

Tomislava Penkova

Russia's New Security Doctrine: "Security through Stable Development"

In 2004 Russia launched the drafting process of its new national security strategy. In June 2008 and especially after the August war with Georgia, President Medvedev urged the finalization of the document. In late March 2009 the security doctrine was almost ready to be issued but a delay occurred once again due to Medvedev's request for some further refinement. Finally, on May 13, 2009 a presidential decree endorsed Russia's overdue new National Security *Strategy* up to 2020, replacing the previous *Conception* drafted in 1997 and updated in 2000 (note the different definition attributed to the two documents in Russian – *Strateghiya* and *Konchep-tchiya*).

As both international and domestic scenarios have radically changed since late 1990s-early 2000, when the previous doctrine¹ was issued, Russia's political class committed itself to work out a new doctrine in line with current reality. The document follows the orientation of major declarations and projects put forward by President

Medvedev in his first year of presidency (July 2008 new Russian Foreign Policy Conception, the proposal for a new security architecture in Europe, the proposal to reform the international financial system, and the latest one on a new energy security architecture). Furthermore, the new Security Strategy is expected to form the basis of other national doctrines such as the Military Doctrine (to be approved by the end of 2009), the Doctrine on Development of the Secret Services and the Policy of Russia in the Arctic Region until 2020 and after.

From the 2000 Conception towards the 2009 Strategy: main trends in security policy

The new Security Strategy² was welcomed in Russia as innovative, useful document clarifying domestic and foreign policy guidelines and the nature of the strategic environment the country is presently facing. The document was even called a sort of a "Constitution of the country's

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Abstract

In May 2009 Russia issued its new National Security Strategy up to 2020, which was welcomed as innovative, realistic and useful document clarifying domestic and foreign policy guiding principles.

Its most salient feature is the approval of a holistic approach to security, i.e. comprising both defence and socio-political priorities.

The doctrine emphasizes Russia's plans to become a "regional state" and to enter the club of the five leading world economies, and affirms that control over energy reserves may lead to the use of force. NATO and the US are still perceived as major threats to national security although they are offered a conditional partnership.

Tomislava Penkova is a Research Assistant at ISPI Program on Russia and EU Eastern Neighbours.

¹ The full text of the previous National Security Conception is available at: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/1.html>.

² The full text of the National Security Strategy is available at: <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>.

security”³. It shows a certain degree of continuity and consistency with Russia’s political and economic priorities as laid down in the Putin’s Plan⁴ and the Conception of Social and Economic Development up to 2020. In other words, the Strategy can be encompassed among the first major results of the transitional process kicked off with the presidencies of Putin and still underway in Russia. The Preamble of the doctrine outlines as key directions of national security those strategic priorities (determined by social, political and economic transformations), which will create the necessary conditions for implementation of Russian citizens’ constitutional rights, attainment of sustainable national development and preservation of territorial integrity and sovereignty. In general, the document signals that “the country has reached a qualitatively new, long-term strategic level of development”⁵, which entails its survival only upon a successful maintenance of sovereignty and society modernization (a recurrent endeavour, at least since Peter the Great)⁶. Here are the main trends indicating this new phase of Russia’s resurgence.

³ B. IASHMANOV - J. GAVRILOV, *112 zapovedei bezopasnosti*, <http://www.rq.ru/2009/05/19/strategia.html>.

⁴ N.N. PETRO, *The Great Transformation: How the Putin Plan Altered Russian Society*, «ISPI Policy Brief», 132, March 2009.

⁵ G. BOVT, *The Doctrine and the Practice*, May 19, 2009, EU-Russia Centre.

⁶ E. KOLESNIKOV, *Russia’s New National Security Strategy*, in «Russia Profile Weekly Experts Panel», May 22, 2009.

Security cannot be achieved by force alone

The most salient feature of the Strategy is the adoption of a broad definition of national security including both the external dimension (US security strategy, for example, refers exclusively to foreign policy and defence) and the internal one⁷. Hence security priorities imply also: development of democracy and civil society⁸, raising citizens’

⁷ Hramchihin observes that in a complex and interdependent world it seems logical that the concept of “security” comprises activities not explicitly related to military affairs. On the contrary, it is the military doctrine that should determine the goals and assignments of military forces aimed at offsetting foreign military threats and providing a guide on how the military apparatus should develop. Hramchihin also points out that the draft of the new Russia’s Military Doctrine foresees that military forces will be in charge of counteracting economic, informational, and socio-political threats, i.e. sectors which do not traditionally belong to military affairs. See A. HRAMCHIHIN, *Sovbez ozabotilsia natchionalnoi bezopasnostiu*, January 16, 2009, http://nvo.ng.ru/forces/2009-01-16/1_sovbez.html.

⁸ It is interesting to note the importance the document attaches to human rights. The Preamble to the section on “State and domestic security” includes among its objectives the protection of “the fundamental rights and freedoms of man and citizen”. Russian security services are expected to suppress any “criminal assault” on human rights, freedoms and property. That section is followed by another dedicated to “Improving Russian citizens’ quality of life”, which apparently entails “improving national human rights protection systems through the development of the judicial system and legislation”.

living standards, defeating demographic decline, support for the middle class, shrinking the gap between poor and rich, improvement of the health-care system, economic growth and competitiveness (to be delivered through transforming the commodity-driven economy into an economy based on innovation), reducing the widespread phenomenon of corruption, scientific and technological advancement, environmental protection and resource conservation. This aspect attributes to security a new, strategic dimension overcoming its traditional (defence-oriented) content and means of implementation. Such an approach recognizes that the major challenges to Russian security belong to its domestic sphere. President Medvedev has summarized this concept into the formula “security through stable development”. What does this mean? “Russia has traditionally relied on a ‘hard power’ vocabulary when constructing its doctrines and strategies, and therefore much more emphasis was always placed on the needs of the military-industrial complex than that of civil society. [Today,] social, economic and humanitarian condition is no less important for providing security than the size of its army [and] much more attention is given to the analysis of domestic problems than to the search for external enemies”⁹. In other words, security can be achieved by combining both national strategic priorities (defence,

⁹ F. LUKYANOV, *A Positive but Confusing Security Strategy*, May 20, 2009.

state and population's security) and socio-political priorities aiming at stabilizing the country's progress and legitimizing federal authorities' governance. It is a decisive acknowledgment bearing somewhat democratic connotations. Yet the link between development and resulting security refers to that peculiar political regime of "sovereign democracy", which still shapes Russian politics.

Less aggressive tone and no prioritizing list of threats

The focus on social and socio-political elements explains the overall less aggressive, more conciliatory tone of the document (with the exception of the use of force for safeguarding national natural reserves – see below) and, at the same time, also its vague language. Moreover, the document often features a continuous swing between cooperation and confrontation with some international players (for example with the US, see below).

Compared to the previous Conception, the Strategy does not envision a clear-cut order of threats. The Conception contained a special section listing an order of threats to national security with the economic situation being placed at the forefront. The Conception recognized that threats in the economic sphere had a complex character and were mainly provoked by a significant GDP drop, decrease of foreign investment, innovation activities, and the technological potential. Negative processes in

Russian economy were primarily due to separatist drives in the country. Indeed, the 2000 Conception was written against the backdrop of the second Chechnya war, identifying terrorism as one of the main threats to national security. Another threat was the lack of conformity of regional legislation to the federal one and even to the Constitution (this problem was subsequently solved through the principle of power verticalization). What is more, the 2000 doctrine warned against the possibility of association of the executive and legislative powers with criminal structures, which were exerting influence over the banking sector and the industrial complex. As for the threats in the foreign realm, they did not differ substantially from the new doctrine (NATO eastward enlargement, the creation of foreign military bases near Russia's borders and consequent weakening of the country's political, economic and military power). This time, the extensive list of threats has been replaced by a "threat part" in every single issue examined. The absence of a prioritizing section on threats points to Russia's ruling elite self-confidence, which allows to have a more detailed and upgraded document¹⁰.

¹⁰ *Vneshniya politika Rossii: interesai, instrumenai, strategii*, May 11-17, 2009, Issue 20, Centr politicheskoi koniunkturai Rossii, p. 9.

A long-term Russian "regional state" model

Russia's security foreign policy is built on the principle of the end of bloc confrontation, search for creating a multipolar world, and a multivector diplomacy based on pragmatism and rationality. The declining US power has allowed Russia to put forward the model of "regional centre" or "regional state"¹¹ (not a hegemonic state) referring to its relationship with the post-Soviet space. The goal is to further consolidate the regional and sub-regional integrationist potential of the states located in the post-USSR area¹². Thus Russia's primary concern is to create an independent centre of power as this is the only chance to build and strengthen its position¹³. Certainly, committing itself to abide by the rules of global clubs cannot provide it with

¹¹ *Strateghiya natsional'noi bezopasnosti RF gotova*, <http://www.gzt.ru/politics/2009/04/29/222502.html>.

¹² Paragraph 8 of the Strategy states that the establishment of new centres of economic growth and political influence has determined a new geopolitical situation, within which regulation of crisis on regional level should be carried out without participation of non-regional forces. Paragraph 41 adds that the main threats to Russia's interests and security on its borders is the possibility of escalation of military conflicts as well as the incompleteness of the international legal regulation of federal borders with some neighbouring states.

¹³ C. BELTON - I. GORST, *WTO tries to make sense of Russia's big rethink*, in «Financial Times», June 13, 2009.

the same power and influence it can enjoy being a “regional state” and coordinating a regional club of its own based on already existing economic, political and military groupings (such as EurAsEc, CIS, CSTO, SCO¹⁴). Securing stable economic (energy included), defence (i.e. defence of national borders and protection there of the current balance of power), and political relations with its neighbours is the ultimate representation of Russia’s external security. However, as this policy has often clashed with the Western agenda regarding the area as well as with the one of some former USSR republics (Georgia, Ukraine), it becomes clear why Russian security is still bound by the (reaction of the) West and is accordingly more Westward looking than China-oriented.

With regard to China, many analysts have noted its absence in the Strategy, an omission that leaves (seemingly) unanswered the question on how Russia is going to react on this rising economic power next to its Eastern borders. China is indeed often perceived as a threat because interested in acquiring as much of hydrocarbon reserves as possible (including the reserves of Central Asia) and often seeking to expand its economic influence over Russia’s Eastern areas

bordering China. Furthermore, China is linked to the “shifting balance of power toward Asia, which will have a significant impact on Russia’s standing in the world. This shift will only gain momentum in the years up to 2020”¹⁵. Such an observation is certainly correct but there can be two explanations of this shortcoming. The first one is what has already been said, namely that currently Russia’s attention is focussed on the West, which more directly and vigorously challenges its plans (see also the recent Prague summit on EU Eastern Partnership). Secondly, the issue of China’s rise is indirectly addressed in different paragraphs such as the one dealing with regional groupings of which China is a member (SCO, BRIC) or the one examining the competition for control over Central Asian energy reserves (see below) or lastly, those identifying the need to diminish the existing social and economic regional gap in Russia. Furthermore, recent BRIC and SCO summits in Russia¹⁶ and the signing of a

¹⁵ F. LUKYANOV, *A Positive but Confusing Security Strategy*, cit.

¹⁶ The BRIC summit decided to push for an increase of the four countries’ voting rights in the International Monetary Fund, back reforms of the international financial system and agreed to call for the creation of a predictable and diversified currency system. At the SCO summit President Medvedev’s efforts to reach a consensus on the introduction of a BRIC common currency met little enthusiasm among SCO members. However, during the summit China decided to grant US \$10 billion for implementation of various economic projects within the organization’s framework. See V.

Memorandum of Understanding on “Eastern gas programme” (a common system of gas production, transportation and supply in the area of East Siberia and the Far East, which will respond to the gas demand of China and other Asian-Pacific countries) during the June Russian-Chinese business forum suggest a significant impetus on the part of Russia as well as on China too to boost regional and bilateral cooperation. Therefore, it will not be wrong to gather that Russia’s strategy *vis-à-vis* China is to combine the mechanisms offered by regional organizations and meanwhile to keep strengthening the internal dimension of security, which in this case once again acquires a crucial importance for Russia’s regional advancement. Finally, it is symptomatic that Russia does not display a desire to unite with other international actors to the detriment of China. Quite the opposite, Paragraph 15, dealing with the SCO, aims at “strengthening mutual respect and partnership” without imposing any condition, as it is instead the case of Russia-US and Russia-NATO relationships (see below).

Overall, the “Strategy attempts to put an end to the debates on Russia’s position in the world and its development model, which started with the dissolution of the Soviet Union”¹⁷. Russia’s role will not be determined by integration encouraged by the West into Western structures

SOLOV’IOV, *Presidentai ne kupilis’ na rezervnuiu valiutu*, in «Kommersant», June 17, 2009.

¹⁷ E. KOLESNIKOV, *Russia’s New National Security Strategy*, cit.

¹⁴ EurAsEC stands for Eurasian Economic Community; CIS stands for Commonwealth of Independent States; CSTO stands for Collective Security Treaty Organization; SCO stands for Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

(as many thought the West should have done in the aftermath of the USSR collapse), neither will it be relegated to a role it does not aspire to. On the contrary, Russia seems determined to play a crucial regional role and by means of this position to propose integrationist models to the West containing clear-cut vision on the balance of power in its near abroad. To confirm this thesis is the fact that after dealing with the post-Soviet space, the Strategy goes on with the EU, with which Russia envisions creating a common economic and security area (i.e. the pan-European collective security system advanced in 2008 by President Medvedev).

The above mentioned “model” is meant to cover a long period of time – up to 2020, assuming, as some analysts have warned considering current economic uncertainty, that the country will not be facing any major turmoil. However, there might be another explanation: the Strategy is a doctrinal document, it refers to the future and as such it provides the key concepts of Russia’s security stance. Their final implementation may well undergo adjustments limited, however, to the Strategy’s general framework.

NATO and the US: from foes to “conditional partners”

The new Strategy confirms Russia’s traditional negative stance on NATO’s eastward enlargement, on US attempt

to dwarf Russia’s nuclear potential by creating anti-missile defence system in Central Europe, and the fear about widening the military and technological gap with the US (despite Russia’s recent determination to strengthen its military apparatus). The text says: “A global security architecture exclusively oriented toward NATO is bound to fail” and Russia “will not cease its vigilance with respect to *plans to move NATO’s military infrastructure closer to its borders* and efforts to give the Alliance a global character, which breach international law”. This equals to a claim that the deployment of NATO forces in operations around the world should be approved by the UN Security Council, where Russia has a veto power. Yet “*Russia is ready to develop a relationship with NATO based on equality* and with a view of strengthening the common security in the Euro-Atlantic region *if NATO shows respect for Russia’s legitimate interests* when implementing its military and political setting up”. The statement clearly refers to Russia’s near abroad considered the foremost priority of its 2008 Foreign policy doctrine. It is a policy of maintenance of the status quo *vis-à-vis* a policy of enlargement of other actors (NATO, the EU), which currently suffer from a lack of internal cohesion. Although the proposal of President Medvedev to create a pan-European security pact is not explicitly mentioned in the Strategy, the negative vision on NATO’s enlargement is designed to stimulate the West (and in particular the

EU) to engage into a dialogue with Moscow on its proposal. The position on NATO suggests also Russia’s reluctance to become its member (collaboration will continue to be developed according to the formula of partnership) or to accept NATO decisions, in which it has not participated. Moreover, according to the Strategy it will be NATO’s responsibility if possible disagreements with Moscow were to arise. It is worth noting that, contrary to the previous Conception where NATO was perceived solely as a threat and Russia did not enjoy any support from inside the Alliance, during the two presidential mandates of Putin, some NATO members took Russia’s part (see 2008 and 2009 NATO summits). It is on them that Moscow can now count on when promoting its policy of conditional partnership.

As for the US, the country is still perceived as a main adversary and a source of most of the threats to Russia’s security. However, in a conciliatory tone (or a response to the recent “hit the reset button” political drive), Moscow admits that it is determined to establish an “*equal and fully-fledged strategic partnership* with the United States *based on coinciding interests*”¹⁸. Such condition can be achieved, in the first place, by reaching an agreement on strategic arms reduction (START I Treaty

¹⁸ The objective of establishing a strategic partnership with the US recalls the opening of Russia in 2001-2002.

expires in December 2009)¹⁹, strengthening confidence building measures, enhancing counter-terrorist cooperation, and regulating regional conflicts. It is a rather sincere acknowledgement that in Russo-US relations there could be divergences but they should not harm the general willingness to cooperate on common goals and threats. Furthermore, throughout the document one can perceive Russia's awareness and growing self-confidence that the economic crisis, which is gradually weakening US might, constitutes an opportunity for Moscow. The very request of establishing a partnership with the "hegemony", as the Strategy often indirectly defines the US, points out to this assumption. Hegemony cannot exist any longer when the hegemonic country is forced to recognize the equal power of another state. It is a crucial and strong message to Barack Obama just weeks ahead of his first presidential visit to Russia in early July, when the two states will search for a common language.

¹⁹ As Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev affirms his country will "make all the necessary efforts at the lowest-cost level to maintain parity with the US in strategic offensive arms in conditions when the global missile defence system is deployed, and the concept of global strike with the use of strategic carriers in nuclear and non-nuclear versions is implemented". See interview of N. PATRUSHEV with *Izvestia*, *Dostoin'i uroven' zhizni – luchshaya strategiya bezopasnosti Rossii*, May 13, 2009, <http://www.izvestia.ru/politic/article3128359/>.

A gloomy vision on energy competition

Paragraph 9 of the doctrine states: "The change from bloc confrontation to the principles of multi-vector diplomacy and the [natural] resources potential of Russia, along with the pragmatic policies of using them has expanded the possibilities of the Russian Federation to strengthen its influence on the world arena". Paragraph 47 links energy and national security: "Sources of danger to national security could become such factors as ... the intensification of the battle over natural resources, among them energy, water and consumer goods".

Authors of the Strategy believe that energy issue and the international competition for access and control of hydrocarbon riches will be a primary concern in world affairs for the foreseeable future. The document even specifies where the major energy geopolitical battlegrounds will take place: in the Middle East, Barents Sea Shelf, Central Asia and the Arctic. It defines "energy security" as a "sustainable balance in supply and demand for standard quality energy resources" and calls for developing global energy markets based on WTO rules (note that Russia is not yet a WTO member and that WTO does not regulate global energy markets), international development and transfers of energy saving or clean technologies. Some have emphasised that the position of the Strategy on the subject indicates continuity with what the 2003 Russia's Energy Strategy up to 2020 says, namely that Russia has

a status of an energy state and its hydrocarbon resources may strengthen the implementation of its domestic and foreign policy²⁰. What however constitutes a novelty in Russia's attitude is the statement that "With the ongoing competition for resources, attempts to use military force to solve emerging problems cannot be excluded and this might destroy the balance of forces on Russia's and its allies' borders". While the importance attached to energy resources should not surprise anyone (energy riches in Russia are comprised in the list of national strategic sectors ruling out any foreign participation), the use of force appears somewhat illegitimate. Its rationale stems from the fact that successive Russian governments have worked hard to try to ensure that oil and gas pipelines, especially those in the post-Soviet space, remain almost totally under Russian control or influence. This is why Russia always highlights the centrality of its near abroad and of the organizations operating there.

More to the point, the use of force recalls the 2008 Foreign Policy doctrine (as summarized in five principles by Medvedev²¹), which "legitimizes" Moscow to counterbalance any aggression to Russian citizens' live and dignity as well as to Russian

²⁰ R. KUPCHINSKY, *Energy and the Russian National Security Strategy*, in «Eurasia Daily Monitor», 6, 95, May 18, 2009.

²¹ <http://www.un.int/russia/new/MaInRoot/docs/warfare/statement310808en.htm>.

business communities wherever they are and especially in the “privileged for Russian interests” area of the post-Soviet space (see the five-day war with Georgia). If this latter element (“first pillar”) seeks to preserve the near abroad from foreign meddling, the statement on the use of force to safeguard control over natural resources (“second pillar”) seeks to preserve the key factor nourishing Russia’s resurgence – the hydrocarbon reserves. Still it seems that, the illegitimate use of force is meant to thwart NATO’s recently voiced readiness to defend its members’ energy security. If this were true, it will confirm the thesis that “Russia’s benevolent control of gas supplies throughout the Central and East European gas markets [aims at] neutralization of the role played by these countries within NATO, along with the unending struggle to increase the profits for Russian companies”²².

Beyond the economic crisis: Russia among the first five world economies

The global economic crisis had a major influence in the formulation of the document, which compares the crisis’ negative worldwide effects with large-scale use of military force. Despite the uncertainty of world affairs in the aftermath of the crisis, the Strategy advances Russia’s most important economic intention that is to enter the

club of the five most advanced world economies in the next five years – an idealistic goal so far. According to the document (Paragraph 55), the main threats in accomplishing this objective are: preservation of the commodity-driven model of economy, loss of control over national hydrocarbon resources, uneven regional development, and weak technological competitiveness of the Russian economy. The solution of seeking an economic model based on innovation and on intensive regional development appears a realistic and even necessary goal. The text recommends the development of industrial and military infrastructures in the Arctic, in East Siberia, the Far East and the Urals areas. Regional development is perhaps one of the sectors where internal security is mostly linked to foreign and energy politics. A closer look at the case of the Far Eastern Russian regions bordering China, where the threat of the steadily increasing Chinese influence is getting stronger, clarifies why is so important for Moscow to promote and boost regional development. In fact, Russia needs to balance its territorial units (federal centre versus periphery) so as to prevent the formation of regional slowdowns favouring external actors’ plans. As for the external dimension of its economy, Russia still counts on the re-organization of global financial order²³ and

²³ “This means creating an alternative. Rather than making merely ‘cosmetic changes as some countries and perhaps the

the shift of world economic centres towards the BRIC, RIC region. However, as the BRIC example shows “there is no prospect of a formal bloc taking shape. The countries’ size, power and assertive international agendas make co-operation difficult on issues other than those where their interests converge. Moreover, the potential for the four countries to share a common voice in international politics is very limited”²⁴.

Conclusion

The newly endorsed Strategy appears a realistic doctrine, when it acknowledges the domestic problems afflicting today’s Russia. It offers certainly an innovative approach when it takes into account citizens’ wellbeing and when includes sections dealing with science, culture, public health, and even with ecology. It is innovative too when it recognizes the tight link between internal stability and external security, namely that there are no purely external or internal threats and that domestic politics necessarily reflect a foreign content. It also appears correct when stressing the

international financial organisations themselves might want’, Medvedev concluded thus his [SCO summit] speech: “What we need are financial institutions of a completely new type, where particular political issues and motives, and particular countries, will not dominate”. See M. HUDSON, *Washington cannot call all the shots*, in «Financial Times», June 14, 2009.

²⁴ *BRIC, but no bloc*, The Economist Intelligence Unit, June 16, 2009.

²² R. KUPCHINSKY, *Energy and the Russian National Security*, cit.

need to undertake a comprehensive economic modernization. However, it seems idealistic or at least it is too early to predict whether and how the country will succeed becoming one of world's five leading economies in the medium term²⁵, especially in a moment of global economic crisis²⁶. In this regard, the Strategy fails to assess the risks related to the failures of capitalism, liberalism and globalization that we are currently facing and to offer them an alternative viable to save Russian economy and to bring it among the top world economies. "The cardinal, and perhaps rhetorical, question of whether the current somewhat statist, somewhat free-market, somewhat liberal, and clearly globalized Russian model of development espoused in the strategy will work in the new circumstances remains un-addressed"²⁷.

On the whole, the new Security Strategy allows to obtain greater domestic consensus, which is fundamental for building a viable and stable society after years (during Putin's two presidential mandates) when

the country strength seemed having only an external reach and the desire to restore Russia's international image was the key-guiding factor. After "the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the XX century", as Putin called the collapse of the Soviet Union, the country is now gradually accomplishing the right balance between its internal and external dimension.

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ISPI
 Palazzo Clerici
 Via Clerici, 5
 I - 20121 Milano
www.ispionline.it

Per informazioni:
ispi.policybrief@ispionline.it
ispi.policybrief1@ispionline.it

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²⁵ The Strategy envisions three periods to accomplish its tasks: short-term (2012), medium-term (2015) and long-term (2020).

²⁶ Some have criticised the timing of the doctrine as the worst possible to introduce a new strategy as the political consequences of the global financial crisis are largely unclear. See R. McDERMOTT, *Russia's National Security Strategy*, in «Eurasia Daily Monitor», 6, 96, May 19, 2009.

²⁷ E. KOLESNIKOV, *Russia's New National Security Strategy*, cit.