



ATP 7-100.1 Russian Tactics

How Russia Views the Strategic Environment

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This article is an excerpt from the recently published Army Techniques Publication (ATP), 7-100.1 Russian Tactics, and will distill critical concepts from the doctrinal publication into shorter, more digestible pieces. ATP 7-100.1 Russian Tactics is the U.S. Army doctrinal presentation of how Russian ground force doctrine indicates Russian ground forces will approach conflict. This article will examine how Russian political and military decision-makers view the strategic environment and explore how that worldview shapes the structure and missions of the Russian Ground Forces. Material is drawn from Chapter 1: Russian Strategic Overview of ATP 7-100.1.¹

RUSSIA IN COMPETITION

From the time of Peter the Great in the 17th and early 18th centuries to the present day, Russia has sought what it perceives is its rightful place as a world power. This drive is a result of Russia's geopolitical insecurity and a strategic culture and worldview influenced by the size of its territory, length of its borders, and a perception of military encirclement. As a major European power starting in the 18th century and for nearly three hundred years afterward, Russia was a dominant regional and global power. In 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia experienced a significant setback and has struggled with finding its new role in the international community.

Russia's policy statements, including the 2021 National Security Strategy, provide a glimpse into Russian leader's vision for its role. While the Security Strategy is like the one announced in 2015, the tenor of the revised document is stronger, revealing Russia's view of deteriorating relations with the West. For the foreseeable future, this position sets the tone for all Russian national actions and for any interaction with the United States, NATO, and the West.

Russia's relations with the United States are defined by a perpetual state of competition and self-interest. While there are instances of positive interaction on discrete programs, the relations between Russia and the United States remain predominantly competitive. Today's rivalry can be traced back as far as the 1918–1920 Allied invasion of Russia at Archangel and Vladivostok, which included U.S. troops, during the Russian Revolution. Even after the U.S. alliance with the Soviet Union during the Second World War, both countries quickly returned to a competitive stance during the Cold War. Actions during the Cold War up to the present set an enduring tone of competition and confrontation between Russia



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and the United States.

During the Cold War, the rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union escalated and ultimately resulted in massive efforts to undermine and compete with one another. The eventual breakup of the Soviet Union and a turn toward democracy did not resolve this, but rather it paved the way for a new phase of competition and conflict that provides fodder for negative Russian narratives about the United States' role on the international stage. Today, substantial sectors of the Russian population and political structure consider the United States to be the primary cause of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. ***This inherent distrust of the United States and Russia's expanding rivalry with other European countries have exacerbated Russia's distrust of the U.S.-led liberal world order that embraces collective security, economic openness, and social progress.***

Russia's 2021 National Security Strategy holds that Russia's policy pursuits are being restrained by a Western containment strategy via diplomatic, informational, military, and economic methods meant to continue Western dominance. The Security Strategy is complemented by its Information Security Doctrine, and a military doctrine that tasks its armed forces and other security services with defeating aggression against Russia and creating conditions favorable to Russian interests.

RUSSIAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Russia pursues a global strategy driven by a desire to once again be recognized as a world power. Its foreign policy stratagems will endure beyond the current leaders, and it is highly likely that future Russian leaders will pursue these policies for the foreseeable future, given its institutionalization throughout the Kremlin and other bureaucracies. As a world power, Russia believes it can provide stability for countries on its periphery, particularly the former Soviet states, and influence international policy and law away from the liberal international system of the West. To achieve this end state, Russia will give priority to the following strategic objectives: maintaining regional dominance, ensuring protection and security of its national interests as well as the current regime, countering foreign interference, and recognition as a global power.

REGIONAL DOMINANCE:

Russia's quest for regional dominance is a longstanding characteristic of its foreign policy and directly related to its perception of encirclement and containment efforts from the West. Russia believes that maintaining regional dominance will preserve its ability to exert influence in its "near-abroad"—Russia's term for former Soviet states and other nearby countries. *Russia views influence in this region as an effective buffer against potential aggressors and justifies any associated military engagements as purely strategic defensive actions, designed to maintain its bulwark against aggressors.*

PROTECTION AND SECURITY:

Russia's aspirations to have a more significant role on both regional and global stages are underpinned by an essential requirement to ensure protection and security of national interests. Policy and doctrine documents highlight domestic and foreign concerns, and the Russian military is

tasked with ensuring these concerns do not impact the country's desired end state. As an element of national power, Russia openly modernizes and wields its military and nuclear capabilities as a deterrent to aggressors. *Russia is emphasizing the development of structure, composition, and size, as well as improved technologies for these capabilities to engage anticipated internal and external threats.*

COUNTERING FOREIGN INTERFERENCE:

Russia's entire approach to international affairs is driven by the perspective that others are deliberately working to counter its efforts. It views NATO and the United States as the worst perpetrators of this interference and plans for the inevitable requirement to counter that interference. Notably, *Russian policy and doctrine allow for both reactionary and preemptive actions, across all elements of national power, to protect its national interests.*

RECOGNITION AS A WORLD POWER:

All these objectives contribute to Russia's drive to achieve world power status, an end-state it views as necessary to shape the global environment and shift international policy and law away from the current U.S.- led system. To achieve this objective, Russia will continue its efforts to grow its international standing as a foil to the United States, NATO, and the liberal international system. *These include forging key strategic partnerships in regions of the world where the United States lacks a strong foothold and providing political, economic, and military support to regimes friendly to Russia, all the while exploiting and manipulating the information environment to its advantage.*

Russia's national policy statements and doctrine indicate a readiness and willingness to intervene in any international crisis it sees as relevant to its national interests. Russia emphasizes the importance of the diplomatic, informational, and economic elements of national power in recognition of its limited military power projection capabilities. Russia's sophistication in the application of soft power, particularly in the area of information, allows it to seize opportunities to gain strategic objectives. It does use its military capabilities to support sophisticated information operations that focus engagements with the West. Russia continues making progress in upgrading and reforming its military power to expand deterrence and security, however its nuclear arsenal remains its essential military guarantor in safeguarding the nation.

Russian leadership views itself as both an emerging regional leader in a post-unipolar world and as a nation historically under threat by western powers and security structures. These views lead Russian decisionmakers to posture across the diplomatic, information, military, and economic levers of power to allow Russia to deter the United States and its partners short of direct military confrontation. Russia will heavily depend on its strategic forces while coordinating action in the diplomatic, information, and political spheres to create security dilemmas and challenge the cohesion of alliances.

SOURCES

- 1 ATP 7-100.1 Russian Tactics. (2024) 2024. C.1 ed. Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army. https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN40737-ATP_7-100.1-001-WEB-4.pdf



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