

# IGA-677 / RusNatSecPol / Lecture 19

## Russian Military Strategy After the Soviet Collapse

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## Today's objectives

1. *Identify*: priorities for Russia's post-Soviet military reforms
2. *Discuss*: why so many reform efforts have failed
3. *Evaluate*: Russia's strategy in potential war vs. NATO

# Russian Military Reforms

Let's consider military capabilities as a **spectrum** from  
**low intensity** (counter-insurgency) to **high intensity** (war with NATO)



Figure 1: The full spectrum

This spectrum is covered by a **distribution**, representing the **likelihood that you'll need capabilities** at each point in the spectrum.

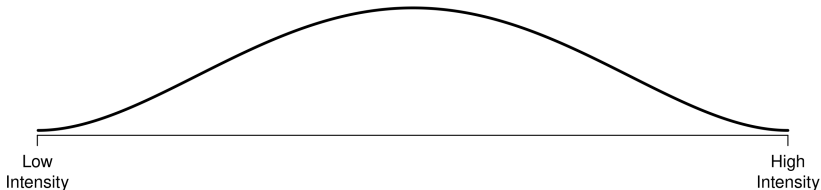


Figure 2: Need capabilities in middle of the spectrum

This spectrum is covered by a **distribution**, representing the **likelihood that you'll need capabilities** at each point in the spectrum.

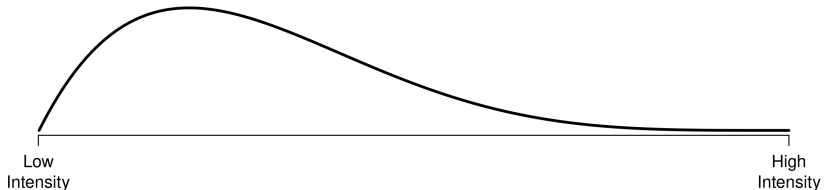


Figure 3: Need capabilities at low end of the spectrum

This spectrum is covered by a **distribution**, representing the **likelihood that you'll need capabilities** at each point in the spectrum.

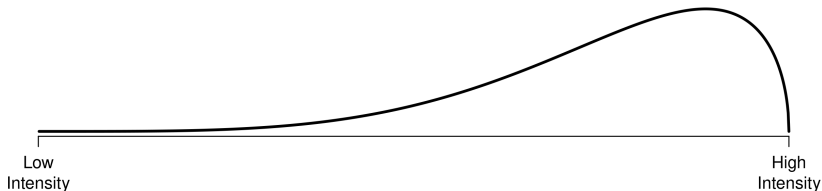
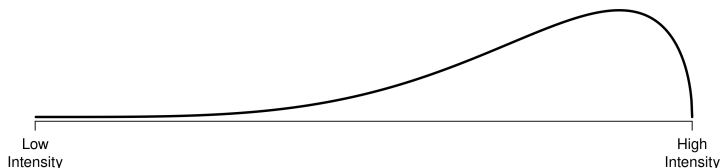


Figure 4: Need capabilities at high end of the spectrum

## Scenario 1: High-Intensity Threats More Likely (war with NATO)



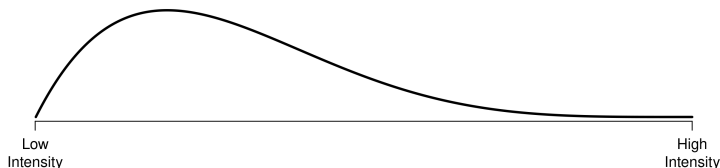
Which **missions** and **policies** are more appropriate in this scenario?

Ground Power	Sea Power	Air Power	Nuclear
(a) territorial defense	(a) coastal defense	(a) ground combat support	(a) strategic deterrence
(b) expeditionary operations	(b) blue water operations	(b) strategic bombing	(b) escalation management

Recruitment	Command & Control	Professional NCOs	Mobilization Reserve
(a) conscripts	(a) centralized	(a) no	(a) no
(b) professionals	(b) dispersed	(b) yes	(b) yes



## Scenario 2: Low-Intensity Threats More Likely (insurgencies, terrorism)

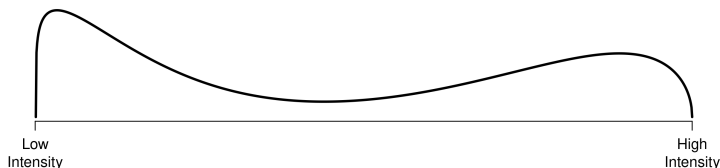


Which **missions** and **policies** are more appropriate in this scenario?

Ground Power	Sea Power	Air Power	Nuclear
(a) territorial defense	(a) coastal defense	(a) ground combat support	(a) strategic deterrence
(b) expeditionary operations	(b) blue water operations	(b) strategic bombing	(b) escalation management

Recruitment	Command & Control	Professional NCOs	Mobilization Reserve
(a) conscripts	(a) centralized	(a) no	(a) no
(b) professionals	(b) dispersed	(b) yes	(b) yes

### Scenario 3: Both Threats Are Likely (insurgencies + large-scale wars)



Which **missions** and **policies** are more appropriate in this scenario?

Ground Power	Sea Power	Air Power	Nuclear
(a) territorial defense	(a) coastal defense	(a) ground combat support	(a) strategic deterrence
(b) expeditionary operations	(b) blue water operations	(b) strategic bombing	(b) escalation management

Recruitment	Command & Control	Professional NCOs	Mobilization Reserve
(a) conscripts	(a) centralized	(a) no	(a) no
(b) professionals	(b) dispersed	(b) yes	(b) yes

## Early Post-Soviet Reforms

## Russian Military Personnel and Spending Over Time

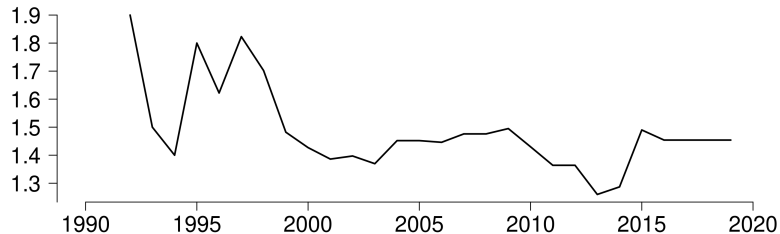


Figure 5: Russian armed forces personnel (millions)

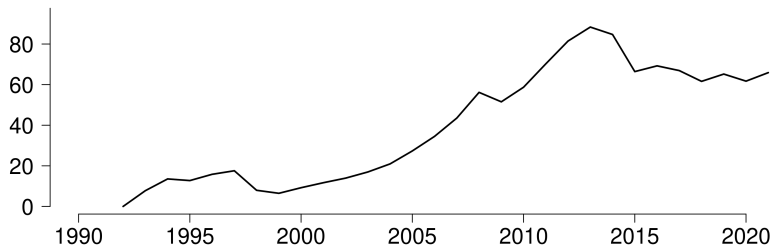


Figure 6: Russian military expenditures (billions USD)

## Immediate post-Soviet challenges

1. Changes in threat environment
  - a) ↑ small regional conflicts
    - Abkhazia
    - South Ossetia
    - Nagorno Karabakh
    - Transnistria
    - Tajikistan Civil War
  - b) ↑ threats from non-state actors
    - Chechnya
  - c) ↓ large-scale war vs. peer
2. State of armed forces
  - a) large standing army  
+ mobilization reserve
  - b) limited civilian control
  - c) top-heavy officer corps
  - d) no professional NCO corps
  - e) decaying equipment, infrastructure
  - f) recruitment & retention challenges



Figure 7: Chechnya



Figure 8: Tajikistan

## Early reform priorities (up to 2008)

1. Reductions in force size
  - a) goal: 1 million troops
2. Decreased reliance on conscripts
  - a) goal: hybrid force  
(mix of volunteers + conscripts)
3. Non-commissioned officers
  - a) goal: professional NCOs
4. Civilian control
  - a) goal: political oversight of spending
5. Combat readiness
  - a) goal: rapid-reaction units with permanent readiness

*Objective:* smaller, more modern armed force

*(Failed) Attempts:*

- ☐ 1997 reforms (constant readiness units)
- ☐ 2003 reforms (contract service)

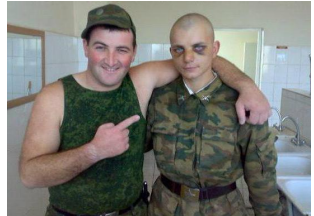


Figure 9: Dedovshchina

## Barriers to reform (up to 2008)

- ☐ Lack of consensus on reform objectives
  - a) perceived salience of NATO threat vs. new threats
- ☐ Lack of funding for reforms
  - a) contract personnel wages higher than conscripts' wages
  - b) costs of updating strategies, plans, training, education
- ☐ Chechnya war as distraction
  - a) hard to restructure army when OPTEMPO so high
- ☐ Strategic culture
  - a) state militarist tradition
  - b) legacy of autocracy, WWII
- ☐ Vested interests
  - a) fear of forced retirements, loss of privilege
  - b) corruption



Figure 10: Corruption

### *Discussion:*

- Which of these barriers is hardest (easiest) to overcome, and why?

## 2008-2012 Reforms



## Russian-Georgian War (2008)

1. Russian political objectives
  - a) annex Abkhazia, South Ossetia (de-facto)
  - b) destabilize Saakashvili regime
  - c) prevent NATO enlargement
2. Russian performance
  - a) political goals broadly achieved
  - b) military success at operational level
    - command, staff expertise
    - early commitment of sufficient number of forces, resources
    - adequate coordination of units
  - c) but shortcomings at tactical level
    - poor small-unit maneuver tactics
    - outdated kit (no reactive armor, night vision, modern fire control)
    - equipment maintenance issues (7/10 APCs, AFBVs broke down)
    - relatively high casualties



Figure 11: Russia-Georgia

## New reform priorities (2008-2012, Serdyukov)

1. Reductions in force size
  - a) get to 1M troops by 2012
  - b) cut 185,000 officers
2. Professional NCO corps
  - a) replace praporshchiks w/ sergeants
3. Better pay & benefits
  - a) 2-3× salary increase
  - b) 50% pension increase
  - c) guaranteed housing
4. Administrative reform
  - a) consolidate military districts
  - b) reorganize PME system
5. Re-organize land forces
  - a) transition to brigade system
  - b) new 3-tier C2 system
6. Re-equip and re-arm
  - a) achieve MIC self-reliance
  - b) modern foreign systems (Mistrals, UAVs)



Figure 12: Serdyukov

## Taking stock: Legacy of Serdyukov reforms

1. Reductions in force size
  - ☐ get to ~~1M~~ 1.2M troops by 2012 (from 1.5M in 2008)
  - ☐ cut ~~185,000~~ 115,000 officers
2. Professional NCO corps
  - ☐ replace praporshchiks w/ sergeants
3. Better pay & benefits
  - ☒ 2-3× salary increase
  - ☒ 50% pension increase
  - ☐ guaranteed housing
4. Administrative reform
  - ☒ consolidate military districts
  - ☒ reorganize PME system
5. Re-organize land forces
  - ☐ transition to ~~brigade system~~ battalion tactical groups
  - ☒ new 3-tier C2 system
6. Re-equip and re-arm
  - ☐ achieve MIC self-reliance
  - ☐ modern foreign systems (Mistrals, UAVs)

# Russian Military Strategy

## Active Defense

## Active Defense (2018-)

strategic concept for war vs. NATO

1. Assumptions:
  - a) scale will be regional or global
  - b) initial military balance favors NATO
  - c) but NATO lacks political will for protracted war
2. Center of gravity
  - a) enemy's military-economic potential
  - b) *not* territory
3. Expected nature of warfare
  - a) pre-war attempts at political subversion vs. Russia
  - b) war begins with massed aerospace attack by US/NATO
  - c) fragmented battlefield, no clear front lines (long-range strikes, fires)
  - d) victory requires asymmetric response (find weak points, vulnerabilities)



Figure 13: Get ready

## Active Defense (2018-)

strategic concept for war vs. NATO

### 4. Concept of operations

- a) anticipatory measures to deter war
- b) deny enemy victory in decisive initial period of war
- c) use non-strategic nuclear weapons for escalation management
- d) degrade enemy through attrition
- e) set conditions for war termination

### 5. Requirements

- a) permanent standing force, *not* mass mobilization army with cadre units
- b) high-readiness, high-mobility operational formations, capable of rapid deployment
- c) advanced capabilities (long-range precision strike, cyber, IW, EW)

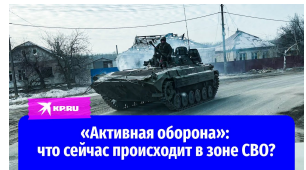


Figure 14: Practice round

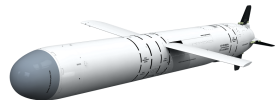


Figure 15: Will need these

## Active Defense (2018-)

categories of peacetime activity

1. Pre-war signaling (military)
  - a) demonstrate capability (exercises, deployments, weapons tests)
  - b) demonstrate resolve (limited conventional strikes, airspace violations, interceptions)
2. Pre-war shaping (non-military)
  - a) shape enemy's perception of costs (psychological, info warfare)
  - b) sow divisions in elites, public
  - c) disrupt information flows
  - d) disorganize enemy C2
  - e) these measures to continue after start of combat operations



Figure 16: Smile for cameras



## Active Defense (2018-) categories of wartime activity

1. Noncontact warfare
  - a) long-range strikes vs. critical targets at operational, strategic depth (C2, critical infrastructure, population)
  - b) complement, not substitute for “contact” warfare
2. Maneuver defense
  - a) fires vs. advancing enemy forces
  - b) remote mine-laying (RMLS)
  - c) brief flanking counter-attacks
  - d) lure enemy into “cauldrons”
  - e) goal:
    - i. enable defense vs. tactically, technologically superior enemy
    - ii. disrupt enemy's initial plan
    - iii. trade territory for time iv, gradually seize initiative



Figure 17: Mining



Figure 18: Demining

## Active vs. Positional Defense

### 1. Pitfalls of active defense

#### a) costly

- significant commitment of forces (numerical parity with attacker)
- availability of maneuver reserves

#### b) indecisive

- “we may as well be on offensive”

### 2. Positional defense as alternative

- a) static fighting from fortifications, well-prepared lines
- b) allows smaller force to pin down superior attacker
- c) leave positions only to avoid envelopment

*Doctrinal emphasis:* maneuver defense

*In practice:* mix of maneuver + positional



Figure 19: Not new idea

### *Discussion*

1. What has the Russian-Ukrainian War revealed about the viability of Active Defense?
2. How successful has Ukraine been in developing counters to this strategy?

# NEXT MEETING

*Energy and Natural Resources* (Th, Nov. 9)

- What is the role of energy in Russia's national security policy?
- Why is gas more closely intertwined with geopolitics than oil?