 20, 2008. [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=34147](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34147).

<sup>27</sup>Rundquist, Lt Col Erik. “Russian Military Reform: Change We Can Believe In?”. Institute for Study of Conflict, Ideology, and Policy: November 06, 2006. <http://www.bu.edu/phpbin/news-cms/news/?dept=732&id=51318>.

<sup>28</sup>Tsimbal, Vitaly and Vasily Zatsepin. “Army Reform”. Kommersant: March 3, 2009. <http://www.kommersant.com/page.asp?id=819269>

<sup>29</sup>Fulghum, David and Douglas Barrie. “Georgia Strikes Back With Air Defenses”. Aviation Week: August 11, 2008. <http://www.aviationweek.com/aw/generic/story.jsp?id=news/AIR08118.xml&headline=Georgia%20Strikes%20Back%20With%20Air%20Defenses&channel=defense>

This outsourcing will allow Russia to build its modern forces without the need to build the infrastructure first. The government continues to maintain a strong air defense structure though the only perceived threat in this arena would be an assault by a missile system (i.e. U.S. missile deployments to Poland and Ukraine).

### **Understanding the Translation**

The Russian Government recognizes that its forces continue to be plagued with corruption and hazing and that the health and readiness of the forces is hindered by a lack of specialized training, modern equipment, and stagnation in the leadership. The new reforms seek to change this. The process will not be quick, nor without problems. There will be pushback from the senior military leadership and perhaps within the ranks, however, if Russia doesn't move the military away from being an institution shaped for large-scale state-state operations, it will not be able to optimally conduct successful small-scale specialized operations, such as counterinsurgency or stabilization missions.

These reforms are also necessary for the military to match the Government's described national interests. Russia's military will need to modernize in both its structure, training and equipment, if it is to protect or influence its near-abroad, be able to conduct cooperative operations with other modern forces, such as many of the militaries in NATO, or if it is to combat Russia's potential internal ethnic or regional conflicts. The lessons of both Chechen Wars and Russia's war with Georgia have displayed that the military is capable of overpowering its less well-equipped enemies; however, the Government now recognizes that the military will need to be able to conduct these operations, quickly, effectively and perhaps more humanely

The military reforms that have been announced and are being pursued by the Russian Government are a direct reflection of what the government has made Russia's national interests. The reforms call for the military to modernize, specialize, and professionalize. The military will need to be able to respond quickly to small-scale or specific threats, while maintaining the basic requirements for deterrence through Russia's nuclear arsenal. The Russian Government has made it clear that Russia's near-abroad will remain in Russian interests, economically and politically. However, to adequately secure the region, Russia's forces must transform and become more adaptable to combat non-traditional, non-state threats both within Russia and in the near-abroad. Moreover, as the demographic decline continues, the government will continue to emphasize the need to protect the withering Russian population out of fear of the very real possibility of demographic shifts. And finally, as Russia's energy and mineral industries will continue to thrive as Russia's chief exporters, the government must have a military that can protect Russian access to these supplies throughout the region and, more importantly, to protect the infrastructure that transports these exports. If there is but one last task for the Russian Government to accomplish, it is to convince the senior military leadership and the Russian people that this reform is necessary to adequately protect Russia's interests. If President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin can do this, then Russia's military will undergo the largest reforms that it has seen since World War II, all in an effort to protect Russia's national interests.

### **Implications for the United States**

So what do these reforms mean for the United States? First and foremost, one must understand the U.S. military, by any estimate, is a more modern, capable, and adaptable institution than the Russian military. Today, there is no reason to believe that there would be a direct military confrontation between the United States and Russia, therefore, Russia's reforms should not be considered in this context. In terms of the other critical power to Russia's east, China, there too remains a low level possibility of a direct military confrontation. If there is a confrontation, it will likely be an economic one. Therefore, in terms of a large scale military confrontation between any of today's global powers, also to include Europe, the chances of this remain minimal.

Instead, outside observers must take into account Russia's own national interests when considering the most recent military reforms. Today, Russia seeks to exert influence where it can, in its near abroad and over industries where it holds a regional monopoly, namely in the oil and gas sectors. While it may be able to politically promote its presence on these issues, it must also be able to protect and defend them. The threats on these industries today mainly reside in Russia's southern unstable regions, and in the near-abroad. The military reforms today reflect Russia's interest there. While it will also seek to keep a deterrence factor in developing and maintaining its nuclear and strategic forces, the priority today is in smaller, specialized forces armed with more capable equipment.

A more modern and capable Russian military should not necessarily be viewed as an opponent to the international community, specifically to the United States and Europe. In fact, having a more capable partner in international stability and humanitarian operations may prove to be a positive development. It is to this end that U.S. defense planners must consider Russia as a valuable partner for securing the Central Asian region. With U.S. operations currently concentrated in Afghanistan and Pakistan, there is the reality that the drug trade and terrorist flow from these two countries spreads into the broader region. By acknowledging this, the U.S. Government should work with Russia as a partner in securing the greater region. Moreover, delivering on high-level diplomatic and military agreements can also bolster economic growth potential with Russia on a bilateral basis, as well as in the Central Asia region where valuable assets remain underdeveloped. Moving beyond the Cold War rhetoric of massive arms buildups and East-West tensions is a small step yet to be fully taken, but developing Russia's military capabilities is a second major step in supporting a future partnership between Washington and Moscow. This relationship has been long and rich one, but divisions between the two countries have been increasingly divided. In order to successfully counter the threats emerging from the Central Asian region, both Russia and America must consider increasing high-level relationships between the two governments. Perhaps then, we will be able to "reset" this strained relationship.

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