



Russia's National Security Strategy

Anna Maria Dynier

On 2 July, President Vladimir Putin approved Russia's updated national security strategy, which replaces the document from the end of 2015. External threats from Western countries and unfavourable social and demographic processes are considered the most important challenges. In response, the strategy calls for Russia to increase its independence and military and economic capacities. Clearly outlined autarkic tendencies and a limited list of states and institutions with which Russia is ready to cooperate indicate that its authorities will maintain a confrontational model of foreign policy.

Russia's "National Security Strategy" is a basic document that sets the directions for the development of the state's security system. It identifies the most important threats to the state, whether external factors or internal processes, both short- and long-term, and is reviewed every few years. All state institutions coordinated by the president are responsible for its implementation. The secretary of Russia's Security Council submits annual reports on the implementation of the strategy and on the state of state security. In practice, the strategy is an element of Russia's strategic signalling, mainly towards the U.S. and its allies, as well as other powers (China) and post-Soviet states.

Goals and Assumptions of the Strategy. The strategy defines two types of greatest threats to Russia. Military ones are long-term in nature and flow from the outside. Internal ones are related to social, economic and information processes or new technologies. The strategy also indicates the most important priority areas for the authorities, which are the protection of the nation, defence and state security, public welfare, IT, economic spheres, ecology, ensuring scientific and technological development, protection of traditional values, and strategic stability.

Western countries (mainly the U.S.) and NATO are identified as sources of military threats and are viewed as not only working to "destabilise the situation in the world" but also to conduct "hostile actions" (military, economic, political, as well as information and historical campaigns) against Russia. The strategy emphasises that the "Western world" is striving for

confrontation and another arms race, including nuclear. To counter this, the strategy states that Russia should continue to increase the mobilisation potential of its armed forces and invest in the development of new military technologies. An important element of the response should be Russia's independence from the international environment, especially in the food, economic, energy, IT, and scientific fields, as well as strengthen the potential of its own society. This is to reduce threats from the outside, both military and those aimed at weakening the Russian state, such as sanctions imposed by Western states. The strategy also clearly declares that both public and state institutions must be ready to function in times of war. The dangers related to the IT system were also indicated as significant, with the armed forces dedicated to fight cybercrime. In terms of internal threats, the most important ones recognised are a decline in the quality of life, crime, and climate change. In response, the Russian government has announced further actions aimed at supporting the family, developing the health and education system, caring for traditional Russian "spiritual" and patriotic values, through which the society is to be able to counteract the external threats, and the development of a "green" economy.

The strategy clearly indicates the need to further increase the role of the state as the basic guarantor of security for both the inhabitants of Russia and the protection of the citizens of that country living abroad.

Changes Compared to the 2015 Strategy. The document published on 2 July, although significantly different in content from the version from December 2015, is similar in spirit. The most important threats were identified in a similar way, however, their main sources were identified as Western countries that seek to change the state order in Russia. Previously, the challenges were perceived much more broadly, for example, in dangers related to terrorism, including Islamic (ISIS was not directly mentioned in the new version of the strategy) and irregular migration.

In the new strategy, much stronger emphasis has been placed on ensuring Russia's greater independence from the outside world. The way in which the goals of Russian foreign policy are presented has also narrowed to Russia's pursuit of its interests, and developing political cooperation with the U.S. or cooperation in the Arctic has been abandoned. Instead, there are declarations about the development of strategic partnerships with China and India.

Importance of the Strategy. The new security strategy reflects the perception by the Russian political elite of the world as a place of competition, divided into spheres of influence. It reaffirms the importance of the force factor in international relations, which Russia invariably considers key to guaranteeing its security, definitely more important than diplomatic measures. In turn, the current global security architecture was assessed as not responding to contemporary challenges and requiring changes.

Autarkic tendencies are visible in the strategy, especially in the economic dimension. Therefore, it should be expected that Russia will increasingly protect its market even from partner states, such as the CIS countries.

Although the document presents new challenges related to climate change and others, the greatest emphasis is placed on responding to "traditional" military threats. Therefore, Russia will continue to increase the potential of its armed forces, strengthen the "spiritual" and cultural values of the nation and build the self-sufficiency of the state.

Conclusions and Perspectives. Although Russia (like [the U.S.](#) in the Biden administration's temporary strategic guidelines) identifies threats related to terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cyberspace, epidemic security, or climate change as important, it sees completely different measures to resolve them. These are isolationism and cooperation limited to UN forum and Russia-backed

organisations such as the Eurasian Economic Union, along the militarisation of the state and society, instead of democratisation, and not to the broad international cooperation strongly promoted by the Biden administration.

Given the overt anti-Western theme of the newly adopted strategy, it should be expected that Russia will maintain confrontation in its foreign and security policy conduct.

The isolationism visible in the document and the need to build the state's potential during a war indicate that in the coming years, Russia will be even less willing to undertake wider international cooperation than before. Although the document lists the countries Russia wants to cooperate with (mainly members of the CIS and Asian countries), the scope and subject of this cooperation will be limited to the current Russian interests.

Russia will continue to seek to increase its influence in the immediate international environment, using, for example, the pretext of the need to protect their citizens living abroad. It will also strengthen the emphasis on integration with countries such as Belarus. There will also be a further strengthening of trends visible today, like the militarisation of the state and increasing control over the society.

While Russia sees the possibility of acting within the UN framework, where it has a veto, the strategy does not include the will to cooperate within the OSCE or with institutions such as the EU. The strategy also places great emphasis on threats in the information and digital spheres, hence one can expect an intensification of aggressive Russian actions towards Western countries in these areas, justified as the protection of Russia's own media and cyberspace. Further historical campaigns under the pretext of preserving memory and declining reality should also be expected. They will be aimed primarily at countries such as Poland or the Baltic states.

The only scope of cooperation that Russia may be interested in concerns partial arms control and the demilitarisation of space—areas in which other countries, especially the U.S., but also China, have a clear advantage over it.

Considering the structural problems of the Russian state, which were identified in a similar way in previous security strategies, it can be assumed that Russia will be unable to cope with most of the identified challenges, especially in the social sphere or in scientific and technological development. The more so because the document does not impose any obligations related to its implementation on state institutions.