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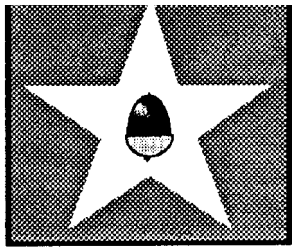

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The Military Doctrine of the Republic of Belarus'

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The new Belorussian military doctrine strongly emphases the principle of collectivity in regional security; its main military relationships are with Russia and the signatories of the Treaty on Collective Security. Belarus' should not therefore be seen as a destabilising influence in military terms.

Formally passed into law on 3rd January 2002, the new military doctrine of the Republic of Belarus' is, in the words of the doctrine itself, "the sum total of the central, official views and principles safeguarding the military security of the state by the use of political and military measures. It consolidates the basic directions of the state's military policy in the modern period, as well as determines its attitude towards military conflicts and their prevention, military organisation, the use of military force for the defence of the state's vitally important interests."[1] To avoid any possible confusion, it should not be forgotten that although both countries have their own national military doctrines,[2] there is now also a single military doctrine for the Union State of Russia and Belarus', approved at the end of December 2001.[3] However, according to the Belarussian Defence Minister, Colonel-General L Mal'tsev, the new Union State military doctrine does not contradict or conflict with any of the provisions contained in either of the two national military doctrines.[4]

The new Belarussian military doctrine replaces the original doctrine of the Belarussian Republic, passed in December 1992 and differs from its predecessor in a number of important aspects, not least in the rejection of the concept of neutrality and in detailing a much closer relationship with its big, eastern neighbour, Russia.[5] One should be careful not to draw the wrong inferences from this, ie that Belarus' is becoming more "aggressive" and consequently more of a potential future security problem for its neighbours. That part of Europe has seen significant political change since the first Belarussian military doctrine was adopted almost a decade ago and in many ways the new doctrine simply reflects an official Belarussian interpretation of how things have changed in the region in particular, as well as globally. This paper will seek to place the new doctrine in its historical, as well as contemporary, context and offer a balanced interpretation of how the country now views its place on the modern European stage.

The New Military Doctrine in its Historical Context

Although the Republic's first military doctrine has not been published, nevertheless it is still possible to say a few things about its content - the first military doctrine penned by any of the republics of the fSU.[6] As does the 2002 doctrine, the 1992 doctrine "reflected the views of the leadership of the country on the questions of war and peace, the development of the country's defences, the training of the armed forces to repel aggression, ways of conducting the armed struggle in the interests of

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defending sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the country".[7] However, Belarus' then, under the leadership of S Shushkevich, was a very different country from Belarus' now, under A Lukashenko. This is reflected in the 1992 doctrine: according to one report, the earlier doctrine "declares [the country] to be in a state of armed neutrality, to have the status of a non-nuclear power and refuses to join military blocs and alliances".[8] Thus, whilst Belarus' is still a non-nuclear power - a fact which the Belarussian president has publicly regretted on a number of occasions - the ideas of "armed neutrality" and not being a member of any military bloc or alliance have long passed. Suffice it to say that the phrase "armed neutrality" does not appear anywhere in the new doctrine and, as for refusal to join any military bloc or alliance, one has only to look at the very close relationship between the military establishments of Russia and Belarus' to understand how that idea has also receded into the country's past. Of course, a close military relationship between the two republics was always on the cards - not least because of the strategic importance of Belarus' to the defence of the Russian Federation, but also because of the economic importance of Russia to Belarus' (last year alone, Russia accounted for 75% of Belarussian manufacturing industry's exports: in total, the trade turnover between both countries last year amounted to 11 billion rubles, 500 million rubles more than trade between Russia and China)[9] - and, although there is no formal military alliance (*soyuz*) between them, there is an impressive list of treaties, agreements, joint concepts, signed over the years in the military and security spheres which just falls short of a formal military alliance.[10] No other country has such a long list of agreements in the military and security spheres with the Russian Federation and there is every indication that the military cooperation between the two states will develop further.

The 1992 doctrine consisted of two sections: "military-political" and "military-technical". The military-political part contains the concepts of 'preventative war' [*predotvrashcheniye voyny*] and 'suppression of aggression' [*presecheniye agressii*]. Actualising the concept of 'preventative war' entails the conduct of a political dialogue to solve matters under dispute, refraining from the use of military force, strengthening the role of the UN in solving issues of collective security. The doctrine also declares the necessity of interacting with interested states to create a 'nuclear-free belt' from the Baltic to the Black Sea, the complete and unequivocal ban on nuclear weapons in the region. Belorussia is against participation in the military conflicts of other states without the corresponding UN sanctions. [It also] declares a ban on the use of the territory of the republic for the conduct of combat operations by other countries, as well as the deployment of troops and military bases of foreign states."[11]

Again, there is little in the new doctrine which bears any resemblance to the above. Whilst there is a reference in the new doctrine to using the offices of the UN during a period of threat, or in the early stages of an armed conflict, to try to bring about peace,[12] there is no mention of the desirability or necessity of creating a nuclear-free zone in the region, nor banning the use of the territory of the Republic for the deployment of foreign troops or for the creation of foreign military bases (just as well, really, given the Russian military bases in Belarus' - at Vileyka and at Gantsevichi).[13]

There are also a number of other significant differences between the two doctrines, particularly in the area of analysing how to prevent war from breaking out, or the best plan of action to pursue once military action has been embarked upon. In the 1992 doctrine, the "suppression of aggression" was defined as follows: "the application of economic measures and diplomatic pressure with the aim of forcing

the aggressor to refrain from preparing for a military invasion of the territory of the republic. The use of the armed forces to repel aggression is only permitted when all other non-military measures have proved ineffective."[14] There is no mention of the means to be used to encourage restraint on the part of the potential aggressor. In the new doctrine, as will be detailed below, there is a lot of emphasis on the issue of "collectivity" in ensuring the defence of the Republic, as well as the military utility of the agreements with Russia and the potential use of the joint Russian-Belarussian military force in the region (the Regional Grouping of Troops - "RGV") should military conflict break out.[15] In this respect, the change in emphasis from "armed neutrality" to "collectivity" in the military sphere can be interpreted simply as a sign of the changed security picture in that part of Europe, as a result of the re-deployment of the military force of the fSU; the break-up of Yugoslavia; the expansion of NATO; the election of Lukashenko, not once but twice; the ever deepening relationship between the militaries in Belarus' and Russia over the past decade, etc.

The next section of the 1992 doctrine, the "military-technical" section, also contained material which was destined not to appear ten years later:

> "the military-technical part of the doctrine includes the concepts of 'containment', [*sderzhivaniye*] and 'active defence' [*aktivnaya oborona*]. The concept of 'containment' contains a definition of the status of Russian strategic forces temporarily deployed on the territory of the republic and regulating their use. In accordance with the concept, Belorussia has the right to take part in the adoption of decisions permitting or forbidding the use of the strategic forces. It should also be noted that following the withdrawal of the strategic forces of the Russian Federation from the territory of the republic, the concept of 'containment' will either be fundamentally re-examined or abandoned.
>
> "The concept of 'active defence' means military cooperation with other states, the existence of one's own armed forces and mobile defence. Cooperation may be realised in the sphere of devising plans for the purchase of weapons and military technology, the training of cadres, the development of infrastructure of a defensive importance. The development of one's own armed forces is the presence of a system for staffing [the Armed Forces] and of a centralised leadership of the Armed Forces, the balanced development of all types of troops with priority being attached to defensive forces and means, the possibility of increasing combat might in the face of the growing military threat. Mobile defence must be maintained by including in the armed forces small but powerful groups, geared towards flexible operations in the event of the start of any real threat."[16]

Some of this did not appear in the 2002 doctrine because, with the final removal of all nuclear weapons by the end of 1996, for instance, there was no need for provision to be made for the republic's role in the decision-making process in the use, or non-use, of nuclear weapons. But the ideas surrounding "active defence" were also not mentioned in the 2002 doctrine, possibly because given the agreements signed with Russia, particularly since 1995, military cooperation has tended to largely focus on this relationship, rather than those with other states. The extensive nature of the cooperation between Russian and Belarus' in the military and security spheres almost precludes Belarus' from developing any other meaningful relationship. Back in July 1992, the then Belarussian Minister of

Defence, Colonel-General P Kozlovskiy, emphasised not only the country's non-nuclear status, but also its neutrality: "Our country will be non-nuclear and neutral. Namely in this lies the basis of our military doctrine, its essence ... If we look at the question of forming various military blocs and alliances, then Belarus' occupies here the firm position of neutrality."[17] Contrast this with the words and spirit of the 2002 doctrine ...

The 2002 Military Doctrine

According to one source, the new military doctrine was worked out involving "military and civilian specialists over a comparatively long time."[18] It was certainly discussed at a session of the Republic's Security Council in May 2001.[19] A newspaper report in September 2001 also mentioned the work of a Standing Commission on National Security preparing a draft law on "the military doctrine of the Republic of Belarus" and listed the "priorities" of the draft law as "defending the state's sovereignty and political independence, as well as safeguarding the territorial integrity and inviolability of the state's borders".[20] The draft law received its first reading in the lower house of the Belarussian parliament in October 2001. In presenting it to parliament at the time, General Mal'tsev stated that "since the previous military doctrine was adopted in 1992, significant changes have taken place: Belarus' has renounced nuclear weapons, the state organisation has changed - it has become a presidential republic and the North Atlantic alliance has come closer to the borders of Belarus'. On top of that, the treaty on the creation of the Union state of Belarus' and Russia has been signed. All of these changes demanded the adoption of a new military doctrine."[21] Mal'tsev also stressed that the military doctrine was based on the Constitution, as well as the new edition of the country's National Security Concept and "foreign experience". He even managed to throw in a reference to the terrorist attacks carried out on September 11th, stating that the "terrorist acts in the USA confirmed the correctness of the new military doctrine of Belarus', the soundness ... of the inter-action of the various power structures in emergency situations".[22] The draft law received its second reading on 11th December 2001, was adopted by the House of Representatives the following day, approved by the Council of the Republic on 20th December 2001 and signed into law by Lukashenko on 3rd January 2002.[23]

The new military doctrine opens with the statement that the doctrine is the sum total of official views on the military security of the state. "Priority" tasks it considers to be "the defence of state sovereignty and political independence, maintaining the territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of the state". "Profoundly defensive" in nature, the doctrine states that the Republic of Belarus' "at the present moment in time" does not recognise any state as being "a potential aggressor" and views its own military security as being "the state of defensiveness of its national interests under conditions of a possible transformation of military danger to military threats to the state."[24]

The doctrine is divided into three sections: "military-political foundations of military security"; "military-strategic foundations of military security" and "military-economic safeguards for military security". Under the first heading the doctrine proclaims that Belarus' is in favour "of the creation of a system of European security, assisting the activisation of international security institutions at the global and regional level, taking into account the interests of all interested states on the basis of the principles of trust and mutual understanding". In this particular context, the doctrine stated that Belarus' sees its role in the Treaty on Collective

Security (signed on 15th May 1992) and the Treaty on the Creation of the Union state (signed on 8th December 1999) as being "real steps" in the direction of creating a viable collective security system in Europe.[25]

In examining the current military-political situation, the doctrine states:

> "the military-political situation at the present moment in time is determined by the following factors:
>
> the lack of effective mechanisms preventing military threats and defending the interests of all subjects of international relations on the European continent;
> the struggle by the economically-developed states for the markets of raw materials and attempts by certain trans-national corporations to control the movement of natural resources for their own interests;
> the push by regional centres to secure political leadership in forming security mechanisms without taking into account the interests of other subjects of international relations;
> the possibility of the spread of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction;
> the introduction of new weapons technology, the testing of which is undertaken in local wars and other military conflicts;
> aggravation of the information struggle;
> strengthening of ethnic and national extremism, activisation of aggressive separatism."[26]

Immediately following this section is a list of de-stabilising tendencies in the world at large:

> "political-economic blocking of the interests of separate states, attempts at open interference in internal affairs;
> military force of certain states or military blocs, conducted whilst breaking generally accepted principles and norms of international law;
> the use, by certain subjects of international relations, of information means and technology with aggressive intent, not taking into account the interests of all the states in Europe in the sphere of security."[27]

This is very much a "European-based" military doctrine: Belarus' has focussed on analysing and responding to the threats emanating from Europe in general, and within its own particular locale. Obviously, given its physical size and resources, it cannot have the same "reach" as, for instance, Russia. Its interpretation of the recent conflicts, particularly in the Balkans, has caused the country's political and military leadership to focus on the security situation well within their own physical and psychological terms of reference. There can be little doubt that much of the text quoted above had been arrived at through Belarussian military and civilian analysts examining events in Europe, not globally, particularly the lessons to be learnt from the break-up of Yugoslavia; the NATO air campaign against FRY in 1999; NATO expansion in Central and Eastern Europe, etc. Given the geographical proximity of Belarus' to these events, it should come as no surprise that Belarus' has devoted time and effort in responding to them along with Russia by, for example, improving their combined air defence (PVO) capability, plugging the gap, as it were, in the western region of the CIS collective security system.

The next section lists the official Belarussian view of the main external threats to its security:

> "the presence in certain states of a significant arsenal of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction;
> existing and future hotbeds of local wars and other armed conflicts;
> interference in the internal affairs of the Republic of Belarus';
> expansion of military blocs and alliances to the detriment of the military security of the Republic of Belarus' and opposition to the formation of a system of collective security involving the Republic of Belarus';
> the creation ... by certain states (groups of states) of a military offensive-strike potential, leading to a rupture in the existing balance of power;
> planned, information (information-psychological) coercion, harmful to the interests of the Republic of Belarus' and its allies, using modern information technologies;
> discrimination against the rights and lawful interests of citizens of the Republic of Belarus' in foreign states;
> activisation of international terrorism and trans-national crime, growth in the illegal trade in weapons ... narcotics, psychotropic substances ... as well as the illegal migration of people".[28]

In comparison with the list of external threats to Belarussian security, the list of internal threats is comparatively small:

> "the possible appearance and provocative activity of extremist organisations, aimed at de-stabilising the internal political situation in the country and the forceful overthrow of the constitutional order;
> organised crime, illegal trade and other anti-legal activity on a scale threatening the security of the state;
> the illegal distribution on the territory of the Republic of Belarus' of weapons, shells, narcotics, psychotropic substances ... which could be used to carry out terrorist acts and other illegal actions".[29]

It would be interesting to see how this list of internal threats to the state has changed over the past 10 years. Unfortunately, such an examination will only be possible if the 1992 military doctrine is ever published. Given the way the world has changed over the past decade, it would be safe to assume that less emphasis would have been placed in 1992 on the growth in danger to the state from trans-national crime, the growing power of extremist organisations, illegal trade in weapons, etc. It could also be the case that as the state itself has changed - as Mal'tsev pointed out in his address to parliament during the first reading of the draft law, the state is now a presidential republic and, thanks to the changes introduced after the 1996 referendum, the power of parliament has diminished as the power of the president has increased - so too has this possibly impacted on the perception of the nature of the internal threat. During his time in office, Lukashenko has shown himself not averse to using strong arm tactics in order to silence the opposition: nowhere in the doctrine is the phrase "extremist organisations" actually defined. Is Lukashenko leaving himself a free hand to define both the nature of the internal threat and the ways to combat it?

In the next section - "safeguarding military security" - the doctrine details the country's means of combating the aggressor: "the Republic of Belarus' condemns war as a means to effect policy and holds to the principle of not being the first to use the Armed Forces ... in solving possible conflicts. The Republic of Belarus' will

consider its potential enemy to be the state whose policy represents a military threat to the Republic of Belarus', or interferes in its internal affairs, encroaches on its sovereignty or territorial integrity."[30] NATO - you have been warned!

Should the worst happen, then the Republic will call for assistance, including military assistance, first and foremost from the other members of the CIS Collective Security Treaty and those states which have concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance with Belarus'.[31] Russia is mentioned for the first time in the next section, entitled: "maintaining military security", in which it is stated that: "with the aim of maintaining military security, the Republic of Belarus': ... attaches priority to the formation of a single, defence space with the Russian Federation, assisting in the development of a joint military infrastructure, adopting other steps to support the defence capability of the Union State within the framework of the Treaty on the Creation of the Union State".[32]

This section of the doctrine also mentions that the "Republic of Belarus' ... plays an active part in strengthening the system of collective security within the framework of the Treaty on Collective Security and increases the effectiveness of the efforts of other international organisations in safeguarding security in Europe".[33] Further on in the doctrine, in analysing the military security of the state, great emphasis is placed on "collective" security, much more so than, for instance, in Russia's military doctrine. This should not come as any surprise: given the physical size and resources of Russia, it has greater "reach" than Belarus', more interests to defend and a much more prominent position in the world. "During peace time," as the doctrine goes on to say, "the Republic of Belarus' ... conducts a peace-loving, foreign policy course, advances initiatives aimed at the creation of effective systems of maintaining international security on the European continent, taking into account the interests of all subjects of international relations".[34] In other words, Belarus' will work collectively in order to ensure its national security, with Russia, with the other members of the Treaty on Collective Security, or with other organisations in Europe. The feeling of "collectivity" runs throughout the new military doctrine; reliance on the UN, OSCE in the event of military conflict breaking out, as well as more concrete activity in the operation of joint PVO combat patrols with Russia, and the joint regional grouping of forces. All this runs against the idea that Belarus' is some sort of lone "rogue" state in the heart of Europe. Belarus' has tied its national security arrangements in with those of Russia simply as a matter of course. Given their shared historical and cultural identities, this is not surprising and certainly should not be taken to imply that either separately or collectively the two states are bent on pursuing a course of action designed to de-stabilise security in the region. It would appear, moreover, that Belarus' is also ready to enter into a collective security arrangement with the other powers in Europe. One wonders, therefore, if there is scope for renewed effort to be made to re-engage Belarus' within the wider European political, economic and security picture?

During a period of threat or at the beginning of conflict, according to the doctrine, Belarus' would seek the assistance of the UN, the OSCE and other international organisations to halt the aggression and restore peace; diplomatic, economic, information and economic sanctions would be applied, again in a bid to halt the slide into all-out war; if that failed, the Armed Forces would then be strategically deployed and the whole state transferred onto a war footing.[35] The nature of the conflict itself - the doctrine lists the most likely types as "military conflicts", "local wars" and "regional wars" - would influence the level of force used and assistance required. Thus:

> "the Armed Forces, other troops and military units would be used ... in a regional war for the armed defence of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, with all its corresponding forces and means, including the use of the combat potential of the regional grouping of troops (forces) [operating] within the framework of the single, defence space with the Russian Federation, repelling the attack and defeating the enemy, forcing him to cease military activities in conditions favourable to the Republic of Belarus'".[36]

There is a clear inference here that, at least on the scale of a "regional war" - defined elsewhere in the doctrine as an "armed clash between states in a specific region"[37] - an attack on Belarus' would be the equivalent of an attack on the Union State, ie Belarus' and Russia combined and would involve the joint military units of the Regional Grouping. That being the case, a regional war in the area involving either Belarus' or Russia would appear to be an unlikely development in the future: attacking an isolated Belarus' would be a possibility, but not Belarus' combined with Russia, in the practical form of the joint Regional Grouping of Troops. In this respect, Belarus' derives a very real practical benefit from the military cooperation it enjoys with Russia: increased security in a geopolitically fluid part of Europe. Russia gets to plug part of its gap in the western defence region, thanks to Belarus' being part of Russia's defensive screen in the west. Defence of the Union State is mentioned a few more times in the remaining sections of the doctrine. For instance in terms of anti-aircraft defence, the doctrine states that: "the tasks of the armed forces in peace time include: ... improving anti-aircraft defence as a unified, combat [capable] defensive system of the Union state".[38]

Slightly further on, there is a specific reference to the mechanism involved in the deployment of the Regional Grouping: "for the armed defence of the Union State, in repelling foreign aggression, a regional grouping of troops (forces) is being created, the use of which will be carried out on the basis of a plan in accordance with a decision of the Supreme State Council of the Union state".[39]

The Supreme State Council is the highest organ of the Union State and was created in accordance with the Treaty for the Creation of a Union State signed in December 1999. The Council is made up of "the heads of state, the heads of government and the leaders of the chambers of parliament of the member-states" and "decides the most important questions in relation to the development of the Union State; within the limits of its competence, forms the organs of the Union State, including administrative organs of a regional and functional nature; appoints elections to the Chamber of Representatives of the Union parliament; approves the budget of the Union parliament ... approves international treaties of the Union parliament, ratified by the parliament".[40] Towards the end of the second section of the doctrine, entitled "military-strategic foundations of military security", once again mention is made of the role of the Supreme State Council:

> "to control the regional grouping of troops (forces) ... by decision of the Supreme State Council of the Union State on the basis of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Belarus' (General Staff of the Armed Forces), during the period of threat, a collegiate organ of military command will be created - the unified command of the regional grouping of troops (forces) ... Organising the maintenance of the military security of the Republic of Belarus' and the Union State during the period of threat, the creation of the organs of military command will be in accordance with the legislative

process of the Republic of Belarus' and the legal acts of the Union State."[41]

The third and final section of the doctrine is entitled "the basis of the economic maintenance of military security" and focusses on ensuring that the state is able to plan for and survive an attack on the country through adequate advance preparation of its economic infrastructure, including maintaining strategic reserves of food, fuel and munitions, civil defence measures; ability to mobilise the economy quickly for war production, etc.[42]

The Union Military Doctrine

The Belorussian military doctrine outlines both the potential use of the regional grouping of troops, as well as the structures involved in their deployment, command and control - at all stages, since they are a force belonging to the Union State, it's the Union State which decides how the force is to be deployed. For that reason, at this juncture it is appropriate to examine what is currently known about the Union military doctrine.

In December 2000, an interview of the current Commander of Ground Forces of the Republic of Belarus', Major-General Yu Portnov, stated that "work is drawing to a close on the single military doctrine for the Union State".[43] A brief interview then appeared, circulated by *Agenstvo Voyennykh Novostey* in January 2001, of the chairman of the commission for national security, member of the parliamentary assembly of the Union State of Russia and Belarus', B Bikkinin, in which he stated that the doctrine would be approved "by the middle of 2001". He stated that the draft version of the doctrine contained "a system of views on the military policy of the Union State [taking into account] the changing conditions of today's world". He also emphasised that, even after the adoption of the new Union military doctrine, Belarus' would still not be in a position where it would have to "send its soldiers in joint operations in hot spots". It would, however, fulfil its obligations both in terms of regional security "in the western direction" and with respect to the Treaty on Collective Security.[44] A couple of months after Bikkinin's interview, another brief report appeared in the well-respected Russian military newspaper, *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, paraphrasing recent remarks by the then Belarussian Minister of Defence, Colonel-General A Chumakov, that both Russia and Belarus' were still involved in "working-out a common military doctrine" for the two countries.[45] According to Russian Defence Minister S Ivanov after his visit to Belarus', the "first item on the agenda" was the "military doctrine of the Union State". In a specific reference to the doctrine, Ivanov stated that it would be "completely open, transparent and published in the media. This will occur after it has been examined and approved by the Council of the heads of state."[46]

There appears to have been no further public mention of the doctrine until the end of December 2001, when a report by the *BelaPAN* news agency stated that at a session of the Supreme State Council, both the Union State's military doctrine and "a plan of work for improving the United regional grouping of troops" had been formally approved.[47] A report issued the following day confirmed that both Presidents Lukashenko and Putin had signed the doctrine into law. Belarussian Minister of Defence Mal'tsev stated that both the military doctrine and the plan were aimed at "maintaining the security of the Union state and were worked out taking into account both the military doctrines and the national security concepts of both countries".[48] Mal'tsev also stated that the Union military doctrine

"evaluated the military threats to the Union State, a plan for neutralising them [and] principles of military organisation of the Union State".[49] Unfortunately, to date (April 2002) no published version of the new Union military doctrine has come to light.

Conclusion

Although it is not as yet possible to make a line by line comparison of the 1992 and 2002 military doctrines, judging by what has been published of the 1992 doctrine, it would appear that a number of important changes have been introduced ten years on. This is hardly surprising, given how the political situation has changed within and outwith Belarus'. In 1992, Belarus' under Shushkevich had just begun on the path of independence and was still very much feeling its way ahead: its decisions to become a non-nuclear power - despite the nuclear legacy left to Belarus' following the collapse of the USSR in 1991 - and a neutral state were clear evidence of the early republic's desire to throw off its Soviet past and emerge as a "non-threat" to its neighbours. It was in many ways (like many of the other republics of the fSU) a new state in a new international environment, attempting to re-establish its identity, not wishing to cause fear or distrust amongst its neighbours. Judging from the analysis of the 1992 doctrine, these laudable aims were carried forth in the doctrine - in the ideas of "containment" and "active defence", emphasising the transitional nature of this period in the history of the republic, moving away from a military strategy based on nuclear weapons to a strategy of cooperation with other states in order to ensure its security.

Ten years later, the nuclear missiles have gone, as has the idea of "active defence"; and cooperation with other states in the military-political sphere has tended to focus almost exclusively on developing a relationship first and foremost with the Russian Federation and secondly with the member-countries of the Treaty on Collective Security. In short, Belarus' is now heavily tied into two main military unions. Whilst both military tie-ins reflect a response to the local situation, as perceived by the military and political elite in Minsk, nevertheless this developing bond has also been in part response to the expansion of NATO. Back in 1992, NATO expansion in this part of the world was not really considered by anyone in particularly serious terms, therefore the 1992 doctrine would not have needed to take this particular factor into account. 10 years later, however, it has already happened and, come November 2002, more of Belarus' neighbours could be added to Poland, as members of NATO. Again, the changing security situation surrounding the country compelled the doctrine to be re-written. If NATO had not expanded would the doctrine still have needed to be re-written? Would Belarus' have dropped its neutral status?

Whilst there may still lack a "common defence space" over the fSU - partly due to the US military presence in Central Asia - Moscow and Minsk can take heart from the way that the gap in their western defences has been plugged comparatively easily. With shared PVO patrols and the Russians operating their early warning missile site at Gantsevichi and the submarine communications centre at Vileyka, the military have managed to ensure that the western regional defence system has been significantly strengthened. The creation of the Unified Regional Grouping of Troops has also helped to secure a potential gaping hole in both countries' defence grid. Belarus' is strategically very important to Russia, but Russia is also very important to Belarus'. Trade between the two countries has helped to cement the relationship further and yet neither of the two states has yet taken the ultimate

plunge into full unification. Belarus' has pushed the harder of the two. Militarily, neither state has openly spoken about the creation of a united armed force: the creation of the unified PVO system is, arguably, the closest they've come: the Unified Regional Grouping of Troops is not a proper military force *per se*, existing for the time being only on paper and only planned to become operational should a military threat arise in the region.[50] True, if brought into action, it will operate under a single command and will pull together both Russia's forces in the West and the entire Belarussian Armed Forces, but that is a possibility that, given no threat, will never materialise.

In general terms, the current military doctrine of Belarus' has been written taking into account the changed circumstances of the state. As C-in-C of the Armed Forces, the president is now in overall charge of the country's military security - the list of "internal threats" does give Lukashenko greater authority to deal with "extremist organisations" as he sees fit. Lukashenko has shown in the run-up to last year's presidential election race that any real challenge to his political authority will not be tolerated (various intimidation tactics were used to "discourage" the country's political opposition) but, internal political opposition aside, the doctrine is not an "aggressive" one, there is a strong emphasis throughout the doctrine on the principle of "collectivity". Through its relationship with Russia, and with the member states of the Treaty on Collective Security, Belarus' sees itself and its security as being tied in with the security of other states. It may have abandoned the earlier declared notion of "neutrality", but it has taken on board the idea of "collective security" instead and therefore should not be treated as a state conducting its affairs in "splendid isolation", never mind "rogue" fashion. Its geographical, political, economic and intellectual position militate against the country embarking on the isolationist road for long. Belarus' has usually been part of something bigger, the Russian Empire or the USSR in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the last century, Belarus' enjoyed very little time as an independent state and this is probably one of the reasons why the state seems to be not all that keen on retaining its independence and more keen on re-integration with its larger neighbour, the Russian Federation. Military cooperation with Russia is part of a wider cultural, economic and political process and simply reflects the fact that Russia has been the single biggest influence on Belarus' for centuries. The new military doctrine not only reflects the changes over the past ten years, both internally and externally, but also reinforces an age-old relationship with Russia and carries on a tradition which pre-dates 2002, 1992 and even 1917. Belarus', as detailed through its doctrine, is not a geopolitical "black hole" in the centre of Europe and should not be treated as such.

ENDNOTES

1 Voyennaya Doktrina Republiki Belarus', http://www.mod.mil.by/doktrina.html, pp1-9; 1. A copy of the Republic's Military doctrine is also to be found at http://www.levonevski.net/pravonews/zakonnew/zakon/z02_74_3.html.

2 Voyennaya Doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii, http://www.scrf.gov.ru/Documents/Decree/2000/706-1.html. Russia's last military doctrine was formally approved on 21st April 2000.

3 O Litskevich, "Prezidenty Belorossii i Rossii utverdili Voyennuyu doktrinu Soyuznogo gosudarstva", BelTA, 28 December 2001.

4 Yu Kas'yanov, "26 dekabrya v Moskve na zasedanii Vysshego Gossoveta soyuznogo gosudarstva byla utverzhdena voyennaya doktrina soyuznogo gosudartsva", BelaPAN, 27 December 2001.

[5] "Belorussian Military doctrine approved", BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB), SU/1571/C-63, 23 December 1992; "Belorussiya: put' k novym gorizontam", M 1996, pp124-126.

[6] G Miranovich, "Natsional'nyye armii: vzglyad obozrevatelya. Belorusskiy variant", *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 4 March 1993. The main reason why there is, as yet, no publicly available version of the 1992 doctrine is simple: it was a classified document. See the report, "Voyennaya doktrina ne predpolagayet professional'noy armii", *Belarus' Segodnya*, 4 October 2001.

[7] Belorussia: put' k novym gorizontam, (M 1996), p124.

[8] Ibid, p125.

[9] P Borodin, "Glavnoye - oborona i ekonomika", *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 25 January 2002.

[10] For example, the Treaty on Military Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus', the Agreement on Joint Maintenance of Regional Security in the Military Sphere (both documents signed in December 1997); the Concept of Joint Defence Policy of Belarus' and Russia (signed in January 1998); the Concept of Security of the Union state of Belarus' and Russia (signed in April 1999); B Bikkinin, "Na zapadnom rubezhe", *Parlamentskaya Gazeta*, 20 January 2000.

[11] "Belorussiya: put' ...", ibid, p125.

[12] Voyennaya doktrina ..., p3.

[13] O Fedulova, "Problemy bezopasnosti I voyennogo sotrudnichestva v ramkakh SNG", *Otechestvennaya Istoriya*, No 5, 2000, 69-84; 71.

[14] "Belorussia: put' ...", ibid, p125.

[15] Voyennaya doktrina ..., pp3, 4, 6, etc.

[16] "Belorussia: put' ...", pp125-126.

[17] Colonel-General P Kozlovskiy, "Belarus' - gosudarstvo mirnoye", *Vestnik Voyennoy Informatsii*, No 7, 1992.

[18] A Fadeyev, "Novaya voyennaya doktrina Belorussii", http://postman.ru/~zatulin/institute/sbornik/046/02.shtml, pp1-3; 1.

[19] "Sovet Bezopasnosti Belorussii rassmotrit segodnya blok voyennykh voprosov", *Agenstvo Voyennykh Novostey*, 8 May 2001.

[20] "Voyennuyu doktrinu obsudyat osen'yu", *Belarus' Segodnya*, 3 September 2001.

[21] "4 oktyabrya 2001. Nizhnaya palata belorussskogo parlamenta prinyala v pervom chtenii zakona o voyennoy doktrine", http://www.embassybel.ru/index.php?action=shownews&new=20.

[22] Ibid.

[23] "Nizhnaya palata rassmatrivaet proyekt novoy voyennoy doktriny", *Belarus' Segodnya*, 11 December 2001; Zakon respubliki Belarus', 3 January 2002, ob utverzhdenii Voyennoy doktriny Respubliki Belarus', http://www.levonevski.net/pravonews/zakonnew/zakon/z02_74_3.html.

[24] Voyennaya doktrina ..., 3 January 2002, http://www.mod.mil.by/doktrina.html, pp1-89; 1.

[25] Voyennaya doktrina ..., ibid.

[26] Ibid, pp1-2.

[27] Ibid, p2.

[28] Ibid, p2.

[29] Ibid, p2.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid. The Treaty on Collective Security was signed on 15th May 1992 in Tashkent by the heads of state from 6 of the 15 ex-Soviet republics, namely Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Subsequently, Azerbaijan signed the Treaty on 24th September 1993; Georgia, 9th December 1993 and Belarus' on 31st December 1993. The Treaty was valid for 5 years and was validated as of 20th April 1994; when it came up for renewal in April 1999, it was not renewed by three states, namely Georgia, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. Thus, in April 2002, its membership comprises Russia, Armenia, Belarus', Kazakhstan, Kirghizia and Tajikistan, http://11.strana.ru/stories/01/09/11/1534/60114.html.

[32] Voyennaya doktrina ..., ibid, p3; the Treaty on the Creation of the Union State, signed on 8th December 1999, contains a number of statements concerning the "functioning of the Regional Grouping of Troops (Forces)" (Article 17); "joint defence policy, co-ordinating

activity in the area of the development of the military, armed forces of the member-states, joint use of one another's military infrastructure and the adoption of other steps to support the defence capability of the Union State" (Article 18), http://whiteworld.ruweb.info/rubriki/000122/000/0108074.htm.

[33] Voyennaya doktrina ..., ibid, p3.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid, p3.

[36] Ibid, p5.

[37] Ibid, p4.

[38] Ibid, p6.

[39] Ibid, p6.

[40] *Rossiyskoye informatsionnoye agenstvo Novosti* - Vysshiy Gosudarstvenyy Sovet, 27 June 2001, http://www.rian.ru/rian/index.cfm?prd_id=547&do_alert=0&msg_id=1001302.

[41] Voyennaya doktrina ..., ibid, p7.

[42] Ibid, pp7-9.

[43] Yu Portnov, "Sleduyushchiy god budet osnovopolagayushchim v formirovanii deesposobnogo mekhanizma vooruzhennoy zashchity soyuznogo gosudartsva, zayavlyayet pomoshchnik ministra oborony Yu Portnov", *BelaPAN*, 11 December 2000.

[44] "Vozmozhnoe utverzhdeniey voyennoy doktriny Soyuznogo gosudarstva Rossii I Belorossii, B Bitkin, *Agenstvo Voennykh Novostey*, 5 January 2001.

[45] "Voyennaya doktrina Soyuznogo gosudarstva', *Nezavsimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, 2 March 2001.

[46] O Falichev, "Voyennaya integratsiya Rossii I Belorussii - effektivnyy otvet na vyzovy vremeni", *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 19 April 2001.

[47] "26 dekabrya v Moskve na zasedanii Vysshego Gossoveta Soyuznogo gosudarstva byla utverzhdena voyennaya doktrina Soyuznogo gosudarstva", *BelaPAN*, 27 December 2001.

[48] "Prezidenty Belarusi I Rossii utverdili Voyennuyu doktrinu Soyuznogo gosudarstva", *BelaPAN*, 28 December 2001.

[49] "26 dekabrya ...", ibid.

[50] This has been admitted by the current Commander of Ground Forces, Belarussian Army, Major-General Yu Portnov. In an interview he gave last year to the Russian MoD's newspaper, *Krasnaya Zvezda*, he stated that: "Every time I'm asked where and how will we see this regional group, I answer: you will see it when there is a real military threat to the Union of Byelorussia and Russia" (Major-General Yu Portnov, "Po yedinym zakonam", *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 2 February 2001).

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