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Towards a Dual Fleet?

The Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation and the Modernisation of Russian Naval Capabilities

Dr. Richard Connolly¹

This review examines Russia's Maritime Doctrine and whether Russia possesses the material capabilities to meet the objectives contained within it. Russian thinking on the subject of naval policy attracted increased attention after the deployment of the aircraft-carrying cruiser, the *Admiral Kuznetsov*, to the eastern Mediterranean in autumn 2016 as part of a larger flotilla comprising cruise missile-capable ships and submarines. This surprised some observers, and served as a vivid demonstration of an increasingly assertive Russian foreign and security policy. However, the deployment of naval force to the Mediterranean would not have surprised those familiar with the updated maritime doctrine (*Morskaya doktrina*) that was published in July 2015.² This doctrine signaled the intentions of the Russian leadership to maintain a permanent naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean in support of wider Russian foreign and security objectives. It also sets out a series of other objectives, including the construction of a modern navy equipped with qualitatively new weapon systems. Taken as a whole, the doctrine sheds light on the role that the Russian leadership envisages for the navy in supporting Russia's pursuit of its wider security, economic and foreign policy objectives.

To date, relatively little has been written in English about the content of the revised



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Printed copies of this paper can be obtained by contacting Mary Di Martino at m.dimartino@ndc.nato.int

Research Division

Jeffrey A. Larsen, PhD, Division Head
NATO Defense College
Via Giorgio Pelosi, 1
00143 Rome – Italy
website: www.ndc.nato.int

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¹ Dr Richard Connolly is director of the Centre for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies (CREES) at the University of Birmingham, associate fellow of the Russia and Eurasia programme at Chatham House, and visiting professor of public policy at the Academy for the National Economy in Moscow. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NATO Defense College or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

² Security Council of the Russian Federation (2015) *Morskaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii* [Maritime doctrine of the Russian Federation]. <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/18/34.html>

doctrine, and what has been written has misrepresented the objectives stated within the document. For instance, Michael Kofman describes the document as ‘incredibly ambitious ... with visions of carriers, multirole landing ships, new destroyers, and a host of platforms indicating parity with the U.S. and power projection across blue waters in the maritime domain.’³ But these grand visions are the interpretation of the author, and are not stated anywhere in the doctrine. Indeed, no reference to specific weapons systems or types of ship is made in the document. Nor is any reference made to achieving or even approaching parity with the US navy. The absence of a sober assessment of the doctrine’s objectives makes the need for this review much more urgent.

But given the protracted economic slowdown that is putting pressure on Russian military expenditure, and in the light of some problems encountered during the production of new vessels as part of the naval modernization programme, it is also worth considering whether Russia’s economic capabilities are sufficient to realize the aspirations contained in the updated doctrine.

This paper reviews the new Maritime Doctrine. First it sketches out a comparison with the previous edition, published in 2001, and then it assesses the key objectives outlined in the new 2015 version. It then turns to examine the progress in implementing what is an ambitious naval modernization programme, along with an assessment of how this programme has been affected by financial and industrial constraints, illuminating the discussion in Russia about the Doctrine. The final section considers whether the naval force structure that is emerging is fit for the purpose of realizing Russia’s maritime ambitions.

While the financial and industrial constraints facing the Russian navy are considerable, the emerging force structure – while far from optimal and not what was intended at the outset of Russia’s military modernization programme – should be sufficient to fulfill the objectives outlined in the updated doctrine. This is because the updated doctrine does not state global power projection as its core objective; instead, Russian interests are defined as existing much closer to home. As a result, a

dual fleet comprising larger Soviet-era legacy vessels and newer, smaller vessels equipped with long-range missiles should be sufficient to equip the Russian navy for its key strategic missions.

The Maritime Doctrine

The updated maritime doctrine, signed by President Putin in July 2015, superseded the maritime doctrine that was approved in 2001.⁴ The 2001 doctrine suffered from several key defects. It was a non-binding document, and lacked any real relationship with other strategic planning documents that were being drafted at around the same time. As a result, in policy terms, the doctrine represented more a set of abstract desiderata rather than a set of achievable objectives. Moreover, the unfavourable economic conditions of the early 2000s, when defence spending remained at historically low levels despite the resumption of economic growth, along with the neglect of the fleet in the 1990s after the dramatic reduction in military spending that accompanied economic reform, left the Russian fleet in a parlous state, and ill-equipped to meet the ambitions contained in the doctrine. The reduction in funding for naval activities and procurement was so severe that the Russian navy was unable to procure new vessels or to fulfill even the most rudimentary maintenance and training duties, let alone assert the country’s interests far from Russia’s shores. The loss of the *Kursk* nuclear submarine in the summer of 2000 exemplified the crisis that the navy found itself in after over a decade of spending cuts.

Much changed during the intervening period between the publication of the maritime doctrine in 2001 and its successor in 2015. First, from the middle of the decade, there was a resurgence in interest in strategic planning across key areas of public policy in Russia.⁵ Consequently, greater attention was paid to ensuring that strategic planning documents were feasible and coordinated with one another to represent a more coherent whole. Second, for 13 of those 15 years, the economy grew, giving the leadership the confidence

3 M. Kofman, *The Russian Navy: Strategies and Missions of a Force in Transition*, Centre for International Marine Security, 23 November 2015, at: <http://cimsec.org/russian-navy-strategies-missions-force-transition/20144>

4 Security Council of the Russian Federation (2001), *Morskaya doktrina Rossiyskoy Federatsii* [Maritime doctrine of the Russian Federation].

5 See J. Cooper, 2012. ‘Reviewing Russian strategic planning: The emergence of strategy 2020’

NATO Defense College, Rome (June 2012) <http://www.ndc.nato.int/research/series.php?icode=9>

to embark on an ambitious rearmament programme, particularly from 2010 onwards.⁶

The wider international environment also significantly changed. While the 2001 doctrine highlighted Russian concerns about NATO, this became more pronounced, and the perception in Moscow of NATO encroachment was more acutely felt. Russia's annexation of Crimea, with its key role as home of the Black Sea fleet, also made reintegration of Crimea with Russia and a strengthening of the Black Sea fleet both urgent tasks from 2014. This all formed part of a heightened perception of threat felt by Russia's leadership that necessitated the mobilization of resources to deal with what it felt to be a threatening and dangerous international environment.⁷

It is in this context, therefore, that the new, updated doctrine was drafted and then published. It contains a description of what Russian policy-makers consider to be the key objectives of its national maritime policy, as well as an outline of the key functional areas of maritime policy that are of interest to Russia. Some main objectives remain, for the most part, formulaic and largely unchanged from the 2001 doctrine, including the statement of the inviolability of the sovereignty of the Russian Federation, and a commitment to freedom of vital sea-lanes and the protection of human life.⁸

Nevertheless, there are significant – if sometimes subtle – changes from the 2001 doctrine. The claim, for instance, to exclusivity of jurisdiction over the exploration, exploitation and conservation of natural resources located on Russia's continental shelf is augmented in the 2015 document with references to the "participation of military components" of Russia's marine capabilities in ensuring this exclusivity of jurisdiction.⁹ From this we may infer that policy-makers in Russia see the Arctic as an area for potential military conflict in the future. Indeed, the

decision to showcase Russia's Arctic warfare capabilities in the Victory Parade in May 2017 is a clear signal that policy-makers consider this to be an important direction of potential military conflict in the future.¹⁰

There is also a concise statement of the key functional areas of maritime policy that are most important to Russian national interests. The doctrine states that Russia's commercial transport fleet and infrastructure (ports, service infrastructure, etc.) should be modernised to ensure that Russia remains competitive in maritime trade and transport.¹¹ The Russian fishing fleet, along with the associated infrastructure, is also identified as in need of modernization.¹² Unsurprisingly, given the vast hydrocarbon reserves estimated to lie in contiguous areas off Russia's coast, considerable attention is paid to the importance of supporting Russian efforts to develop marine mineral and energy resources, as well as protecting offshore pipelines that are of vital importance to Russia's energy industry.¹³ Finally, the doctrine also highlights the importance of undertaking marine scientific research better to understand anthropogenic processes that are affecting the sea and that may affect Russian national security.¹⁴

These functional areas of maritime policy can be considered the key policy areas in which Russian objectives must be secured. Although these areas are not military in nature, the Russian navy is described as the ultimate means of securing Russian objectives in these areas. The navy (*voenno-morskoy flot*) is described as both the "main component" of Russia's marine potential and one of Russia's primary foreign policy tools.¹⁵ As an instrument of policy, the navy is described as both crucial to Russia's security, and also in projecting Russia's presence across the world's oceans.¹⁶ In this respect, it is possible to see the navy performing a dual function: on the one hand, ensuring Russian territorial security; and

6 J. Cooper, 2016. *Russia's State Armament Programme to 2020: A quantitative assessment of implementation 2011-2015*, Stockholm: FOI; R. Connolly and C. Senstad. 2017 (forthcoming) 'Russian rearmament: An assessment of defence-industrial performance,' *Problems of Post-Communism*.

7 A Monaghan, 2016, 'Russian state mobilization. Moving the country on to a war footing', *Chatham House Russia and Eurasian Programme Research Paper*, London: Royal Institute for International Affairs.

8 *Morskaya doktrina*, 2015, §5.

9 *Ibid.* §5b.

10 'Minoborony vpervyye pokazhet arkticheskuyu voyennuyu tekhniku na parade Pobedy [For the first time, the Ministry of Defence will display Arctic military equipment at the Victory parade], *RIA Novosti*, 5 April 2017, at: https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20170405/1491528283.html

11 *Ibid.* §§19-20.

12 *Ibid.* §26.

13 *Morskaya doktrina*, 2015, §§28-29 & §§30-32.

14 *Ibid.* §§33-35.

15 *Ibid.* §41.

16 *Ibid.* §43.

on the other hand, flying the flag abroad. The two are not necessarily equivalent. This distinction is worth bearing in mind when Russia's ability to achieve its maritime objectives is considered below.

Having defined Russian objectives and key maritime interests, the doctrine summarises Russia's maritime interest by geographic area. These areas of interest are certainly broad in scope, encompassing the Atlantic, Arctic, and Pacific Oceans, the Caspian Sea, the Indian Ocean and Antarctic.¹⁷ However, this should not be interpreted as suggesting that all areas are of equal importance, and more detailed attention is given to areas that are likely of greater importance to Russian policy-makers.

The first, and probably the most important, area discussed is the area in the "Atlantic direction". Here, Russian policy is conditioned by NATO's 'unacceptable' moves to develop military infrastructure up to Russia's borders, and the Alliance's plans to perform 'global functions' in the area.¹⁸ The document characterises the Atlantic region as suffering from 'imperfect legal mechanisms' to guarantee international security, complaints that are frequently repeated elsewhere in Russian strategic planning documents.

However, the Atlantic region is broadly defined, encompassing the Baltic and Black Seas, as well as the Mediterranean and the wider Atlantic Ocean. Very little attention is paid in the document to the north Atlantic specifically, an area of activity that would require a well-equipped blue water navy to assert Russian interests. Instead, the doctrine focuses on areas closer to Russian shores, such as the need to continue developing the economic and natural resource potential of the Baltic Sea.¹⁹

More attention in the broad "Atlantic direction" is paid to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. In the Black Sea, a wide range of objectives are stated, including strengthening military forces in the region to ensure

Russian sovereignty over Crimea, accelerating efforts to exploit the natural resources in the offshore zone, reintegrating Crimea into the wider Russian economy, and in supporting the development of a robust ship-building industry in Crimea.²⁰

In the Mediterranean, the thrust of the doctrine is exclusively of a military nature, with the authors expressing the desire to turn the region into a zone of 'military-political stability'.²¹ The precise focus of Russia's Mediterranean policy, however, remains unclear: Russia's recent actions in the region suggest the eastern Mediterranean (i.e. the area near Syria), but it is possible that the region enjoys a broader meaning in Russian thinking. The desire for a permanent presence (*postoyannoy osnove*) in the region is explicitly stated.²² This is the only area where such a desire is expressed in the whole document. It is also noteworthy that the doctrine states that Russia's Mediterranean policy requires further bolstering of the military infrastructure in Crimea and Krasnodar,²³ suggesting that Russia's renewed assertiveness in the Mediterranean is directly related to the annexation of Crimea.

Judging by the volume of attention devoted to discussing it, the Arctic appears to be comparable in importance to the Atlantic direction. Here, it is argued that the region is important because of the role it plays in ensuring that the Russian fleet has access to both the Atlantic and Pacific.²⁴ The region's reserves of natural resources and the potential for their exploitation are also emphasized, as is the potential importance of the Northern Sea Route.²⁵ While the economic potential – as well as the importance of developing the Arctic seas for Russia's onshore regional development – is stressed, it is again noteworthy that the military dimension of the Arctic is mentioned before the social and economic aspects, in particular the need to reduce threats to national security and to ensure strategic stability in the Arctic region.²⁶ The need to restrict foreign naval activities from operating in waters considered to be Russian (by Russian officials, if

17 *Ibid.* §§49-72.

18 *Ibid.* §52.

19 *Ibid.* §55.

20 *Morskaya doktrina*, 2015, §57.

21 *Ibid.* §58a.

22 *Ibid.* §58b.

23 *Ibid.* §58c.

24 *Ibid.* §59.

25 *Ibid.* §59.

26 *Ibid.* §59a & b.

not the international community) is also emphasized.²⁷ To achieve this, it is stated that Russia's naval potential, particularly the Northern Fleet, should be strengthened.

Considerable attention is given to outlining the long-term challenges to be addressed to ensure the successful exploitation of the Arctic. First, and probably foremost, is the need for the continued development of the technological base required to ensure successful exploration and exploitation of the fuel and energy reserves of the Arctic.²⁸ The desire to develop the nuclear icebreaker fleet and a modern infrastructure for their use is also expressed, which is viewed as entailing a wider modernization of the network of Arctic ports, supporting naval facilities and border infrastructure.²⁹

The overall message from the passage on the Arctic seems to be that Russian policy-makers consider the area to be of immense future importance, and that they would prefer that states operate according to stable and legitimate legal frameworks. However, the emphasis on the military dimension suggests that Russian confidence in a rules-based approach is weak. As a result, capable and sophisticated military forces, including naval, will be required to ensure the protection of Russian interests in the Arctic.

The other geographic regions covered in the doctrine receive less attention. In the Caspian, more attention is paid to the need to exploit the region's natural resources and to cooperate with other littoral states than to the military dimension, presumably reflecting Russian confidence in its clear military superiority in the region.³⁰ While the Pacific section expresses the generic desire to ensure strategic stability in the region, it is notable that more attention is paid to stressing the potential for cooperation in the region than, for instance, in the Atlantic direction.³¹ A similar emphasis on the potential for cooperation is also found in the short section

on the Indian Ocean, with the doctrine stressing the need to support Russia's joint shipping activities in the region.³² The nature of these joint activities is not made clear, although it is likely to encompass both commercial and military activities. Finally, a short section asserts Russia's interests in the Antarctic, encouraging the use and further development of the Antarctic Treaty as the basis for international interaction in the region. As with the Arctic region, Russia's desire for a rules-based system is repeated.³³

One area in which the updated doctrine is completely different from the 2001 version is in its emphasis on the importance of supporting the development of the domestic shipbuilding industry for both civilian and military purposes. Particular emphasis is placed on developing the capabilities required for military shipbuilding and to support the exploitation of the Arctic region.³⁴ It is clear that the authors of the document attach considerable importance to the development of Russia's domestic technological and infrastructural capabilities so that Russia remains independent in productive capabilities in this area, a desire that was also expressed in the National Security Strategy published in 2015.³⁵ Indeed, the maritime doctrine serves as a justification for the import substitution (*importozameshcheniye*) programme initiated in 2015 that is intended to invigorate Russian industrial development and reduce its dependence on imported technology used for military production and for the exploitation of offshore natural resource deposits.³⁶ In addition to ensuring Russia's industrial and technological independence in shipbuilding, the doctrine also emphasizes the need to develop the "mobilization readiness" (*mobilizatsionnoy gotovnosti*) of the industry, a sentiment consistent with wider efforts to develop Russia's mobilisational preparedness for conflict.³⁷

Finally, the updated doctrine contains a clear delineation

27 *Ibid.* §61h.

28 *Ibid.* §61a.

29 *Ibid.* §61h.

30 *Ibid.* §67.

31 *Ibid.* §65.

32 *Ibid.* §69a.

33 *Ibid.* §71 a-c.

34 *Ibid.* §78.

35 R. Connolly, 'Towards self sufficiency? Economics as a dimension of Russian security and the *National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation to 2020*,' *Russian Studies Research Review* 01/16, Rome, NATO Defense College, 2016; Security Council of the Russian Federation, 2015. *Strategiya natsional'noy bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii do 2020 goda* [National security strategy of the Russian Federation up to 2020], <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/40391>

36 *Morskaya doktrina*, 2015, §77a-c. On Russia's import substitution programme, see: R. Connolly and P. Hanson, 2016. 'Import substitution and economic sovereignty in Russia,' *Chatham House Russia and Eurasian Programme Research Paper*, London, Royal Institute for International Affairs.

37 *Ibid.* §77o. *Ibid.*; Monaghan, 2016; J. Cooper, 2016. *If war comes tomorrow: how Russia prepares for armed aggression*. Whitehall Report 4-16, London, Royal United Services Institute. https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201608_whr_4_16_if_war_comes_tomorrow.pdf

of the role of state authorities in the formulation and implementation of maritime policy, and outlines plans for the creation of additional institutional capabilities to foster a more coherent maritime policy in the future.³⁸ This is clearly an attempt to create sufficient administrative capacity to ensure that the maritime doctrine does not remain a list of unmet abstract objectives. To this end, a Marine Board (*morskaya kollegiya*) – created in 2013 – exists to direct and coordinate strategic planning in support of achieving the objectives set out in the doctrine.³⁹ The board is chaired by Dmitry Rogozin, the deputy prime minister with responsibility for the defence industry. Alongside Rogozin, the board is comprised of several deputy chairmen, including the commander of the Russian navy, Vladimir Korolev, the minister of natural resources and ecology, Sergey Donskoy, the new minister for economic development, Maxim Oreshkin, and the minister of transport, Maxim Sokolov.⁴⁰ The Marine Board played a key role in drafting the updated doctrine by coordinating the work of 15 different departments while liaising with the Presidential Administration.

To sum up: the updated maritime doctrine is an ambitious and broad-ranging document. It encompasses a wide array of social, economic and political objectives tied to Russia's maritime policy, extending from the Arctic to the Antarctic, and from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean. However, caution should be exercised before interpreting Russian intentions as expressed in the doctrine to be truly global in nature. This is because there is a clear sense of priority contained throughout the doctrine.

In line with other official security and foreign policy strategies published in the last few years, much of the military threat to Russia is presented as emanating from the western direction, especially near the Black Sea and Mediterranean. The Arctic region is also singled out as an area where military conflict may become more likely in the future, a perception informed by Russia's estimate of the immense economic potential of the region. In practice,

the Indian Ocean, Antarctic and even large parts of the Pacific are unlikely to be of as much concern to Russian policy-makers, and, accordingly, receive less attention in the doctrine. As a result, the doctrine suggests, quite unsurprisingly, that Russia's core interests are defined as existing closer to its shores.

Discussion of the doctrine

Discussion of the updated doctrine within Russia was rather muted. What has emerged came from two circles: the Russian navy, and from commentators on military affairs located within the media and think tanks.

Subsequent to the approval of the doctrine, two articles appeared in the Russian navy's monthly journal, *Morskoy Sbornik*. Neither article was critical of any key elements of the doctrine, but both highlighted areas where the authors felt implementation of the doctrine might prove especially challenging.

The first article, published in the November issue of 2015, argues that the focus on the development of the Arctic region was a crucial component of the doctrine.⁴¹ The authors – both of whom are currently civilians engaged in research on maritime policy – state that Russia's approach to the Arctic region is essentially defensive, but nevertheless requires the development of new weapon systems tailored to the Arctic environment that would enable Russia to protect its interests in the region.⁴² Moreover, the authors stress the importance of developing the onshore infrastructure in Arctic regions to ensure that Russian offshore interests are protected.⁴³ Only by ensuring a balanced development of onshore and offshore capabilities, the authors suggest, will Russia be able to guarantee its interests in the region. The authors conclude by refuting the binary argument that Russia, as a land power, should not focus on maritime development. Instead, they state that the development of the maritime Arctic will help strengthen Russia's position as a continental power.⁴⁴

38 *Ibid.* §§ 93-102.

39 *Morskaya doktrina*, 2015, §97

40 Information on the composition and activities of the Marine Board can be found on its website: <http://mk.esimo.ru/portal/portal/arm-mk/%D0%93%D0%B%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%8F>

41 S. Kozmenko and A. Bryzgalova, 'Povysheniye roli VMF i arkticheskikh «voyenno-morskikh ZATO» v usloviyakh realizatsii novoy Morskoy doktriny Rossii,' [Enhancing the role of the navy and Arctic 'closed territorial-administrative zones' in the implementation of the new Russian Maritime doctrine], *Morskoy Sbornik*, November 2015, pp. 60-64.

42 *Ibid.* p.62.

43 *Ibid.* p.63.

44 *Ibid.*

A month later, a second article in *Morskoy Sbornik* was published in response to the updated doctrine.⁴⁵ This article was notable because it was co-authored by the retired former commander-in-chief of the Russian navy, Fleet Admiral Vladimir Ivanovich Kuroyedov. Here, the authors focus on the problems that previously existed in the lack of state capacity and coordination in the realm of maritime policy.⁴⁶ According to the authors, it was the fragmented nature of the maritime policy process that hindered previous attempts to fashion a coherent maritime policy.⁴⁷ They state that much responsibility for the success or otherwise in achieving the objectives laid out in the doctrine will be carried by the Marine Board, which is charged with ensuring a coordinated maritime policy.

While the response of the Russian navy focused on specific elements of the doctrine, commentary in the Russian media tended to be more critical, focusing on what most observers view as the remote probability of meeting the objectives stated in the doctrine. For most commentators, the economic slowdown that has gripped Russia since 2013, and the consequent squeeze on military funding, means that the material resources required to develop the shipbuilding industry will be insufficient to meet the stated objectives.⁴⁸ The scarcity of funding is, they argue, further exacerbated by deficiencies in domestic shipbuilding that have in turn been worsened by sanctions imposed by Ukraine and Western countries.⁴⁹

Ambitions and capabilities: too wide a gap?

The relationship between means and ends is central to any discussion of strategy writ large and in particular whether the stated objectives contained within Russia's

updated maritime doctrine are attainable. For the Russian critics of the doctrine there is a clear disparity between stated ambitions and actual capabilities. It is, therefore, worth considering the extent of the financial and technological constraints that may impose limits on Russian naval capabilities in the future.

Financial constraints

Although the pace of economic growth in Russia has slowed down markedly over the past six years, total Russian military expenditure grew rapidly as the modernization of the Russian armed forces emerged as a key policy priority. Against the backdrop of an ambitious plan to modernize the equipment used by Russia's military forces – embodied in the ten-year state armaments programme (*gosudarstvennaia programma vooruzheniia*, GPV-2020) – military expenditure grew faster than all other areas of federal government spending. As a result, the share of military expenditure in gross domestic product (GDP) rose from 3.8 percent in 2010 to 5.5 percent in 2015. Within this, the amount allocated to the procurement of military equipment also rose sharply, growing from 1 percent of GDP in 2010 to 2.4 percent of GDP in 2015.⁵⁰ The amount allocated to the annual state defense order (*gosudarstvennyi oboronnyi zakaz*, or GOZ) was augmented with state guaranteed credits (SGCs) provided via state-owned banks, as well as funding channelled through other ministries, such as the Ministry of Industry and Trade, which funded the development of industrial projects with military applications.⁵¹

To develop and build new models of corvettes, frigates, and submarines, as well as to upgrade and refurbish older warships, such as the *Kirov*-class and *Slava*-class cruisers, and the *Antey*-class and *Shchuka B*-class attack submarines, naval procurement was assigned

45 V. Kuroyedov and M. Moskovenko. 'O realizatsii Morskoy doktriny Rossiyskoy Federatsii' [On the realisation of the Maritime doctrine of the Russian Federation], *Morskoy Sbornik*, December 2015, pp. 35-41.

46 *Ibid.* pp. 36-37.

47 *Ibid.* p.40.

48 For instance, see: Y. Resheto, 'Novaya Morskaya doktrina Rossii vyzvyayet voprosy' [New Maritime doctrine raises questions], *Deutsche Wells*, 28 July 2015, at: <http://www.dw.com/ru/a-18611735>; 'Novaya Morskaya doktrina Rossii – deklaratsiya ili plan deystviy?' [Russia's new Maritime doctrine – declaration or action plan?] *Russia Today*, 4 August 2015, at: [http://argumenti.ru/army/n498/409279](https://russian.rt.com/inotv/2015-08-04/Novaya-Morskaya-doktrina-Rossii-; Y. Vyatkin, 'Novaya Morskaya doktrina Rossii' [Russia's new Maritime doctrine], Argumenty nedeli</i>, 30 July 2015, at: <a href=); and A. Golts, 'Kremlin's new naval doctrine misses the boat,' *Moscow Times*, 3 August 2015, at: <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/kremlins-new-naval-doctrine-misses-the-boat-op-ed-48714>

49 R. Pukhov, 'Zachem ponadobilas' novaya redaktsiya Morskoy doktriny' [Why a new version of the Maritime doctrine is needed], *Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye*, 28 August 2015, at: http://nvo.ng.ru/gpolit/2015-08-28/13_doktrina.html; V. Sychev, 'Vidimost' sopernichestva. Pochemu ne srobotayet novaya Morskaya doktrina Rossii' [The visibility of rivalry. Why Russia's new Maritime doctrine won't work] *Slon.ru*, 29 July 2015, at: <https://republic.ru/posts/54584>.

50 J. Cooper, 2016; R. Connolly, 'Hard Times? Defence Spending and the Russian Economy,' *Russian Analytical Digest*, Zurich: Centre for Security Studies, 2017, pp.2-5, at: <https://www.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-security-studies/pdfs/RAD195.pdf>; R. Connolly and C. Senstad, 2017.

51 A. Nikolsky, 'Russian Defense and Dual-Use Technology Programs,' *Moscow Defense Brief*, No.5, 2015, pp.18-20.

around 25 percent (Rub 5 trillion) of the sum committed to rearmament (c. Rub 20 trillion).⁵²

However, after peaking in 2015, overall defence procurement spending is scheduled to decline over the next few years as weak economic growth is expected to exert pressure on government spending and as current weapons development programmes reach maturity.⁵³ Due to the protracted economic slowdown that has afflicted the Russian economy since 2013, tax revenues have declined, causing the federal budget deficit to expand to over 3 percent of GDP in 2016. Because of the desire in the leadership to reduce the size of the budget deficit, plans have been made to reduce federal government spending across nearly all spheres of government over the next three years so that the budget deficit can be nearly entirely eliminated.

Due to its political importance, however, defence spending is likely to be cushioned from a severe reduction in expenditure. Even so, military expenditure, and with it procurement, is scheduled to decline slowly over the next three years.⁵⁴ As a result, President Putin has encouraged the defence industry to focus on the 'optimisation' of defence spending (i.e. the more efficient use of existing resources) and 'diversification' of defence-industrial production (i.e. a shift away from state defence orders as the primary source of sales towards civilian production and arms exports).⁵⁵

Not only is overall procurement likely to decline, but also the navy is unlikely to receive such a large share of the funding under the new armaments programme (GPV-2025) that is scheduled to replace the existing programme (GPV-2020) by 2018. According to analysts from the Moscow-based think tank, CAST, the navy is

likely to play the part of "Cinderella" (i.e. receive a smaller allocation of budgetary funds than her other 'sister' armed services) as Russia's land and air-space forces are allocated larger shares of a reduced procurement budget.⁵⁶ This view was reiterated by senior Russian officials who have indicated that future procurement will focus on smaller designs, bolstered by upgrades to older and larger vessels.⁵⁷ Although new ships will continue to be built, the reduction in funding will certainly impose constraints on the Russian navy's ability truly to modernize its fleet.

Shipbuilding constraints

As the financial resources available for naval procurement begin to diminish, the efficient use of scarcer resources will become more important. However, the ability of Russian shipyards to build high quality ships on time, on budget, and in sufficient quantities remains open to question after a mixed performance over the past 5 years in meeting the modernization objectives of the GPV-2020.

While steady but significant progress has been made in building *Borey*-class (Project 955) strategic missile submarines (SSBNs) that will gradually replace the ageing fleet of Delta III and Delta IV submarines, progress in building more than one of the expensive *Yasen*-class (Project 885) multipurpose nuclear-powered submarines has been much slower.⁵⁸ Only one *Yasen*-class submarine has been delivered to date, with production now focused on an updated model (Project 885M).⁵⁹ The original objective of acquiring seven *Yasen*-class submarines by 2020 will not be met, although there are currently five submarines at various stages of construction.⁶⁰ Due

52 CAST, 'Gosudarstvennyye programmy vooruzheniya Rossiyskoy Federatsii: problemy ispolneniya i potentsial optimizatsii' [The state armaments program of the Russian Federation: problems of performance and optimization] Moscow, CAST, 2015.

53 R. Connolly, 2017.

54 *Ibid.*

55 'Putin: nuzhno dovesti dolyu grazhdanskoy produktsii na predpriyatiyakh OPK do 30%' [Putin: it is necessary to increase the share of civilian products in defence industry enterprises to 30%], RIA Novosti, 1 December 2016, at: <https://ria.ru/economy/20161201/1482596835.html>; 'Putin: OPK dolzhen narashchivat' proizvodstvo grazhdanskoy produktsii' [Putin: the defence industry should increase production of civilian goods], *Vedomosti*, 1 December 2016, at: <http://www.vedomosti.ru/newsline/top/business/news/2016/12/01/667756-opk-dolzhen-narashchivat-proizvodstvo>

56 CAST, 'The Future Outlooks for Russian Weapons Manufacturing,' Presentation at RUEGRO conference on the Russian Defence Industry, Oslo: Norwegian Defence Research Agency, 11 October 2016.

57 'Bol'she "Armat," men'she korablye: podrobnosti novoy gosprogrammy vooruzheniy' [More Armatas, fewer ships: details of the new state armaments programme] RIA Novosti, 6 April 2017, at: https://ria.ru/defense_safety/20170406/1491656079.html

58 The first *Borey*, the Yuri Dolgoruki (K-535), is based at Yagelnaya in the Northern Fleet. The second, the Alexander Nevsky (K-550), is based near Petropavlovsk, and entered service in September 2015. A third *Borey*, the Vladimir Monomakh (K-551), was based at Viliuchinsk on the Kamchatka Peninsula, at the end of 2016. A fourth *Borey* – the Knyaz Vladimir – is the first of a modified Project 955A or *Borey* II series that will form the basis for the remaining five submarines that are due to be delivered over the next four-five years.

59 'Pusk krylatoi rakety "Kalibr" proizveden s APL "Severodvinsk"' [Launch of 'Kalibr' Cruise Missile Carried Out by 'Severodvinsk' Nuclear Submarine], *Voyenno-promyshlennyy kur'yer*, 30 April 2016, at: <http://vpk-news.ru/news/30497>

60 Well-informed observers from the Russian navy have expressed doubt about whether any additional *Yasen*-class submarines will enter service before 2020. See M. Khodarenok 'Strategicheskikh deystviy v okeane bol'she ne planiruyut' ["Strategic actions in the ocean are no longer planned"], *Gazeta.ru*, 31 July 2016, at: <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2016/07/31/9716165.shtml>

to serious challenges encountered during production that have driven up the cost of the submarine, there is speculation that that serial production of the *Yasen* will be ended to free up resources to develop and build a new, smaller, and cheaper model of multipurpose submarine.⁶¹

It is not only nuclear-powered submarines that have suffered production setbacks. Efforts to introduce the *Lada*-class diesel-electric submarines have also proven challenging. Problems surrounding the air-independent propulsion system have caused planners to scale down the original plans for eight submarines of the class to just three.⁶² Indeed, it is not clear that even three will eventually enter service. Instead, it is now rumored that a new *Kalina*-class type of diesel-electric submarine will be built instead. If true, this will mean that the navy will have to wait even longer for the introduction of a truly modern generation of diesel-electric submarines. Until a new model is developed, the Russian navy has had to be content with deliveries of *Varshaviyanka*-class submarines (Project 636.3), an advanced variant of the older *Paltus*-class submarine (Project 877) developed in the early 1980s.

The performance of the Russian shipbuilding industry in recent years suggests that it is able to supply more advanced variants of older models where established production processes exist. However, the industry has experienced much greater difficulty in delivering newer models of submarine that have been developed in the post-Soviet period. This has complicated efforts to augment and eventually replace the Soviet legacy of fleet of submarines. As a result, only the Black Sea Fleet has enjoyed a substantial modernization of its submarine force, receiving six *Varshaviyanka*-class submarines.

Similar trends are evident in the construction of surface combat vessels. For instance, the development of the modern *Admiral Gorshkov*-class frigate (Project 22350) has been hampered by a series of technical problems that mean it is unlikely that the target of six new ships will

be delivered by 2020. The cessation of deliveries from Ukrainian suppliers as a result of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine in 2014 meant that the gas turbine engines produced by Zorya-Mashproekt have to be replaced by domestic substitutes that are not yet in production.⁶³ These new production lines are expected to be in a position to deliver engines between 2018-2020, although this timeframe may prove to be optimistic. The most recent problem with the functioning of the *Redut* air defence system has further delayed the introduction of the first ship of the class.⁶⁴

It is true that the construction of *Admiral Grigovich*-class frigates (Project 11356P/M) was proceeding reasonably well until the Ukrainian-built engines (again, supplied by Zorya-Mashproekt) became unavailable after Russia's annexation of Crimea. However, this was largely due to the fact that the *Grigovich* was based on the design of the Indian *Talwar*-class, an export version of the Soviet-era *Krivak III*-class frigate. The Yantar shipyard in Kalingrad has been able to complete three ships, which are all scheduled to serve in the Black Sea Fleet. The status of the remaining three ships that were left without engines is uncertain. Although a deal was struck in October 2016 to sell the remaining three ships to the Indian navy, there is speculation that a substitute Russian engine may yet be produced in time to ensure that at least one more ship may enter service in the Black Sea Fleet.

Russian producers have proven more successful in developing, building and delivering modern smaller, shorter-range ships, such as corvettes and small missile ships (*malye raketnyye korabli*). Since 2010, ten of these smaller ships have been delivered.⁶⁵ Problems have been encountered, to be sure, not least in the form of Western sanctions, which resulted in supplies of vital components, including engines, being interrupted. In particular, sanctions halted the delivery of German-made engines, which hampered the development of the

61 VMF Rossii zadumalsia nad sozdaniem atomnoi podlodki-robota' [Russian Navy Considered Creating a Robotic Nuclear Submarine], *Lenta.ru*, 24 February 2016. Available at: <https://lenta.ru/news/2016/02/24/newalfa/>

62 'Istochnik: tret'iu podlodku tipa 'Lada' perezalozhat v Peterburge 19 marta' [Source: Third 'Lada' Submarine to Be Laid Down in St. Petersburg on March 19], TASS, 27 February 2015, at: <http://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/1796279>

63 Early problems encountered in this process are described in: A. Soyustov, 'Dvizhki-2: letayushchiiy «pylesos», chemodany deneg i Serdyukov' [Engines 2: the flying vacuum cleaner, money bags, and Serdyukov] RIA Novosti, 22 December 2015, at: <https://riafan.ru/491620-dvizhki-2-letayushij-pylesos-chemodany-deneg-i-serdyukov>. Doubts have also been expressed as to whether Russian producers possess the technological capabilities to perform all the tasks associated with replacing Ukrainian components – see Khodarenok, 2016.

64 Y. Zgirovskaya, 'U «Almaz-Anteya» valyatsya rakety' [The Almaz-Antei missiles are crashing down] *Gazeta.ru*, 15 July 2016, at: <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2016/07/15/9693095.shtml>

65 R. Connolly and C. Senstad, 2017.

Gremiashchii-class corvettes (Project 20835),⁶⁶ and the Russian navy has been forced to order other types of ships that rely on Russian components.

Consequently, the fleet is expected to take further delivery of over a dozen smaller ships over the next few years, comprising a mixture of the *Bykov*-class (Project 22160), *Karakurt*-class (Project 22800), *Steregushchii*-class (Project 20380), and *Buyan M*-class (Project 21630) vessels. While small, these ships are capable, and are nearly all equipped with long-range anti-ship and ground-attack missiles (i.e. *Onix* and *Kalibr* systems). Such ships have already been delivered to the Baltic and Black Sea Fleets, as well as the Caspian Flotilla, and are expected to enter service across all four major Russian fleets over the next decade.

The emerging force structure

Financial constraints and the weaknesses in Russia's shipbuilding industry mean that the naval force structure is unlikely to develop how planners originally hoped. Initially, it was envisaged that by the mid-2020s a mix of *Borey*- and *Yasen*-class nuclear-powered submarines, as well as *Lada*-class diesel-electric submarines, would be in service. These were intended to be deployed alongside *Buyan M*-, *Gremiashchii*- and *Steregushchii*-class corvettes, *Admiral Gorshkov*- and *Admiral Grigorovich*-class frigates, and *Lider*-class destroyers. Such a fleet, it was hoped, would give Russia the material capabilities to meet the strategic objectives outlined in the maritime strategy.

However, as funds for procurement become increasingly scarce, and as plans for larger ships are scaled back, postponed or cancelled altogether, a dual naval structure is emerging. On the one hand, the blue water, Soviet legacy fleet constructed largely before the early 1990s is being refurbished and tasked with performing the sort of out of area missions (whether combat operations or flying the flag missions) currently underway in the eastern

Mediterranean. These ships have been modernized so that they can continue to perform duties further afield while new classes of larger ships are developed. However, because the construction of larger surface vessels is unlikely to take place before the early 2020s at the earliest, the larger Soviet-era ships will form the backbone of Russia's blue water fleet for some time to come. Indeed, because the development of the *Lider*-class of destroyers remains clouded in uncertainty, plans to upgrade an additional five of the large *Udaloy*-class ships have recently been approved.⁶⁷ This will take place alongside existing plans to refurbish other cruisers, destroyers, and nuclear-powered attack submarines built mostly in the Soviet period.

This legacy fleet will sit alongside a shorter-range 'mosquito' navy in which smaller and more modern multipurpose ships equipped with long-range missiles perform missions closer to home shores. While such ships will struggle to take part in longer-range deployments, they will, alongside augmented coastal defence systems and naval aviation, enhance Russia's ability to assert its interests in the core areas defined by the maritime doctrine, especially the Arctic and Black sea regions. Meanwhile, a mixture of old and new nuclear-powered submarines will provide the sea-based component of Russia's nuclear deterrent force.

Indeed, it noteworthy that recent statements by senior Russian officials, including defence minister, Sergey Shoigu, and deputy prime minister with responsibility for the defence industry, Dmitry Rogozin, indicate that ambitions for the re-equipment of the navy have been considerably scaled down.⁶⁸ While state-owned Russian media outlets proudly announce defence industry progress in the development of a new classes of aircraft carrier and destroyers, the words of senior officials tend to be more low-key and realistic. Instead, as former commander of the Russian Navy, Admiral Igor Kasatonov, has observed, the thinking of senior policy-makers is now focused not on larger vessels, but instead towards the deployment of a larger number of smaller

66 'V Kolomne razrabotan dvigatel', kotoryi zamenit importnye analogi na korabliakh VMF RF' [In Kolomna an Engine Has Been Developed That Will Replace Imported Versions on Russian Navy Ships], *Voyenno-promyshlennyy kur'yer*, 19 June 2015, at: http://vpk.name/news/134224_v_kolomne_razrabotan_dvigatel_kotoryi_zamenit_importnyie_analogi_na_korablyah_vmf_rf.html

67 D. Grigoriyev, 'Pyat' BPK Severnogo i Tikhookeanskogo flotov proydu modernizatsiyu' [Five large anti-submarine ships of the Northern and Pacific fleets will be modernised], *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, 19 January 2017, at: <https://rg.ru/2017/01/19/reg-szfo/piat-bpk-severnogo-i-tihookeanskogo-flotov-projdu-modernizaciiu.html>

68 'Ministr oborony Rossii provel ocherednoye zasedaniye Kollegii voyennogo vedomstva' [The Russian Minister of defence held a meeting of the Collegium of the defence ministry], 21 April 2017, at: http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12119607@egNews; 'Bol'she "Armat," men'she korably: podrobnosti novoy gosprogrammy vooruzheniy' [More Armatas, fewer ships: details of the new state armaments programme] *RIA Novosti*, 6 April 2017, at: https://ria.ru/defense_safe-ty/20170406/1491656079.html

ships equipped with the *Kalibr* and *Onyx* long-range missiles.⁶⁹ This, he argues, should equip the navy to perform its key objectives.

Conclusion: A navy fit for purpose?

This review of Russia's updated maritime doctrine has considered two aspects of Russian naval policy. First, it has highlighted the most important elements of the revised maritime doctrine, arguing that Russian ambitions have shifted subtly towards a focus on areas closer to Russia's shores than in the past. Second, it has examined the extent to which Russia possesses the material capabilities to meet the objectives stated in the updated maritime doctrine. This is of crucial importance because, as many critics have pointed out, the emerging force structure is likely to present problems in equipping the Russian navy to meet some of the more ambitious elements of the doctrine, such as those related to the Indian Ocean and the Antarctic. As Soviet-era legacy ships are gradually retired, these objectives will become even more difficult to meet, especially if problems in the development of replacement ships persist. However, as the first part of this review has highlighted, these objectives do not receive that much attention in the doctrine, suggesting that they are not considered to be of vital interest to Russian policy-makers.

Instead, what appears to be of greater importance is the Russian navy's ability to perform its core missions closer to home. Careful reading of the updated doctrine suggests that competing with, for example, the US navy for control of the Atlantic is not what Russian policy-makers intend. Rather, it appears that Russian intentions are focused on seas much closer to its shores, and are directed towards not aiming for full control of the seas in and around its borders, but instead on at least challenging or denying command of those areas considered to be of vital importance.⁷⁰ These areas – the Arctic, Black (and Mediterranean), Baltic and Caspian

seas – do not necessarily require the construction of a large fleet of cruisers, aircraft carriers and multipurpose nuclear-powered submarines. Consequently, Russia's emerging set of naval capabilities should be sufficient for the more limited purposes described in the maritime doctrine, despite the fact that these capabilities are not perhaps what Russian naval planners initially envisaged.

To illustrate this point, it is useful to consider the recent evolution of the Black Sea Fleet. Since the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the fleet has taken delivery of six *Varshaviyanka*-class submarines, three *Admiral Grigorovich*-class frigates (with the third ship, the *Admiral Makarov*, undergoing sea trials as of January 2017), two *Buyan M*-class small missile ships, as well as *Bastion P* mobile coastal missile defence systems and combat aircraft for naval aviation based in Crimea. With additional *Karakurt*-class corvettes expected to supplement the fleet over the next few years, it is fair to state that Russian capabilities in the Black Sea area have been significantly enhanced. Because of the primary role that the Black Sea Fleet plays in supporting operations in the eastern Mediterranean (augmented with ships from other fleets), this upgrade has helped Russia meet two of the most important objectives stated in the doctrine, despite the fact that the original plans for reequipping the Black Sea Fleet were derailed by a combination of Western sanctions and deficiencies in Russia's shipbuilding industry.

What this example illustrates is that an excessive focus on Russia's technological and financial weaknesses – while an important consideration – can obscure the point that most of the core objectives contained within the updated doctrine are likely to remain well within reach of Russia's emerging naval force, which looks set to be organised around a larger number of smaller vessels equipped with long-range armaments. This should be a source of concern for NATO given that the priority areas stated in the doctrine all lie contiguous to member state borders.

69 Andrey Rezchiko, 'Rossiya bol'she ne mozhet pozvolit' sebe okeanskiy flot' [Russia can no longer afford an ocean-going fleet], *Vzglyad*, 21 April 2017, at: <https://www.vz.ru/politics/2017/4/21/324418.html>

70 A similar point was made by a prominent analyst of Soviet naval policy in the 1970s. See M. McCwire, 'Command of the Sea in Soviet Naval Strategy' in M. McCwire, K. Booth, and J. McDonnell, *Soviet Naval Policy. Objectives and Constraints*, London, Praeger, 1974, p.634.

