

## ***Russian Security and Air Power 1992 – 2002***

### ***The development of Russian security thinking under Yeltsin and Putin and its consequences for the air forces***

**By Marcel de Haas**

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### **Reviewed by Gp Capt C J Finn**

The headline title *Russian Security and Air Power 1992 – 2002*, would seem to indicate that this is a book primarily about air power, perhaps in the Chechen conflicts. However, the sub-title shows that the book is aimed in a somewhat different direction. The book is an abridged version of the author's PhD thesis completed under the sponsorship of the Royal Netherlands Military Academy and the Royal Netherlands Air Force while he was an instructor at the Academy. The author clearly sets out his intent in his introduction (page 2) where he states that "The ultimate aim is to assess the effect of political-strategic decision making on the use of air power in irregular warfare".

In Chapter 1 the author describes the structure of Russian security policy, leading in Chapter 2 to an analysis of the decision-making process and its effects with a useful summary of the

arguments so far. Chapter 2 also has the particular merit of analysing Russian policy from a Russian viewpoint whereby NATO is seen as a threat and the UN Security Council as the only legitimate international decision-making body. Chapter 3 describes both the physical and the doctrinal structure of Russian air power and particularly how it developed over the period and why. The move from the Cold War posture of specialist air defence forces and tactical air forces under the command of the ground force commander to a Western model of unified and centralized command and control is explained, as is the use of 'lessons learned' in the bureaucratic battle for resources. In Chapter 4 the author discriminates between the 'implementation of air power' in terms of strategy and doctrine, and the use of air power itself in the Chechnya and Dagestan conflicts. At the strategic and operational levels the author gives a very good explanation of the blend between the political and military imperatives. In his consideration of the employment of air power the author discusses the role of combat support air operations and the failure of the Russians to provide 'joined up' intelligence support. However, his conclusions that the effectiveness of the kinetic mechanisms was greatly reduced by the lack of funding, and hence the lack of PGMs, NVGs etc (irregular warfare, p164) seems to ignore the vital role of ISTAR in enabling the effective use of PGMs in any conflict. In Chapter 5 the author argues how the preceding chapters have met the original aim stated above. The key point is perhaps contained on page 188 where he states that "Russian military doctrines are geared mainly to the military-political level", thus returning to the traditional Clausewitzian argument.

The strengths of this book are equally its weaknesses. As the author states, it is an abridged PhD thesis, not a book derived from one: thus it is pedagogically structured. Those specifically interested in the application of air power in irregular conflicts should concentrate on Chapter 4, with reference to the concluding elements of the other chapters. On the other hand it meets the author's ultimate aim in providing a very well researched analysis of, and reference to, the development of Russian political and military thought in the immediate post-Cold War era.

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