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The Change of Security Paradigm

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

IS UKRAINE AN OBJECT OR A SUBJECT OF THE WORLD POLITICS?	3
<i>Interview with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Pavko Klimkin for UA: Ukraine Analytica</i>	
A WORLD IN DISORDER	7
<i>Mykola Kapitonenko</i>	
IS IT ALL ABOUT VALUES? DIVERGING PERCEPTIONS OF SECURITY AS REASON FOR NATO-RUSSIA CRISIS	15
<i>Yulia Nikitina</i>	
RUSSIA'S NEW SECURITY STRATEGY AND THE UNITED STATES' RESPONSE	24
<i>Polina Sinovets</i>	
NO SECURITY WITHOUT VALUES	32
<i>Taras Mykhalniuk</i>	
PROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF UKRAINIAN CRISIS: SCENARIOS FOR MID-LONG TERM EVOLUTION	38
<i>Iulian Chifu</i>	
UKRAINIAN CRISIS AND BUDAPEST MEMORANDUM: CONSEQUENCES FOR THE EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL SECURITY STRUCTURES	45
<i>Sergiy Galaka</i>	
UKRAINIAN CRISIS' IMPACT ON THE SOUTH CAUCASUS	52
<i>Tornike Sharashenidze</i>	
CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN UKRAINE OR WHY IS THERE REALLY NO NEED FOR ANOTHER DAYTON	60
<i>Olena Bordilovska</i>	

RUSSIA'S NEW SECURITY STRATEGY AND THE UNITED STATES' RESPONSE

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The article offers analysis of Russia's military strategy based on the text of the Military Doctrine 2014 as well as the Kremlin's public rhetoric. The issues of Russia's identity as well as its vital interests and military development and engineering are touched upon. On the other hand, the United States' National Security Strategy 2015 is regarded as a key element to understanding American intentions and resolve in response to the Russia's challenge. The Ukrainian conflict is presented as a key element of Russia's strategy.

Russia's Military Doctrine and Strategic Worldview

The year of 2015 was marked by aggravation of the international relations' conflict level, as well as publication of the main defence documents by Russia and the United States. Both documents presented updates of basic interests and security challenges these countries define in the modern security architecture. They also reflect shifts and changes in the international political environment that have taken place in the last two years.

Russia's Military Doctrine was presented on December 29, 2014, on the New Year's Eve, as if the Kremlin did not want to share it with the world. Still, it became known to the wider public in the beginning of 2015; that is why it is reasonable to regard the Document as the event of 2015. This document's key ideas can be summed up in three main points:

1. Russia is rising. The central idea is to counterbalance the West presented as the

one destabilizing the world order. Blaming the West (and, first and foremost, the United States) for building the unipolar world has become the Russia's authorities' main catchphrase in 2015. In particular, "To build the balanced system of interests and relations defined in the world long ago", is how Putin articulated Russia's current mission in his Valdai speech in 2014¹. Russia's Military Doctrine, in its turn, addresses the West's attempts to increase its geopolitical influence among the main "dangers" to Russia.² Among the dangers ranked highest are NATO enlargement, deployment of the European missile defence, and implementation of the Global Prompt Strike concept. One of the newly added one is a regime change threatening Russia's interests, which is a direct reference to the events in Ukraine. These events are presented to the Russian public as an artificial coup d'état aimed at increasing American influence and undermining Russia's positions in the near abroad. The "Threats" chapter gives a similar message, where "special security

¹ Zasedaniye mezhdunarodnogo discussionnogo kluba Valdai, 24 Oktiabria 2014, "Prezident Rossii", <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46860>

² Военная доктрина Российской Федерации (Military Doctrine of Russian Federation) 29 декабря, 2014 года [<http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf>, access: 9.01.2015]

services” of “certain states’ are blamed for “undermining spiritual and patriotic traditions in the defence of motherland”³. In general, the Military Doctrine’s main intrigue is very similar to a plot of an old good Hollywood movie, where the good guy has to stand up and defend himself against an evil power, which is doing its best to destroy his wealth.

No specific names are mentioned but the relations with the West, mostly reduced to NATO, are described as an “equal dialogue”, not as “partnership” or “cooperation” as it used to be called in the previous years. To be more precise, Russia admits a possibility of cooperation with NATO in separate spheres as, for example, the missile defence, however, the main condition remains the same – “equitable participation”⁴. This passage sounds hollow enough as the dialogue between NATO and Russia over missile defence hit a dead end a couple of years ago, when it became quite clear that the Alliance was not going to subjugate its security to the Kremlin’s will.

2. The area of Russia’s vital interests is outlined. To quote Sergey Karaganov, the Dean of the Department of World Politics and Economy, Higher School of Economics, Russia is fighting “to preserve the territories considered to be of vital importance for its survival.”⁵ In particular, the Doctrine text defines these territories as “states bordering the Russian

Federation.” Overall, it is necessary to mention several points:

The first one: the Russian Federation’s Military Doctrine directly refers to Ukraine and the Ukrainian events, drawing red lines to the West’s potential actions, which Russia will consider unacceptable. They can be found not only in the text of the Doctrine, but also in President Putin’ speeches. In particular, the Large-scale military exercises in the territories of the states neighbouring the RF and its allies”⁶ are listed as military threats (the actions that can cause direct application of the military force) in the Doctrine. It regards regular Ukraine-NATO joint military trainings as potentially endangering Russia’s vital security. Moscow has already expressed its dissatisfaction with NATO-Ukraine military trainings “Rapid Trident-2015”, which took place in July 2015 in Lviv oblast, treating them as a provocation and support of the war spirit in Ukraine.⁷

In addition, the “i” were dotted in President Putin’s revelations in the documentary “Crimea. The Way Back Home”⁸: Putin said he was ready to use nuclear weapons if necessary to “defend” people in Crimea. Such Russian public figures and officials as Fyodor Lukyanov and lieutenant general Evgeniy Buzhinskiy both comment on their concern about the sort of NATO actions that can launch an actual war with Russia. In particular, Buzhinskiy believes that for Russia, Ukraine is a red line and especially

³ Военная доктрина Российской Федерации (Military Doctrine of Russian Federation) 29 декабря, 2014 года [http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf, access: 9.01.2015]

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Сергей Караганов, Причина этого конфликта – заблуждения Запада, поэтому русские не сдадутся (The reason of this conflict is the West’s mistake, that is why Russians would not surrender), Россия в глобальной политике, 24 September, 2014, [http://www.globalaffairs.ru/pubcol/Prichina-etogo-konflikta--zabluzhdeniya-Zapada-poetomu-russkie-ne-sdadutsya-16975, access: 25.02.2015].

⁶ Военная доктрина Российской Федерации (Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation) 29 декабря, 2014 года [http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d527556bec8deb3530.pdf, access: 9.01.2015]

⁷ Россия считает учения во Львовской области провокацией (Russia views the military trainings in Lviv oblast as provocation) [http://24tv.ua/ru/ukraina/rossija_schitaet_voennye_uchenija_vo_lvovskoj_oblasti_provokaciej/n59506; access: 25.08.2015]

⁸ Crimea The Way Back Home – EN Subtitles. Full Documentary, March 24, 2015, Sott. Net, [access: www.sott.net, August 5, 2015]

“Ukraine that is hostile to Russia.”⁹ This is a crucial point, as these days, the Russia’s elites claim that the United States is doing its best to alienate Ukraine from Russia, driving a wedge between the two brother nations, or even one nation, as Academician Arbatov once called Russians and Ukrainians: “Even if there are two states, there is one nation.” In the Russian experts’ opinion, the United States underestimates Ukraine’s role to Russia. In particular, Lukyanov believes that America’s massive military help to Ukraine might cause a big war. In his opinion, Russia views Ukraine as a part of its territory, and even if not a part then still essential to Russia’s security¹¹.



Russia does not clearly outline the perimeter of its vital interests, perhaps in an attempt to preserve some strategic ambiguity for NATO.

While Ukraine may be essential, it is not the only dimension of Russia’s vital interests. In particular, as the war with Georgia in 2008 showed, all states of the former Soviet Union, especially those bordering with the Russian Federation are included in the perimeter of Russia’s vital interests.

The second point refers to those neighbours of Russia’s, which are already included in the vital interests of Russia’s main rivals, in particular, NATO. Russia does not

clearly outline the perimeter of its vital interests, perhaps in an attempt to preserve some strategic ambiguity for NATO. Still, this ambiguity holds certain dangerous questions for the Alliance. Does “bordering states” mean those states of the former Soviet Union, which still do not have NATO membership? Does Alliance membership guarantee that there will be no “green men” on the territory of the NATO states? Yet again, is there a remedy against Russia’s “creeping aggression”? Russian expert Andrey Piontkovsky developed the so-called “Narva paradox” as a potential trigger of World War 3. In his opinion, Russia’s provocative strategy towards the Baltic states aims at creating a sort of Donetsk scenario, where the “struggle of Russians for their rights” would be supported by the “little green men”. This situation might force NATO to decide whether to start an armed conflict with the nuclear Russia or to demonstrate non-credibility of the NATO defence commitments, which will all but bury the Alliance as viable organization.¹² In this situation, Russia flexing its military muscles serves as one of the most important tools of its strategy towards the West. One more strategic peculiarity of Russia’s culture is interconnection between the state’s greatness and its military power. This idea was borne out by the experience of the Russian Empire, when military power became the “chief institutional foundation of Russia’s statehood”¹³. Czar Nicolas II’s abdication in 1917, a decision taken by the General Staff instead of the State Duma, can be regarded as an obvious example here¹⁴.

⁹ M. Fisher, Former top Russian general: Russia will defend Eastern Ukraine, even if it means taking Kiev, “Vox Energy & Environment”, May 15, 2015, [www.vox.com; access: 28.07.2015]

¹⁰ Interview of the author with A. Arbatov.

¹¹ M. Fisher, How World War III became Possible, “Vox Energy & Environment”, June 29, 2015, [<http://www.vox.com>; access: 27.07.2015]

¹² Андрей Пионтковский: сценарий четвертой мировой войны (Andrey Piontkovsky: the screenplay of the Fourth World War), “Svobodnaya Rossiya”, December 2, 2014, [freedomrussia.org; access: 20.07.2015]

¹³ Fritz W. Ermarth, Russian Strategic Culture in Flux: Back to the Future? [in]: Strategic Culture and Weapons of Mass Destruction. Culturally-based insights into Comparative National Security Policy Making, ed. J.J. Johnson, K.K. Karchner, J.A. Larsen – New York, 2009.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Therefore, one of the main tasks of Putin's regime is to restore Russia's military might, at least to the level of its regional ambitions.

Until recently, conventional deterrence was considered one of the Russia's weakest points, although the situation began to change. At first sight, Russia's conventional arms procurement plans look very ambitious. Moscow is putting significant efforts into correcting its conventional imbalance with NATO. In particular, Russia's 2015 federal budget allocates 3.286 trillion roubles to defence, equivalent to 4.2% of GDP¹⁵. As a result, the Kremlin's defence budget has doubled since 2004. Russia's 2011-2020 arms procurement program stipulates the upgrade of up to 11% of the forces' military equipment annually, and will boost the share of modern weaponry in the armed forces' inventory to 70% by 2020.¹⁶

At the beginning of the decade, the general feeling was that, within seven years, Russia would be able to catch up with the United States in implementation of the Prompt Global Strike concept. This statement was confirmed by the Russian military exercise Zapad-2013, which, unlike in previous years, was based on imitation of a conventional weapons scenario conflict¹⁷. Moreover, the mention of conventional strategic deterrence as well as the Prompt Global Strike among military dangers seems to attract attention to Russia's rapid development of its conventional arms capabilities.

Today, this idea sounds much less realistic, considering the actual international dynamics. The impact of sanctions against Russia as well as the consequences of the current prices for oil, which dropped by almost a half during the last year, blurs the conventional weapons development perspective. According to evaluations made in the end of 2014, due to the sanctions Russia is going to suffer a reduction of its GDP by 2-3% per year¹⁸. Today, almost 80% of key sensitive technologies used by Russia to make precision-guided munitions are imported from the West, which will become unsustainable because of the sanctions¹⁹.

Therefore, Russia still relies on nuclear weapons as the ultimate and undeniable tool of its power. Looking at the Doctrine text for the first time, it is possible to believe that Russia regards application of nuclear weapons as the last resort to defend itself against the conventional aggression, "when the very existence of the state is under threat." Meanwhile, considered in the context of Russia's actions in general, military trainings, and the Kremlin's statements, it gains a much wider meaning. Vladimir Putin's admitted readiness to use nuclear weapons to defend Crimea makes it clear, that for the Kremlin, existence of the state means preservation of the current political regime with its aggressive nationalist ideology. "Sovereignty, independence, and unity of Russia is undeniable. They are those "red lines" nobody is to cross".²⁰ The

¹⁵ 'Strategic nuclear force top priority of Russian army in 2015', December 29, 2014, "Russia News.net", [<http://www.russianews.net/index.php/sid/228941881>]; accessed: 5.03.2015].

¹⁶ Russian Military Budget, "GlobalSecurity.org", www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/mo-budget.htm [accessed: 12.01.2015].

¹⁷ Nikolai Sokov, Upping the Ante: The Implications of Russia's Pursuit of Precision Conventional Strike Weapons', WMD Junction, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 20 December 2013, [http://wmdjunction.com/131220_russia_precision_conventional_strike.htm]; accessed: 17.01.2015].

¹⁸ Vladislav Inozemtsev: Kak Sanktsii izmeniat Rossiyu?, "Haifainfo.ru", December 6, 2014, [<http://haifainfo.ru/?p=48533> (accessed: 19.02.2015)].

¹⁹ Igor Sutyagin, Roundtable discussion "Ukraine and Its Neighborhood: How to Deal with Aggressive Russia?", NATO Defense College, Rome, February 9, 2015.

²⁰ Vystuplnie Vladimira Putina na zasedanii kluba Valdai, 19 Sentiabria 2013, <http://www.rg.ru/2013/09/19/stenogramma-site.html>

question is what the Kremlin means by the word “unity”? If Crimea belongs to the historical lands of the Russian Empire, then all former Soviet republics can be regarded as potential elements of Russia’s unity, which can be defended by nuclear weapons. In this context, Moscow’s recent statements about checking legitimacy of the Baltic states’ secession from the USSR adds to the overall portrait of the Kremlin ambitions.

During the last year, the number of nuclear threats Moscow applies doubled as did military trainings with the potential use of tactical nuclear weapons, including their deployment in Kaliningrad oblast and even, according to some information, in Crimea. In June 2015, in his speech at the Military Technical Forum “Army-2015,” President Putin announced that this year Russia was going to add 40 new ballistic missiles to its strategic nuclear forces (24 ICBMs “Yars” and 16 SLBMs “Bulava”²¹). NATO took this announcement with great anxiety as the evidence of Moscow’s determination to start another arms race. Today, Russia’s nuclear arsenal amounts to 4,500 warheads²², of which 2,000 are nonstrategic nuclear weapons and 1,643 are deployed on strategic vehicles²³. Still, taking into account Russia’s actual situation, where ICBM deficit is combined with the sanctions’ impact over the economy, there are all reasons to believe that by 2018 Russia will comply with the demands of START-3, which set the limit for the deployed warheads at 1,550 units. At the same time, START-3 will be the threshold Russia would be unable to cross in the nearest future, first of all, because

of the mentioned economic and technical reasons preventing Moscow from replacing the old SS-18s with the new ICBMs before 2022. A couple of years ago it was planned that SS-18s would be decommissioned in 2017, then their service was prolonged till 2020, and now till 2022, when the new liquid-fuel missile “Sarmat” is supposed to replace them.

The US Response

Russia’s Military Doctrine was followed by the US National Security Strategy published in February 2015. The logic is understandable as the strategic environment has changed significantly since 2010, when the previous Security Strategy was published.

Among the main threats defined in the document, three key ones are: the threat to the US homeland and its critical infrastructure; the threat to the security of the US allies and citizens abroad; and the global economic crisis²⁴. The spreading of weapons of mass destruction occupies the fourth place, just above pandemic diseases and the climate change. It differs significantly from the previous NSS published in 2010, which stated that “there is no greater threat to the American people than weapons of mass destruction”, which could become an object of interest for terrorist organizations and certain states²⁵. Main changes are presumably connected with the “rise of Russia”, which is still the only peer to the US in regard to the nuclear arsenal.

²¹ Путин: ядерные силы России пополнят более 40 межконтинентальных ракет (Putin: 40 ICBMs will be added to Russian nuclear forces), «ТВЦ», 17 June 2015, [www.tvc.ru; access: 30.07.2015]

²² Hans N. Kristensen, Robert S. Norris, Russian Nuclear Forces, 2015, The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists [http://bos.sagepub.com/content/early/2015/04/13/0096340215581363.full; access:29.07.2015]

²³ New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms, “Bureau Of Arms Control, Verification, And Compliance” September 1, 2014, [http://www.state.gov/t/avc/rls/235606.htm; accessed:12.02.2015].

²⁴ US National Security Strategy, February 2015, The White House, [www.whitehouse.gov; access: 25.07.2015]

²⁵ US National Security Strategy, May, 2010, The White House, [www.whitehouse.gov; access: 21.07.2015]

It is also possible to outline the US Strategy in two main messages:

1. US' continued leadership, which is presented as a leadership by strength, by an example, and with capable partners. It is mentioned that, besides having the most dynamic economy in the world, the US has the strongest military might but its values make it an exceptional and undeniable leader. Such an aggressive style of the document seems as a reminder to Russia that all its criticism of the American global dominance is nothing but empty barking. Also, the United States' budget capabilities are quite different from Russia's. In particular, while at the end of the 1980s, the USSR's military expenditures were about 70-80% of America's, which was almost enough to reach the strategic parity, and in the 2000s, Russia's expenditures decreased to 9-17% of America's²⁶. These numbers show the depth of military disparity between the two states today, especially in the fields not related to nuclear weapons, which Russia has been keeping since the Soviet parity era.

2. America's vital interests concentrate first on security of its homeland and security of its allies and partners. In particular, this point can be underlined as one of the most important messages to Russia, whose permanent provocations at NATO borders mentioned earlier pose a threat to credibility of the US defensive commitments to the Alliance, and, therefore, NATO's cohesion. To a certain extent, the Russian President aggravated this concern by saying "if

I wanted, the Russian troops would not only be in Kyiv in two days, but in Riga, Vilnius, Tallinn, Warsaw or Bucharest, too."²⁷

To stop Russia from further speculations, President Obama visited Estonia in September of 2014, where he reiterated the US pledge to defend the Baltics. "We'll be here for Estonia. We will be here for Lithuania. We will be here for Latvia. You lost your independence once before. With NATO, you will never lose it again"²⁸. Obama's words were supported by the US sending troops to the Baltic states to participate in the 3-month military trainings "Atlantic Resolve" to demonstrate the United States' readiness to act on its commitments to its NATO Allies²⁹.

Special attention is paid to support of partners, in particular, Ukraine in the face of Russia's aggression. "Russia's aggression in Ukraine makes it clear that European security and the international rules and norms against territorial aggression cannot be taken for granted. In response, we have led an international effort to support the Ukrainian people as they choose their own future and develop their democracy and economy."³⁰ At the same time, there is a strong determination in differentiating between partners and allies, as the latter are covered by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, obliging the US as a NATO member to respond to aggression against them. In this light, the United States reiterated its pledge to support its allies, although unable to help Europeans resist Russia's coercion.

²⁶ Юрий Фёдоров, Глазами либерала: вы слышите, грохочут сапоги (With liberal's eyes: you hear the boots are rattling), "PIR Center Security Index", June 2015, [pircenter.org; access: 15.07.2015]

²⁷ Will Stewart, Moscow troops could be in five NATO capitals in two days, boasts Putin: www.dailymail.co.uk; access: 25.07.2015]

²⁸ Remarks by President Obama to people of Estonia, Nordea Concert Hall, Tallinn, Estonia, The White House, [www.whitehouse.gov; access: 26.07.2015]

²⁹ European Security: Operation Atlantic Resolve, US Department of Defense, [http://www.defense.gov; access July 30, 215]

³⁰ US National Security Strategy, February 2015, "The White House, [www.whitehouse.gov; access: 25.07.2015]

In this connection, the US military capabilities play a secondary role to its resolve, which to the White House seems to be the weakest element of its commitments' credibility. Still, it is worth mentioning that conventionally the United States is much stronger than Russia and the only field, where relative parity still exists, is the nuclear arsenal. Today the United States possesses about 4,760 nuclear warheads and more than 800 ballistic missiles and aircraft. Among them, about 2,080 are deployed at strategic weapons and 180 are Europe-deployed non-strategic nuclear weapons³¹. It is necessary to mention that, unlike Russia, which is now in the middle of modernizing its nuclear arsenal, the US is just entering the modernization process. The Obama Administration adopted the plan of refurbishment of the nuclear weapons in 2010; also, there is a plan to spend USD 350 billion on modernization of the nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles in the nearest few decades. There are grounds to believe that in the light of the growing confrontation between the US and Russia, these modernization programs will bury the global disarmament idea.

Summing up, we can draw the following conclusions:

The Ukrainian events of 2014, which provoked Russia's annexation of Crimea and intrusion to the East of Ukraine, opened a new chapter in Russia's confrontation with the West. Russia's political and military worldview is developed in the process of this confrontation and is partially reflected in the Russia's Military Doctrine-2014. The Doctrine's main idea as well as the Kremlin's rhetoric is the rise of Russia, which serves as the grounds for its aggressive regional expansion.



In its turn, the United States' National Security Strategy-2015 looks as an attempt to confront Russia's coercive strategy, insisting that the US was, is, and will be an undeniable leader in the world as a result of its capabilities, responsibility and ideology.

In fact, "the rise of Russia" presents the Kremlin's attempt to restore the dividing lines in Europe, isolating its sphere of vital interests from the West's geopolitical expansion. Meanwhile, Russia's interference in the Ukrainian conflict as well as its threats to security of the Baltic states can be regarded as a tool to compel the West to accept its rules of the game. Nuclear weapons play the role of a coercive instrument, which allows Russia not only to continue its war in Ukraine, but to remind NATO that in case of any military support to Ukraine, the situation might aggravate to a regional nuclear war between Russia and NATO. It takes place in the situation, when Russia is much weaker than it wants to show, reminding of the events of Khrushchev in power, when the aggressive nuclear rhetoric and great geopolitical ambitions were hiding Moscow's significant military inferiority.

In its turn, the United States' National Security Strategy-2015 looks as an attempt to confront Russia's coercive strategy, insisting that the US was, is, and will be an undeniable leader in the world as a result of its capabilities, responsibility and ideology. Moreover, the NSS tries to compensate the vulnerability NATO used to have during the Cold War, which is easily overplayed by Russia

³¹ Hans N. Kristensen, Robert S. Norris, US Nuclear Forces, 2015, The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, [http://bos.sagepub.com/content/71/2/107.full; access: 26.07.2015]

now. This is Europe's vulnerability to any regional application of nuclear weapons exacerbated by the former Soviet states' historic fears of being conquered by Russia. The reiterated pledge to defend all NATO members as well as the US troops sent to Europe (which is more a symbol of resolve than an efficient military contingency) might be enough to make clear to Russia all possible consequences of its provocations towards NATO.

At the same time, the situation is very unstable: any aggravation or the other way around, the realization that the response towards its actions won't be strong enough might push Moscow to further expand the conflict area in Ukraine or even take more aggressive steps towards the Baltic states to confirm its determination to stand for its vital interests.

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