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The Theory and Practice of New Generation Warfare: The Case of Ukraine and Syria

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ABSTRACT

By employing well-known methods of warfare, but in innovative ways and with the help of new technologies, Russia's concept of operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine took many in the West by surprise. Almost immediately, Western analysts embarked on a search for definitions for this 'new' approach, most of them within the West's own theoretical framework. These have included the Gerasimov Doctrine, hybrid warfare and hybrid threat, non-linear warfare, fourth-generation warfare, and most recently 'gray zone' conflict. Nevertheless, a vast volume of Russian theoretical debates about new ways of warfare has remained under-studied. This has resulted in misconceptions in the characterization of Russian strategy, through molding it to fit Western theoretical constructs as opposed to those within which it was developed. Rather than helping assess the real options open to Russia, each of the aforementioned terms has tended to be unhelpful, as none reflects Russia's doctrine or assumptions about the nature of war in the 21st century. This article's main aim is to describe the Russian way of 'sub-threshold warfare' as defined by Russia itself. This was done by researching more than 30 years of Russian military literature, case studies from Crimea and Eastern Ukraine built from interviews with Ukrainian military and security personnel, and information on the Syrian case based on Russian sources. An analysis of the Russian military literature when compared to the empirical evidence of Russian tactics in Ukraine and Syria shows that its strategy is multi-layered and comprehensive. It is counter-productive to frame the Russian strategy within artificial frameworks established outside of the threat context, such as Hybrid Warfare. The Russians have their own framework that, although influenced by Western military doctrine, is the result of their own theoretical developments.

Introduction

Russia's strategy in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, employing well-known methods of warfare in innovative ways and with the help of new technologies, took many in the West by surprise. Almost immediately, Western analysts

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started looking for definitions of the Russian approach, mostly within the West's own theoretical framework, and ignored the vast Russian theoretical debate about new ways of warfare. These have included hybrid warfare and hybrid threat, non-linear warfare, and most recently 'gray zone' conflict. This resulted in a travesty in the characterization of the Russian strategy.

The article's main aim is to clarify the Russian way of warfare as defined by the Russians themselves. It begins with a discussion about the concepts used by Western analysts to frame the Russian strategy and especially stresses their inadequacy for fully defining it. A review of the Russian military literature follows, with the objective of establishing a structural schematization of the many formative concepts of the Russian strategy. A third section discusses the application of these concepts in the field, using the Crimean, the Ukrainian, and Syrian operations as case studies.

This was done by researching more than 30 years of Russian military literature. The main publications are, but are not limited to, *Voennaia mysl'* [Military Thought], *Vestnik Akademii voennykh nauk* [Bulletin of the Academy of Military Sciences], *Krasnaia Zvezda* [The Red Star], *Voenno-promyshlennyi kur'er* [The Military Industrial Courier], *Orientir* [The Guide], *Zashchita i bezopasnost'* [Defense and Security], *Rossiiskoe voennoe obozrenie* [The Russian Military Review], and *Armeiskii sbornik* [The Army's Digest]. The case studies from Crimea and Eastern Ukraine were built from interviews with Ukrainian military and security personnel, and information on the Syrian case was based on Russian sources.

The Russian way of warfare is eclectic, drawing on whatever works for a specific situation. A key issue is the asymmetry between what is acceptable in terms of 'gray zone warfare' to Russia and to the West. Russians analyze Western techniques and tactics, studies and reports on them, and then develop their own doctrine. In other words, Russia learns from the West but then adapts the lessons to Russia's specific circumstances.

Western theories of Russian 'hybrid warfare'

After Russia's annexation of Crimea, Western analysts tried to understand the Russian strategy by framing it within Western concepts. This resulted in the creation of a false narrative about the way the Russians engage in warfare. One of the first concepts used was William Lind's *Fourth Generation Warfare*. Its main idea is that the state loses its monopoly on violence and war when it finds itself fighting non-state adversaries. Since its main feature is basically non-state actors fighting a culture war, it is too narrow to characterize the Russian actions in Ukraine and does not apply to Syria.[1]

[1]W. S. Lind, 'Understanding Fourth Generation War', *Antiwar.com*, 2004, http://www.antiwar.com/lind/?articleid=1702.

Later, Mark Galeotti proposed using *non-linear warfare*, a term coined by one of Putin's closest advisors, Vladislav Surkov (under the pseudonym of Nathan Dubovitsky). He discussed the idea in an article describing what the Fifth World War would be like, the one where everyone fights against everyone else. The idea is that traditional geopolitical paradigms no longer hold. Therefore, the Kremlin may gamble with the idea that Western politicians consider old alliances like the European Union and NATO to be less valuable than their economic interests.[2] This is substantiated, for example, by many Western countries that welcome obscure financial flows from the post-Soviet space as part of their own mode of economic development. Therefore, Russia could get away with aggression because Western politicians are not letting security interests interfere with the interests of the City of London and Wall Street.[3] Although this concept may explain Russia's idea of a war of civilizations, it fails to reflect the way it has been conducting warfare.[4]

The most accepted term became *hybrid warfare*, also adopted by NATO. The seminal work is Hoffman's *Hybrid Warfare and Challenges*. The author developed the idea that a hybrid strategy is based on tactically employing a mix of instruments, resulting in it being difficult to fully understand and establish a proper strategy to deal with it. The main challenge results from state and non-state actors employing technologies and strategies that are more appropriate to their own field, in a multi-mode confrontation. It may include exploiting modern capabilities to support insurgents, terrorists, and criminal activities; the use of high-tech military capabilities combined with terrorist actions; and cyber warfare operations against economic and financial targets.[5] Therefore, it still largely presupposes the application of kinetic force, thus of military power to defeat the enemy.

In addition to hybrid warfare, the idea that there is a Gerasimov Doctrine also gained popularity. It is based on the idea that General of the Army Valery Gerasimov, the Chief of the Russian General Staff, presented his views of future warfare in an article published in the *Voenno-Promyshlennyi Kurier*.[6] This is a misconception. Gerasimov's article was the transcription of his annual speech and presentation at the Russian Military Academy of Sciences in March 2013, when he was trying to explain the way the West engages in warfare and the increasing significance of non-military instruments for

[2]N. Dubovitsky, 'Bez Neba (Without the Sky)', *Russkii Pioner*, 12 March 2014, http://ruspioner.ru/honest/m/single/4131.

[3]P. Pomerantsev, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia*. (New York, NY: Public Affairs) 2014.

[4]Although the idea of wars of civilizations is an American concept developed by Samuel Huntington at the beginning of the 1990s, the Russians later integrated it into their strategic analysis, developing their particular version and ideas and establishing the USA as Russia's main adversary. For example, see A. I. Vladmirov, *'NATO v paradigme obshchey teorii voyny'* [NATO in the Paradigm of the General Theory of War], 2014, http://kadet.ru/lichno/vlad_v/NATO&Obschaya_teoriya_voiny.htm.

[5]F. Hoffman, 'Hybrid Warfare and Challenges', *Joint Forces Quaterly* 52 (2009) pp. 34–39.

[6]V. Gerasimov, V. 'Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii' [The Value of Science in Foresight], *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* 8 (27 February–5 March 2013) pp. 2–3.

achieving military objectives. In other words, it was Gerasimov's views about American contemporary ways of warfare. One more attempt to try to understand new-generation warfare was made by Jonsson and Seely in 2015. They proposed calling it *Russian full-spectrum conflict*.[7]

Since around 2015, the concept of a 'gray zone' has also become popular for characterizing what was called *low-intensity conflict* 30 years ago. According to Mazarr, the main features of gray zone warfare are that it:[8]

(1) Pursues political objectives through cohesive, integrated campaigns;
(2) Employs mostly non-military or non-kinetic tools;
(3) Strives to remain under key escalatory or red-line thresholds to avoid outright, conventional conflict;
(4) Moves gradually toward its objectives rather than seeking conclusive results in a specific period of time.

Therefore, a fair definition of gray zone warfare is: the employment of unconventional tactics including cyber-attacks, propaganda, political warfare, economic coercion and sabotage, and sponsorship of armed proxy fighters. It strives to remain below conventional war and above the routine, peaceful competition among states.[9] It is very similar to the definition of low-intensity conflict, which is discussed in the following, with the addition of cyber-attacks. In other words, gray zone warfare is methodological amnesia. There are two problems. First, all aforementioned approaches still presuppose the application of kinetic force in some way. Although it might resort to using military power, conceptually Russian new-generation warfare does not. Second, it is a methodological mistake to frame Russian military thought within theories reflecting other cultures, ways of thinking, and strategic understanding, even if the influence of Western and especially American military art is considerable.

The Russian way of warfare: New-generation warfare

To fully apprehend the theoretical development of the Russian art of war, it is necessary to review the Russian military literature reversely to deconstruct its theoretical fundaments. However, before doing so, it is necessary to answer one question: Does military science have some, if any, influence in defense policy making in Russia? There are two complementary ways to answer this question: first, by observing and comparing theory with reality in the field; and second, by comparing theory with doctrine and official documents and statements.

[7]O. Jonsson and R. Seely, 'Russian Full-Spectrum Conflict: An Appraisal After Ukraine', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 28(1) (2015) pp. 1–22.
[8]M. J. Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict*, Army War College Press, December 2015, https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1303.
[9]Ibid.

There are five main recurrent conceptual themes in Russian military literature. The first and most important is *asymmetric warfare*. It forms the main base sustaining the other three. Second, the strategy of low-intensity conflict as developed by the Pentagon's Joint Special Operations Command. Third, the Russians' own understanding and theoretical development of *network-centric warfare*. Fourth, General Major Vladimir Slipchenko's *sixth-generation warfare*. It is their many possible combinations that defines what Chekinov and Bogdanov called *new-generation warfare*. However, there is an additional factor. It is the strategic concept of *reflexive control*. Only when it is applied to new-generation warfare does the latter become fully operational. More recently, a new term appeared, *new-type (hybrid) warfare*. This term is used to refer to the allegedly Western strategy of *color revolutions*, which, according to the Russian military, recently includes Ukraine, Lybia, and Egypt, and in some cases the fall of the Soviet Union.

Asymmetric warfare

The main element defining the Russian way of warfare *is asymmetric warfare*. It provides the base on which *low-intensity conflict, network-centric warfare, and sixth generation warfare* will be combined in different proportions to form the many faces of new-generation warfare. This is one of the most ignored aspects of Russian military art. Arguably, the biggest problem in using the term *hybrid* is that it obfuscates the asymmetric and kinetic character of the Russian tactics. As Vladimir Putin stated already in 2006, 'Quantity is not the end (…). Our responses are to be based on intellectual superiority. They will be asymmetrical and less expensive, but will certainly improve the reliability of our nuclear triad'.[10]

The main idea is, as Clausewitz put it, that war

> (…) is not merely a political act but a real political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, a carrying out of the same by other means. (…) The political design is the object, while war is the means, and the means can never be thought of apart from the object. (Clausewitz 2000, p. 280)

As a result, since the objective of war is to achieve political objectives, the instruments of warfare may be military or non-military. This means that a direct attack followed by territorial occupation and annexation might not be necessary. Although, for Clausewitz, indirect warfare was a matter of resistance, the Russian strategy is based rather on Sun Tzu's idea that 'warfare is the art (tao) of deceit . . . . Attack where he [the enemy, JB] is not prepared; go by way of places where it would never occur to him you would go'.[11]

[10]V. Putin, Poslaniye Federal' nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoy Federatsii [Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation], *Krasnaya Zvezda* 79 (May 2006).

[11]S. Chekinov and S. Bogadanov, 'Asimmetrichnyye deystviya po obespecheniyu voyennoy bezopasnosti Rossii' [Asymmetrical Actions to Ensure Russia's Military Securirty], *Voennaia Mysl* 3 (2010) pp. 13–22.

Another important aspect for understanding the Russian view of asymmetric warfare is Mao Zedong's strategy of using regular and irregular forces together. Mao viewed guerrilla and conventional forces as part of the same mechanism for defeating the enemy. Therefore, attacks were both symmetric and asymmetric, dispersing the enemy's strength. However, the most valuable lesson the Russians learned from the Chinese is in respect to the ideological aspect of warfare. This was very well exemplified during the Sino–Japanese War. Since the ideological dimension of war is fundamental for victory, especially during stabilization operations, to win the hearts and minds of the population is decisive.

This is the basis for the Russian strategy of creating an alternative reality as a military strategy. The idea is that support for strategic objectives of war by society in a country at war — in other words, the legitimization of war — is fundamental for achieving victory. In other words, the success of military campaigns in the form of armed conflicts and local wars is very much dependent on the relationship between military and non-military factors — the political, psychological, ideological, and informational elements of the campaign — than on military power as an isolated variable.[12]

Therefore, asymmetric warfare has the objective of avoiding direct military operations and interference in internal conflicts in other countries. As a result of the specifics of fighting weaker adversaries, the following strategy was predominant: the employment of small units of specially trained troops; preventive actions against irregular forces; propaganda among local populations that the weaker adversary pretended to defend; military and material support given to support groups in the country being attacked; a scaling-back of combat operations and employing non-military methods to pressure the opponent. In general terms, the Russians consider the following points as the most important instruments of asymmetric warfare:[13]

(1) Measures making the opponent apprehensive of the Russian Federation's intentions and responses;
(2) Demonstration of the readiness and potentialities of the Russian Federation's groups of troops (forces) in a strategic area to repel an invasion with consequences unacceptable to the aggressor;
(3) Actions by the troops (forces) to deter a potential enemy by guaranteed destruction of his most vulnerable military and other strategically important and potentially dangerous targets in order to persuade him that his attack is a hopeless case;
(4) Impact of state-of-the-art highly effective weapons systems, including those based on new physical principles (remote versus contact);

[12]Sun Tzu, The Art of War, ed. and trans. S. B. Griffith, Oxford University Press, New York, 1963.
[13]Ibid.

(5) Widespread employment of indirect force, non-contact forms of commitment of troops (forces) and methods;
(6) Seizing and holding enemy territory are not always needed and are only undertaken if the benefits are greater than the 'combat costs' or if the end goals of a war cannot be achieved in any other way;
(7) Information warfare is an independent form of struggle along with economic, political, ideological, diplomatic, and other forms;
(8) Information and psychological operations to weaken the enemy's military potential by other than armed force, by affecting his information flow processes, and by misleading and demoralizing the population and armed forces' personnel;
(9) Significant damage to the enemy's economic potential, with its effect showing up at a later time;
(10) A clear understanding by a potential adversary that military operations may turn into an environmental and socio-political catastrophe.

It is interesting to note that much of what has been written by Russian military experts about Russia's strategic challenges reflects the way it has been conducting warfare. Aleksandr Nagornyi and Vladislav Shurygin, when analyzing Russia's most important strategic challenges, established ways and instruments the West could employ against it. Although their analysis is mostly based on Color Revolutions as the result of strategies of controlled-chaos deliberately being employed by the West, it reveals more about Russian strategy itself. They have formalized nine points. Although they could allegedly be used by the West against Russia, in reality they strongly reflect the Russian asymmetric strategy operationalized in Ukraine. The nine points are as follows:[14]

(1) Stimulation and support of armed actions by separatist groups with the objective of promoting chaos and territorial disintegration;
(2) Polarization between the elite and society, resulting in a crisis of values followed by a process of reality orientation to Western values;
(3) Demoralization of armed forces and the military elite;
(4) Strategic controlled degradation of the socio-economic situation;
(5) Stimulation of a socio-political crisis;
(6) Intensification of simultaneous forms and models of psychological warfare;
(7) Incitement of mass panic, with the loss of confidence in key government institutions;
(8) Defamation of political leaders who are not aligned with Russia's interests;
(9) Annihilation of possibilities to form coalitions with foreign allies.

[14]A. Nogurny and V. Shurygin (eds.), *Defense Reform as an Integral Part of a Security Conception for the Russian Federation: A Systemic and Dynamic Evaluation*, Moscow, Izborsky Club, 2013.

The Russian view of asymmetric warfare has a systemic and comprehensive nature, employing political, diplomatic, informational, economic, military, and other indirect forms at the same time. Simultaneously, it includes employing high-precision strategic non-nuclear weapons systems, with the support of subversive and reconnaissance groups, resulting in unacceptable damage to strategically significant targets like top government administration and military control, fuel and energy plants, life support facilities, chemical plants, and storehouses of poisonous agents, just to cite a few.[15] To put it differently, it is the combination of elements of low-intensity conflict with sixth-generation warfare and network-centric warfare. In other words, it is the very base of new-generation warfare.

Low-intensity conflict

Low-intensity conflict (LIC) has been used for a long time. This includes the People's Liberation Army during the Chinese Civil War, General Võ Nguyên Giáp as part of the Vietnamese resistance partisan endeavor, and the Red Army during the Second World War. It can be defined as:[16]

> … a political-military confrontation between contending states or groups below conventional war and above the routine, peaceful competition among states. It frequently involves protracted struggles of competing principles and ideologies. It ranges from subversion to the use of armed force. It is waged by a combination of means employing political, economic, informational, and military instruments. LIC's are often localized, generally in the Third World, but contain regional and global security implications.

The main factors making LICs operational are change, discontent, poverty, violence, and instability. Change includes socio-economic and political factors that may result in rising tensions. If a government is not connected to or, in some cases, even concerned with the wishes of the people, the result might be discontent leading to internal turmoil. Discontent can have many forms and is connected to the sentiment of injustice. The level of social violence is directly related to the number of people sharing a common sense of injustice, which determines the level of discontent. Outside pressure might be a critical factor boosting such sentiments. Relative poverty, especially the sentiment of deprivation as a result of unstable economic conditions, is also an important factor influencing LICs. As a result, impoverished nations have great potential for revolution and change. Usually, the common man wishes for what he considers to be fair. Very often it is just something relatively simple but ignored by the ruling government. It is possible to target what the population wants, stimulating revolutionary actions (violent or not) and creating instability.

[15]S. Chekinov and S. Bogadanov, 'Asimmetrichnyye deystviya', pp. 13–22.
[16]H. L. Dixon, *Low Intensity Conflict: Overview, Definitions, and Policy Concerns*, Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict, Langley Air Force Base, 1989, p. 1.

Finally, instability can be considered to be an asset if it can be used for achieving the goals of the LIC mission.[17]

Low-intensity conflict has five essential requirements:

(1) Political dominance — meaning that the military are subjugated to civilian and political authorities.
(2) Unity of effort, or the integration of military actions with other government agencies' initiatives. Interagency coordination is critical, and commanders may answer to civilian chiefs or employ the resources of civilian agencies.
(3) Adaptability to develop new approaches reflecting new situations.
(4) The legitimacy of the government to rule.
(5) Perseverance, since LIC involves protracted struggles.

LIC has four main operational categories: support for insurgency and counterinsurgency, combatting terrorism, peacekeeping operations, and Peacetime Contingency Operations.[18]

The Russian military developed its own views on the subject. The main concept used is *controlled chaos*. It is mostly operations based on the American literature about low-intensity conflict and counterinsurgency, being often referred to as strategy of *destruction and attrition*. Its objective is the geopolitical destruction of the victim state by a set of measures aiming to neutralize any geopolitical advantage the enemy might have, such as economic power, military might, international status, size of territory and population, etc. The Color Revolutions and the Arab Spring are examples of how the West uses this. It has three stages. First, there is crisis-inspired destabilization and internal conflict. Second, degradation, impoverishment, and disintegration of the country, making it a failed state. Third, the aggressor, posing as a benefactor and savior of the country, steps in with troops to change the political regime. The closing stage is a stabilization operation. The main target is the self-awareness of the population, influencing the nation's mindset. The objective is to transfer aggression from the physical space to the information-network one. The objective is to attack the people's national and cultural identity.[19]

The main instrument is the *technique of information intervention*, already used during the Cold War. The main instruments are extremist nationalist, religious, or separatist movements, organizations, and structures that might destabilize the internal political situation in the country. This includes the direct and indirect support of subversive forces to take control of government

[17]H. L. Dixon, *Low Intensity Conflict: Overview, Definitions, and Policy Concerns*, Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict, Langley Air Force Base, 1989, p. 1.
[18]Ibid.
[19]I. N. Vorobyov and V. A. Kiselyov, 'Strategii sokrusheniia i izmora v novom oblike' [Strategies of Destruction and Attrition in a New Version], *Voennaia Mysl* 3 (2014).

organizations, the mass media, culture institutions, non-governmental foundations, and social movements to promote the political and ideological values of the attacking country. The West uses

> ingeniously, a sort of subversive ideological weapon called Westernization. It consists in imposing a social system, economics, ideology, culture and way of life similar to those in the countries of the West. This results in discrediting the social system (…) stratifying the population into hostile groups, and support for any opposition movements.[20]

The result is the destruction of the enemy's social and ideological system. Its mechanism of self-destruction and self-annihilation can be compared to a virus penetrating the internal structure and governance system. Also, it is conducted without any rules. There are no borderlines between the front and rear, close and long-range combat, contact and non-contact actions, offensive and defensive methods.[21]

Sixth-generation warfare

Although William Lind's discussion of generations of war foresaw four generations, as discussed before, General Major Vladimir Slipchenko's generational evolution of warfare has six generations. The difference starts in the fourth phase. For Slipchenko, the fourth phase is about dispersion and communications that remove the battlefront entirely. In place of decisive combat, the focus is on cultural/media attacks and coordinated violent actions aiming to paralyze or collapse the enemy's political will. The fifth generation is thermonuclear warfare. This division is more appropriate to establish a generational division, since thermonuclear war was arguably the most critical strategic feature of the Cold War.

The concept of a sixth generation of warfare was developed to reflect what Slipchenko considered to be a very new way of warfare. It is based very much on his views of Operation *Desert Storm* and the NATO bombing in Yugoslavia. It has three main components. First, the use of advanced conventional systems, which approach nuclear effects, blurring the line on nuclear deterrence. Second, non-contact warfare. Third, the use of precision strikes or high-technology non-nuclear weapons. The main operational objective is to make obsolete the massing of large forces in a conventional war. However, since the objective of war is to achieve political objectives, the strategic goal is to use high-precision non-nuclear weapons, with the support of subversive and reconnaissance groups to target strategic points that, if destroyed, result in unacceptable damage to the country being attacked.

They include top government administration and military control systems, major manufacturing plants, fuel and energy facilities, transportation hubs

[20]N. Vorobyov and V. A. Kiselyov, 'Strategii sokrusheniia i izmora v novom oblike' [Strategies of Destruction and Attrition in a New Version], Voennaia Mysl 3 (2014)., p. 13.
[21]Ibid.

and facilities (railroad hubs, bridges, ports, airports, tunnels, etc.), potentially dangerous objects (hydroelectric power dams and hydroelectric power complexes, the processing units of chemical plants, nuclear power facilities, strong poison storage facilities, etc.). If the enemy's armed forces are mostly composed of ground forces, it might not be necessary to destroy them. The idea is to make the enemy's political system collapse, making the local population the instrument for achieving victory. In this case, the occupation of foreign territory might not be necessary (Slipchenko 2001). The recent bombing of hospitals and food storehouses in Syria can be considered examples of sixth-generation warfare.[22]

Wars are to start, and might even be finished, by a long aerospace offensive operation in conjunction with non-nuclear strategic forces and naval forces. Its length is presupposed to be between 60 and 90 days. Electronic warfare is fundamental for neutralizing and detecting the enemy forces long-range. Slipchenko's calculations are that 9,000 precision missiles are needed to destroy 300 critical hypothetical strategic objects of the country under attack, or a rate of 30 missiles per object. The strategic aerospace offensive involves two stages. The first targets the enemy's capabilities by massive strikes, aiming to destroy the most important government, military, and economic strategic objects, including suppressing its air-defense system, gaining the initiative in the war and paralyzing the enemy. Its duration is between 10 and 15 days.

The second stage aims to completely destroy the enemy's economic infrastructure, its government, and the armed forces, therefore achieving the war's strategic and political objectives without deploying troops. Its duration is relative to the stock of high-precision weapons. Slipchenko believed that by 2015, the developed countries would have a stock of 50,000 to 70,000 units of high-precision and air- and sea-based strategic non-nuclear missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, and weapons built on new physical principles. He also stated that technological development will make near-Earth space non-nuclear weapons a reality, resulting in the targeting of any strategic target deep in the enemy's territory. Since high-precision levels are necessary, it is fundamental to have terrestrial systems of coordinates with the targets.

A military geographic information system able to process satellite images and design 3D digital terrain models — creating digital topographic maps, city plans, and models of industrial plants, among others — is necessary. The role of air defense also has to change, developing a nationwide air-space anti-precise air strike defense system. Electronic warfare has a special role, since it is to become an independent branch with its own form of operational strategic forces. Its role is to create a dense high spectral power and interference barrier

[22]V.I. Slipchenko, 'Voiny Shestogo pokoleniya, Reshayushchaya rol' v nikh budet prinadlezhat' [The Wars of Sixth Generation and Their Decisive Role], *Ezhednevnaia gazeta Leningradskogo voennogo okruga*, 7 May 1997; N. Dubovitsky, 'Bez Neba (Without the Sky)', *Russkii Pioner*, 12 March 2014, http://ruspioner.ru/honest/m/single/4131.

to deny the enemy using its radars, communications, and other electronic systems and equipment in all possible frequencies.

These developments change traditional strategy, since the attack occurs simultaneously in multiple targets, with the tactical and operational boundaries changing. As a result, notions such as *front, rear*, and *flank* lose their validity, being substituted by *to be hit* and *not to be hit*. The concept of victory also changes. Before, to achieve victory it was necessary to occupy the enemy's territory to annihilate its armed forces, to destroy its economic structure, and to overthrow the political system. Within sixth-generation warfare, victory is mostly achieved just by destroying the enemy's economic infrastructure. Since the result is deep economic crisis, the loss of combat capability, and strong social turmoil, it is to be expected that the enemy's political system will also collapse. Thus, the political objective of the war is achieved without direct contact and territorial occupation, and annexation might not be necessary.

Network-centric warfare

Although network-centric warfare (NCW) is a Western concept, for the Russians it has a double character. One of the best definitions is:

> Network-centric warfare is a war in which the combat strength of a troop (force) grouping is increased thanks to the creation of an information-communication network that would link information (intelligence) sources, control bodies and means of destruction (suppression). This can be done by giving the participants in operations reliable and complete information about the situation practically in real time.[23]

It presupposes (a) the organization of forces on the networking principle with higher autonomy; (b) that it is global; (c) that the notion of battlefield includes emotions, a figurative perception of reality, and the adversary's state of mind — in other words, instruments of reflexive control; (d) that without global communications between forces, command and control is impossible; (e) that the proportion of non-military tools of coercion has a dramatic increase, and at the same time there are no distinct state and national limits; (f) the abandonment of the classical hierarchical command and control system for horizontal links between the parts involved.[24] General Valery Gerasimov made an explicit reference to NCW in his famous article '*Tsennost' nauki v predvidenii*' [The Value of Science in Foresight]. Two points are of direct relevance: non-contact clashes between highly maneuverable inter-specific fighting groups and the management of troops in a unified informational sphere.

Figure 1 shows the organizational structure of modular network-centric armed forces. Instead of having divisions of between 15,000 and 20,000 troops,

[23]A. V. Raskin and V. S. Pelyak, 'Voyennoye iskusstvo. K voprosu o setevoy voyne' [On Network Centric Warfare], *Voyennaya mysl'* 3 (2005) pp. 21–27.
[24]Ibid.

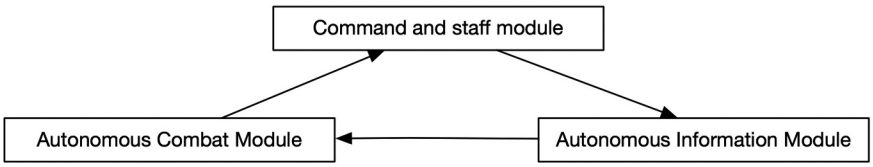

Figure 1. Modular structure of a network-centric organization. Source: A. V. Raskin and V. S. Pelyak, 'Voyennoye iskusstvo. K voprosu o setevoy voyne' [On Network Centric Warfare], *Voyennaya mysl'* 3 (2005) pp 21–27.

it has between 3,000 and 5,000 men. Each unit is an autonomous combat module, able to independently conduct combat operations. Depending of the conditions, smaller modules like a detached battalion, a reinforced company, or even a platoon or small special operations unit may be formed. It is of fundamental importance that each individual unit has the necessary degree of autonomy and capability to successfully perform its missions.[25]

The autonomous information module assures the cooperation between each autonomous combat module and the command and staff module. This is done by establishing a single information space based on an aggregate database of loops of information about the adversary, one's own troops, and the combat environment collected by the autonomous combat and command and staff modules. It must include data on one's own troops, intelligence, the navigation field, and weather conditions, just to cite a few. This information database is to be used for providing continuous command and control, informing one's own troops and misinforming the adversary including disrupting its information systems, protecting one's own information systems, and shaping the desired image of reality to shape public opinion and to create psychological pressure on the adversary.

The autonomous information module is made up of units and sub-units of intelligence and psychological operations, electronic warfare, information warfare, one group of space-based support, automated command and control, and communications support. This structure changes the role of command and control — first, from supervisory to coordination; second, a decentralization of the process of decision making and the conducting of combat operations. Therefore, it is necessary to establish superiority in command and control by destructively taking control of the enemy's network-centric organization to create a situation of controlled chaos.

Figure 2 above shows the process of destructive controlling the enemy's network-centric organization. The first stratum must be understood as procedures for reflexively controlling the adversary. It is done at the personal level, since it consists of selecting specific individuals from the adversary's military and political leadership to receive information to influence their decisions. The

[25]Ibid.

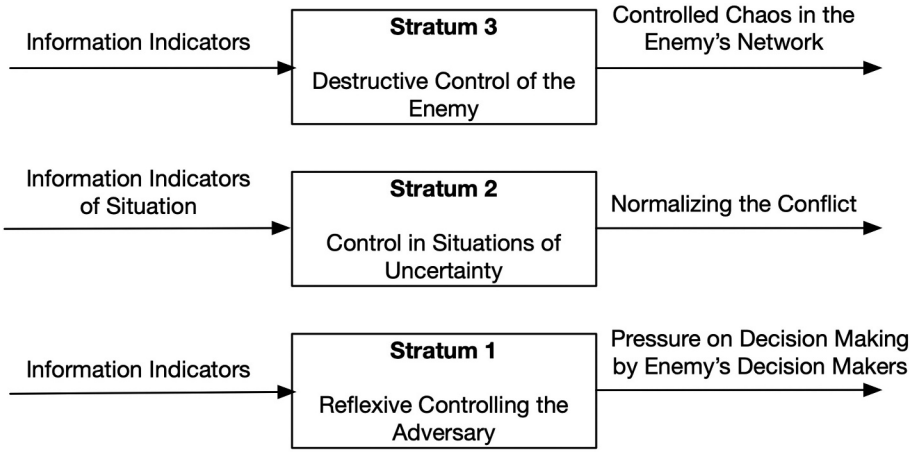

Figure 2. Stratified model of destructive controlling of the enemy's network-centric organization. Source: A. V. Raskin and V. S. Pelyak, 'Voyennoye iskusstvo. K voprosu o setevoy voyne' [On Network Centric Warfare], *Voyennaya mysl'* 3 (2005) pp 21–27.

main aim is to adversely influence the opponent's process of decision making, creating favorable conditions for the controller's own forces. The second stratum comprehends controlling the adversary in situations of uncertainty. The analysis of the information indicators of the situation is used to escalate the conflict rather than to normalize it. This is useful to decide the best courses of action in case of incomplete or divergent information about the opponent's behavioral profile. The third stratum comprehends the destructive control of the enemy's entire network with the objective of creating controlled chaos.

Reflexive control

Reflexive control is the technique of providing the opponent (controlled) with special enemy information to make her or him voluntarily take a predetermined action desired by the controller. It may occur by changing the enemy's information processing (cognitive) or by selecting the messages (informational). It can also be divided between constructive reflexive control when the opponent is influenced to voluntarily make a decision favorable to the controller and destructive reflexive control when the objective is to destroy, paralyze, or neutralize the procedures and algorithms of the opponent's decision-making processes. It manipulates moral, psychological, and other factors, such as the personal characteristics of the opponent, using psychological deficiencies in deception operations.[26]

Indeed, conscious that the USSR would struggle to match the pace of technological investment by the United States, the Soviets actively sought alternatives to

[26]T. Thomas, 'Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17(2) (2014) pp. 237–256.

Hard Power, and by the late 1950s, scientists began studying physical and social regulatory systems. Using newly developed computer technology, they were directed to consider military decision making and in doing so created a modeling system composed of three sub-systems: a model to simulate one's own decisions, a model to simulate the adversary's systems, and a model to actually make decisions. The model's inventor, Vladimir Lefebvre, concluded that it could be used to influence an adversary into making decisions that were favorable to the Soviet Union. In essence, Lefebvre was suggesting that if the Soviet Union could get inside and understand the decision-making process of the adversary, it could provide the adversary with information and conditions that might lead it to make a pre-determined decision.

Rather than looking at conflict as an interaction between two military forces, conflict should be considered as being between the decision-making processes of the two opponents, where each adversary bases his decisions on a model of both himself and his adversary — i.e., a reflective interaction between the two. Reflexive control is the process where one of the sides provides reasons to the enemy from which he can logically infer his own decision, pre-determined by the first side. A more modern definition is a means of conveying specially prepared information to a partner or an opponent to incline him to voluntarily make the predetermined decision desired by the initiator of the action.

Examples of the deployment of reflexive control include:

- Distraction — during the preparatory stages of combat operations, creating a real or imaginary threat against one of the most vital places for the enemy, such as the flanks and rear, forcing him to reevaluate his decisions to operate on this or that axis;
- Overload — often manifested by sending the enemy a large amount of conflicting information;
- Paralysis — or creating the belief about a specific threat to a vital interest or weak spot.

The suggestions offer information that affects the enemy legally, morally, ideologically, or in other areas.[27] Although Western analysts are skeptical about reflexive control, its distinct advantage is that it forces the potential user to develop a mindset in which understanding the enemy, thinking through moves and countermoves, and attempting to develop a rigorous methodological approach to analyzing strategic problems and making optimal decisions is of utmost importance (Chotikul 1986). To understand how Russian military and state consider reflexive control as an instrument of

[27]S. A. Komov, 'O sposobakh i formakh vedeniya informatsionnoy bor'by' [On the Methods and Forms of Information Warfare], *Voyennaya mysl'* 4 (1997) pp. 18–22.

warfare, one has to avoid easy and extreme (black-and-white) analysis. Their objectives might be not obvious at first.

In conclusion, Russian new-generation warfare is not something new. Rather, it is the particular understanding of Russian military thinkers about the evolution of military art, especially in the West. Although it is not correct to affirm that the Western way of conducting warfare determined how Russian military thinkers developed their own understanding on the subject, its influence is undeniable. Both the strategy of low-intensity conflict and network-centric warfare were originally developed in the United States, while sixth-generation warfare is very much Slipchenko's understanding about the strategic implications of Operation *Desert Storm* and the NATO bombing in Yugoslavia. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that the concept of hybrid warfare is strange to the Russian military, but Russian new-generation warfare results from their own understanding and interpretation of Western military strategy. This explains why many people have been saying that it is not new but at same time being unable to fully explain it. The term *hybrid* became very popular specifically because it can be understood as anything that is not monolithic. Figure 3 presents the conceptual schematization of New Generation Warfare.

Russia's new-generation warfare in practice

Often, what takes place is the transformation of older concepts to be used in newer and different situations. In addition, as often happens, new ideas might appear original, but someone had probably already proposed something similar before. An example is the transformation of low-intensity conflict into the gray zone, then into hybrid, and finally into Russian hybrid warfare. Russia's new-generation warfare is none of these. It is the combination in any proportion between asymmetric warfare, low-intensity conflict, network-centric warfare, and reflexive control. A different combination is appropriately chosen for each tactical objective for each specific theater. Therefore, the use of low-intensity

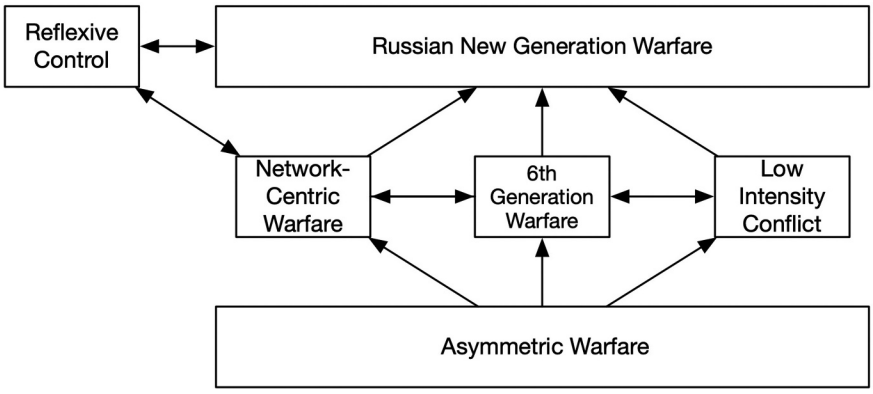

Figure 3. Russian new-generation warfare's theoretical structure. Source: Author's own elaboration.

conflict tactics that were characteristic to the Ukrainian case might not be adequate for other theaters. This becomes visible when comparing Ukraine with Syria, where there were no *green men*, no pro-Russian band of militants, no exercises on the border, just to cite a few of the Russian actions in Ukraine. Rather, the Syrian campaign has been a huge test for the Russian doctrine of non-contact warfare — or as the Russians call it, sixth-generation warfare.

Russian new-generation warfare in Ukraine

Russia's actions in Ukraine took the West by surprise. Without any bloodshed, Russia's operation in the Crimea was a success, even if it had a population of almost 2.5 million, while Ukraine had a force of around 22,000 troops, 22 combat ships, three anti-submarine aircraft, eight helicopters, 41 tanks, 160 armored fighting vehicles, and 47 artillery systems and mortars over 100 mm caliber. The operation, using evidence from social media, probably started on 22 February, when the Ukrainian president was deposed.[28]

The operation in Crimea was facilitated by years of the Russians subsidizing educational, health, and cultural institutions and by the presence of a large ethnic-Russian population. If it was polite green men in the beginning, after 18 March, the Russian forces started openly taking control of the remaining Ukrainian military bases and key military facilities without practically any resistance. This makes the Crimea a unique case. In Donetsk and Luhansk, Russia has been employing kinetic force in asymmetric ways by financing and supporting local terrorist groups. Table 1 classifies the Russian actions according to the concept of new-generation warfare.

Table 1 Russian Actions in Ukraine as New Generation Warfare. Source: Author's own elaboration based on interviews with senior Ukrainian officers.[29]

Following Table 1, it is possible to conclude that the Russian actions in Ukraine do indeed reflect the Russian theoretical framework of new-generation warfare. Comparing the actions on the ground with the analysis of the Russian military literature on this article, it is clear that in Ukraine, new-generation warfare was mostly based on asymmetric warfare and low-intensity conflict, although some instruments of reflexive control and network-centric warfare were also employed. In Syria, this was not the case.

Russian new-generation warfare in Syria

The Russian intervention in Syria differs from the Ukrainian experience, and it would be difficult to find justification to classify it as hybrid or gray zone warfare, although there are elements of low-intensity conflict and insurgency warfare.

[28]For example, see https://vk.com/wall-38185695_180078; comments on http://tlt.ru/articles.php?n=1954976.
[29]This interviews were part of the Science and Technology Organization, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (STO/NATO) STO-TR-SAS-121, 'Hybrid Warfare: Ukraine Case Study' research project.

Type of Action	Asymmetric Warfare	LIC	Sixth Generation Warfare	Network Centric Warfare	Reflexive Control
Blocking and taking control over state facilities and the permanent bases of military units (troops) of the armed forces, other military formations and law enforcement bodies of Ukraine	X				
Intensive psychological brainwashing of Ukrainian servicemen to persuade them to commit treason	X	X			X
Blocking and taking over of airports, sea ports, TV and radio broadcasting stations, entry routes to the peninsula	X	X		X	X
Increasing the intensiveness of the reconnaissance of facilities in the territory of Ukraine engaging the orbital group of aerospace intelligence vehicles, maneuvering signal intelligence groups, reconnaissance of the air force, remotely controlled aircraft and vessels				X	
Creating and building up of the group of Russian forces close to the Ukrainian state border disguised as large-scale operative (combat) training	X				X
Using civilians as a *human shield* to cover up the actions of terrorists and mercenaries	X	X			
Mass involvement of armed persons in civilian clothes or in uniform-like clothes without identifying insignia	X	X			X
Artillery shelling of Ukrainian troop positions from Russian territory			X		
Establishing a Russian logistics support system for illegal armed formations of the so-called *Armed Forces of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR)* and the *Luhansk People's Republic (LPR)*	X	X			
Carrying out reconnaissance and electronic warfare by troops and assets of the armed forces of the Russian Federation in favor of supporting its own troops and illegal armed formations	X			X	
Russian mercenaries participating in combat actions against Ukrainian power structures	X	X			
Involving mercenaries from the RF to participate in combat actions in the territory of Ukraine, organization of protest actions within and beyond the conflict area	X	X			
Use of the army aviation of the Russian Armed Forces against troops involved in the Anti-Terrorist Operation			X		
Demonstrating the readiness to fight of aviation and air defense forces stationed in the Russian territory close to the Ukrainian border	X				X
Using civilians to block state and military facilities, the permanent basis of law enforcement bodies and routs of military columns	X	X			
Manipulating the sentiments of the population of the occupied territories (instilling an atmosphere of fear, frustration and panic)	X	X			X
Creating conflict situations in Eastern Ukrainian residential settlements and regions; initiating mass street protests and riots	X	X			
Use of sabotage groups against military and civil facilities	X	X			
Information and psychological operations by Russian special services	X	X		X	X
Encouraging the breakup of political and business elites using their ideological discrepancies and corruption	X	X			X

(*Continued*)

(Continued).

Type of Action	Asymmetric Warfare	LIC	Sixth Generation Warfare	Network Centric Warfare	Reflexive Control
Supporting domestic organizations interested in destabilizing the situation	X	X			
Forming public opinion on the reasonableness of changing the government in place and others	X	X			X
Physical destruction of critical hard infrastructure facilities (heat, power, gas and water supply), transport infrastructure and soft infrastructure facilities (hospitals and schools, post-offices and communication facilities, mass communication media) and impeding their reconstruction using powerful weapons and explosives	X	X			
Destroying economic and transport infrastructure within the temporarily occupied territories		X	X		
Denying the aggression against Ukraine/ representing the aggression as an internal Ukrainian civil conflict	X	X			X
Falsifying facts and misinforming the public; substituting concepts and applying other propaganda warfare methods and means	X	X			X
Manipulating the provisions and principles of international law in carrying out the annexation of the ARC and the City of Sevastopol, specifically, the principle of the right of a nation to self-determination	X	X			X
Extensive use of false and twisted information at multilateral and bilateral international events in order to present the developments around Ukraine to its advantage and to accuse the Ukrainian party of a mass violation of human rights, *genocide*, non-compliance with obligations (the Minsk Agreements), etc	X	X			X
Manifesting positive signals and declarations while there are no real meaningful changes in practice	X	X			X
Using all forms of pressure, threats and blackmail when conducting consultation to resolve the conflict	X	X			X

Rather, it has been the application of Slipchenko's theories of non-contact warfare. By September 2015, satellite images of the Hmeimim Airfield showed the Russian deployment of airplanes: 18 bombers (six Su-34 and 12 Su-24M), 12 Su-25, four Su-30cm, and 17 helicopters (five Mi-8AMTSh and 12 Mi-24P). On 7 October 2015, a sixth-generation (non-contact warfare) campaign began to be realized with a total of 26 3M-14 Kalibr NK long-range cruise missiles. On 17 November, a long-range aircraft operation was launched from Russian territory using three types of combat aircraft (Tu-160, Tu-95MS, and Tu-22M3). By mid-November 2015, Russia had already deployed Su-35Cs, the S-400, and S-300V4 air defense missile system; short-range air defense systems like the ZRPK Shell-C1 on the basis of the Kamaz-ED5FEW; and electronic warfare agents like the complex Krasukha-4. By May 2016, the number of sorties was believed to have been 10,000 and the number of cruise missiles to have been around 115, while by late 2017, the number of sorties was believed to have been around 34,000, accordingly to the Russian Ministry of Defense.[30]

During this period, a ground operation began to be considered because of ISIL and Jhabat al-Nusra's ability to hold their positions. Still, at first it was the Syrian Army and not Russian troops who started to fight. On 8-9 December, the ISIL engaged against the Syrian Army on the outskirts of Palmyra. Russian aerial intervention was ineffective in changing the outcome. Although the Russian Air Force had made over 18,500 sorties by this time against more than 71,000 targets, it was clear that the efficiency of non-contact war was limited, with the engagement of ground troops being necessary. Officially, Russia's role was organizing the intensive training of Syrian personnel, and a significant expansion of the authority of the Russian military in Syria, with Russian senior officers taking direct control of Syrian units. In addition, Russia started deploying mercenaries from the Wagner group and troops from special forces units. What started as non-contact warfare became urban warfare. The logic of the operation was outlined by Lieutenant-General Alexander Romanchuk, the deputy commander of the troops of the Southern Military District, during a briefing at the *Army-2017* International Military-Technical Forum.

There are four characteristics to be taken into consideration:

(1) First, the absence of a clear line of combat contact that stretches vertically from underground communications to the upper floors of buildings.
(2) Second, it is difficult to maneuver because of the terrain.
(3) Third, the knowledge of the terrain by the adversary.
(4) Fourth, the operations take place in residential areas.

There were additional difficulties, since it is necessary to ensure withdrawal of civilians from the war zone. At the same time, it limited the possibilities of

[30]Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation.

using artillery and air power in some cases. Additionally, it was necessary to identify militants among the refugees. The main lessons learned are:

(1) When acting in urban conditions, the main issue is to find ways to accomplish the task of mastering a settlement with the minimum use of military force. As a result, the complex actions of troops come to the fore. Therefore, the organization of an operation will take much longer than in normal conditions.
(2) Non-military measures will yield a positive result.
(3) The city should be blocked to stop the supply of reserves, ammunition, and other material assets to the enemy. In this case, the blockade must not be passive.
(4) Short offensive actions should be conducted along the entire contact line.
(5) Units should capture one building in each direction to prevent the enemy from identifying the direction of the main attacks. This will make it impossible for the enemy to know where to concentrate its main forces.
(6) It is fundamental to assess the situation inside the city — the economy, the living conditions and mood of the population, food supplies, and the possibilities for their replenishment.
(7) The widespread use of 3D maps with the capacity to detail each building in the city. According to the deputy commander of the troops of the South Caucasian Military District, this made it possible to determine the combat tasks most effectively for units that were assigned to the city in clearly defined neighborhoods.
(8) The most effective method to take a city is a combination between the local actions of small forces along the line of contact with the arrival of reinforced assault troops along converging lines with the objective of dividing the city. It is easier to destroy the opponent's forces after isolating, dividing, and weakening them. For example, during the capture of the eastern regions of Aleppo, defense militias were significantly weakened after their coordinating headquarters were destroyed.

Taking the aforementioned discussion into consideration, it is necessary to find the adversary's vulnerabilities and critical issues. The objective is to severely impact the conditions on the ground, making the civilian population leave instead of resisting Syrian and Russian forces. A specific example is Russia targeting schools and hospitals. In other words, this is the first time Slipchenko's sixth-generation warfare has been applied in a conflict of such scale. This conclusion is supported by speeches by General Valery Gerasimov and General Dmitry Bulgakov at the Russian Academy of Military Sciences in March of 2018.[31]

[31]O. Falichev, 'Goriachie tochki nauki' [Hot Scientific Points], *VPK. Voenno-promyshlennyi kur'er* 12, (27 March 2018) p. 1; V. Khudoleev, 'Voennaia nauka smotrit v budushchee' [Military Science Looks to the Future], *Krasnaia zvezda* 31 (26 March 2018).

The main characteristic of the battle in Syria is the lack of direct contact between the opponents. Concentrated maneuvers were substituted by comprehensive, continuous, and simultaneous actions in all areas of confrontation and in remote regions as well. To achieve this objective, the Russian military have been trying to integrate all combat instruments into a unified command system, albeit with doubtful success.

At the same time, the significance of electronic warfare and information and psychological operations has been increasing in Russian operational planning, together with the use of precision weapons to destroy specific critical targets. They include military areas and areas of economic significance, even if located a considerable distance from the zones of direct military operations. The main specific actions by Russian troops on the ground were:[32]

(1) Repelling of enemy counterattacks and retention of occupied areas, positions, strong points, dominant heights, and passes;
(2) Dissection of enemy groupings and their subsequent destruction;
(3) Fighting for control of road junctions, commanding heights, and mountain paths;
(4) Creation of a network of explosive and non-explosive obstacles on routes that allowed Russian units to maneuver into the flank and rear of Syrian forces;
(5) Fire blocking routes for delivery of material assets, weapons, ammunition, and replenishment of the enemy;
(6) Destruction of observers and suppression of the firearms of militants on the prevailing heights;
(7) Capturing important lines, areas and objects, transport hubs, water sources, and human settlements;
(8) Blocking militant supply routes to cut them off from ammunition, water, food, other material means, and replenishing this with manpower;
(9) Widespread use of the camouflaging properties of the terrain for a sudden maneuver, bypassing fortified areas and large points of enemy resistance;
(10) Non-standard application of available forces and means and the use of new and unexpected methods for the enemy.

The operation in Syria has been considered one of the major military successes for the Russian military in many years.[33] It has been an important opportunity for training Russian military personnel in real warfare conditions. Russian

[32]These points are based on the speech of Major-General Yuri Yarovitsky, commander of the 11th Army Corp, during the conference ARMY-2017. Quoted in A. Tikhonov, 'Siriiskaia proverka boem' [Syrian Battle Verification], *Krasnaia zvezda* 97 (4 September 2017).

[33]The five-day war is not considered a success because of its specificity and the large number of organizational and technical problems the Russian Armed Forces experienced. Ukraine is not officially considered a military operation.

sources argue that almost all air crew operational-tactical and army aviation received warfare experience involving state forces, insurgents and international terrorists, and private military companies. Syria has become a large-scale training ground, where the Russian Armed Forces were able to test the new weapons developed within the State Armament Program 2011–2020. This provided an opportunity to identify flaws and defects and to establish priorities for the 2012–2027 phase.

According to General Valery Gerasimov, the experience in Syria gave a new impetus to the improvement of the system of comprehensive enemy destruction. To increase its effectiveness, special attention has been paid to the development of precision weapons. Efforts have been made to improve the structure of command and control, including creating special information units and introducing new software and hardware equipment. Accordingly to Gerasimov, the time for employing high-precision long-range weapons was reduced by 30 percent. The Russians are trying to develop reconnaissance, strike, and reconnaissance-and-strike systems to ensure the efficiency and continuity of the fire impact on the enemy,[34] although there is no evidence of its success.

Russian phasing model construct: Policy implications

Russia is aware of its lack of strength in facing the United States and NATO in the case of a direct and more conventional conflict. This explains why Russia will always avoid direct confrontation in non-favorable conditions. Different objectives result in a variety of ways of conducting warfare, since the ultimate tactical objectives are also different. This is exemplified by the differences between the Russian operation in Ukraine and the one in Syria. Nevertheless, although the Russian military never openly published something similar to the Phasing Model Construct, it is possible to derive something similar from the literature and the actions in Syria and Ukraine:[35]

- Second Phase: special operations to mislead political and military leaders by coordinated measures carried out by diplomatic channels, media, and top government and military agencies by leaking false data, orders, directives, and instructions;
- Third Phase: intimidation, deceiving, and bribing government and military officers, with the objective of making them abandon their service duties;
- Fourth Phase: destabilizing propaganda to increase discontent among the population, boosted by the arrival of Russian bands of militants, escalating subversion;

[34]General Valery Gerasimov quoted by V. Khudoleev, 'Voennaia nauka smotrit v budushchee' [Military Science Looks to the Future], *Krasnaia zvezda* 31 (26 March 2018).
[35]S. G. Chekinov and S. A. Bogadanov, 'O kharaktere i soderzhanii voyny novogo pokoleniya' [On the Nature and Content of a New-Generation War], *Voennaia Mysl* 10 (2013) pp. 13–24.

- Fifth Phase: establishment of no-fly zones over the country to be attacked, imposition of blockades, and extensive use of private military companies in close cooperation with armed opposition units;
- Sixth Phase: the commencement of military action, immediately preceded by large-scale reconnaissance and subversive missions. All types, forms, methods, and forces, including special operations forces, space, radio, radio engineering, electronic, diplomatic, and secret service intelligence, and industrial espionage;
- Seventh Phase: combination of targeted information operation, electronic warfare operation, aerospace operation, constant air force harassment, combined with the use of high-precision weapons launched from various platforms (long-range artillery, and weapons based on new physical principles, including microwaves, radiation and non-lethal biological weapons);
- Eighth Phase: roll over the remaining points of resistance and destroy surviving enemy units by special operations conducted by reconnaissance units to spot which enemy units have survived and to transmit their coordinates to the attacker's missile and artillery units; fire barrages to annihilate the defender's resisting units by effective advanced weapons; airborne operations to surround points of resistance; and territory mopping-up operations by ground troops. Peacekeeping operations.

The first four phases are basically non-kinetic, using strategies of low-intensity conflict as understood by the Russians. The fifth phase is when military action really starts. It is important to mention the use of private military companies — the PMC. The United States has used them extensively in Iraq and Afghanistan from operating mess halls to providing security and, sometimes, performing military duties. For the Russians, PMCs must be understood as mercenaries in the worst sense of the word. The objective is to have an active military force that cannot be linked to the Russian Armed Forces. These mercenaries can act as if they were locals, part of the enemy's armed forces, police, or whatever necessary. They will often engage in sabotage, blackmailing, subversive activities, terrorism, kidnapping, or any other activity that is not considered regular warfare. Russia can and will deny any connection with its mercenaries, publicly accusing them to be part of the enemy's forces. The last three phases are a combination of network-centric warfare, sixth-generation warfare, and reflexive control.

Although theoretically, Russia might start in any of the eight phases, in Ukraine and Syria it demonstrated that there is some logical cumulative sequence in moving from one to another. That is why it is better to organize them in a sequential inter-operational cumulative division where the first tier precedes the second, which precedes the third:

- First tier: first, second, and third phases;
- Second tier: fourth and fifth phase;

- Third tier: sixth, seventh, and eighth phases.

In the field, this discussion implies employing high-precision non-nuclear weapons, together with the support of subversive and reconnaissance groups. The strategic targets are those that, if destroyed, result in unacceptable damage to the country being attacked. They include top government administration and military control systems, major manufacturing, fuel and energy facilities, transportation hubs and facilities (railroad hubs, bridges, ports, airports, tunnels, etc.), potentially dangerous objects (hydroelectric power dams and hydroelectric power complexes, the processing units of chemical plants, nuclear power facilities, storage places for strong poisons, etc.). Therefore, Russia's objective is to make the enemy understand that it may face an environmental and socio-political catastrophe, thereby avoiding engagement in combat and preferring a political solution.[36]

The Russian version of the Phasing Model Construct has the objective of achieving deterrence in peacetime and preemption in wartime aiming for a return to economic, political, diplomatic and other non-military instruments. Unless the opponent is considerably weaker, Russia's actions have the purpose of gaining a result in political negotiations with the interested parties. It is a tool of political pressure to have Russia's interests taken into consideration. As a result, Russia may use military instruments to achieve non-military objectives, non-military instruments to achieve military objectives, both at the same time, or any combination of these. Since Russia's objectives are always political, it starts with the establishment of political opposition and the formation of pro-Russian coalitions, both inside the country under attack and in the international arena to legitimize Russia's objectives and to support Russian interests during the conflict resolution phase. It uses political and diplomatic pressure in combination with economic sanctions and even a blockade, a break in diplomatic relations with the objective of changing the political and military leadership.

Final remarks

An analysis of the Russian military literature when compared to the empirical evidence of Russian tactics in Ukraine and Syria shows that its strategy is multi-layered and comprehensive. The Russians call it *new-generation warfare*. It is not something new. Rather, it is the particular understanding of Russian military thinkers and the main commanders about the evolution of military art, especially in the West. Although it is not correct to affirm that the Western way of conducting warfare determined how Russian military thinkers developed their own understanding on the subject, its influence is undeniable. Both the strategy of low-intensity conflict and network centric warfare were originally developed

[36]S. Chekinov and S. Bogadanov, 'Asimmetrichnyye deystviya po obespecheniyu voyennoy bezopasnosti Rossii' [Asymmetrical Actions to Ensure Russia's Military Securirty] *Voennaia Mysl* 3 (2010) pp. 13–22.

in the United States, while sixth-generation warfare is very much Slipchenko's understanding about the strategic implications of Operation *Desert Storm* and the NATO bombing in Yugoslavia.

Therefore, it is possible to affirm that the concept of hybrid warfare is strange to the Russian military, but Russian new-generation warfare results from their own understanding and interpretation of Western military strategy. This explains why many experts have stated that it is not new but at same time being unable to fully explain it. The term *hybrid* became very popular specifically because it can be understood as anything that is not monolithic. The same applies for gray zone warfare, which is an attempt to create a pseudo new concept based on the American doctrine of low-intensity conflict largely employed in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s.

The most important step is the obvious, although it has been the most difficult one: to analyze and try to understand Russia on its own terms. There are three main issues to be observed. First, the general idea by many that Moscow knows the West is right and that they are corrupt and anti-democratic. In reality, the Kremlin considers the West to be corrupt, cynical, hypocritical, and two-faced. Only business interests are important. However, even if this was true and Putin and other Russian politicians believed that they are what the West accuses them of being, this does not change Russian foreign and security policy. Therefore, the West has to take the strategic challenge as it is and not expect any other kind of attitude from Russia. The West is the main opponent and strategic danger for Russia.

Second, it is necessary to understand the Russian strategy on its own terms. In other words, to accept that Russia has divergent strategic interests that are not necessarily compatible with the West; that it sees itself as a world power with the right to have its own sphere of influence. Third, it is counterproductive to frame the Russian strategy within artificial frameworks established outside of the threat context, such as hybrid warfare. The Russians have their own framework that, although influenced by Western military doctrine, is the result of their own theoretical developments. The West's focus on hybrid or gray zone warfare shadows the asymmetric and kinetic components of the Russian strategy. Assurance, deterrence, and defense should not just be words. They have to be in the form of real capabilities and not just perception.

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