8-1-2018

Russian Information Operations in the Soviet Strategic Framework

Kyle I. Campbell
University of Denver

Recommended Citation

Russian Information Operations in the Soviet Strategic Framework

Abstract
This thesis seeks to illuminate how information operations supports Russia's strategy for creating power for the state. Using classic military theory and Soviet strategy as the lens, the paper examines information operations in the context of the nature of war. The examination includes historical and contemporary Russian publications on warfare, as well as information operations case studies from Eastern Europe, Georgia and Crimea. Russia's operations are found to be consistent with a strategy of attrition. The opponent's society is the primary target of information operations. The emphasis on information operations within contemporary Russian concepts of modern war indicate that the Russian military theory establishment judge this means of war as useful and persistent. Western nations must seek to separately and holistically understand Russia's strategy and how information operations support it, as well as the role of society in the rubric of war. These elements are essential to counter Russian aggression.

Document Type
Thesis

Degree Name
M.A.

Department
Josef Korbel School of International Studies

First Advisor
Jonathan Adelman, Ph.D.

Second Advisor
Julia Macdonald, Ph.D.

Third Advisor
Elizabeth Campbell

Keywords
Information operations, Information warfare, Military theory, Russia, Strategy, War

Subject Categories
Military and Veterans Studies | Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration | Slavic Languages and Societies

Publication Statement

Russian Information Operations in the

Soviet Strategic Framework

_____

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies

University of Denver

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

_____

by

Kyle I. Campbell

August 2018

Advisor: Jonathan Adelman, PhD

Author: Kyle I. Campbell
Title: Russian Information Operations in the Soviet Strategic Framework
Advisor: Jonathan Adelman, PhD
Degree Date: August 2018

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to illuminate how information operations supports Russia's strategy for creating power for the state. Using classic military theory and Soviet strategy as the lens, the paper examines information operations in the context of the nature of war. The examination includes historical and contemporary Russian publications on warfare, as well as information operations case studies from Eastern Europe, Georgia and Crimea. Russia's operations are found to be consistent with a strategy of attrition. The opponent's society is the primary target of information operations. The emphasis on information operations within contemporary Russian concepts of modern war indicate that the Russian military theory establishment judge this means of war as useful and persistent. Western nations must seek to separately and holistically understand Russia's strategy and how information operations support it, as well as the role of society in the rubric of war. These elements are essential to counter Russian aggression.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: RUSSIAN INFORMATION OPERATIONS IN THE SOVIET

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Russia poses a negligible military threat, if monetary expenditures are the

measure. As of 2017, Russia's defense budget is reportedly $47.3 Billion.[1] Despite not

having the second largest military, Russia is often ranked as the second strongest military

power in the world,[2] due at least in part to nuclear capabilities that underline Russia's

national security and military power. Beyond subjective rankings and objective dollar

amounts, Russia is plagued with problems that affect the government's ability to project

power. Russia's sparse and outdated infrastructure, widespread poverty and a weak

economy are all tied to a corrupt political system.[3] In terms of instruments of national

power, Russia has a held a weak hand for decades if not centuries. Analysts may differ

on the point of whether President Vladimir Putin is seeking to create either a great Russia

or a greater Russia, but the fact remains that he must do so with limited assets.[4] In recent

---

[1] Caffrey, Craig. "Russian defense budget expected to be cut by 5% in 2018," *Janes Defense Industry,*
September 20, 2017, accessed January 25, 2018, http://www.janes.com/article/74248/russian-
defence-budget-expected-to-be-cut-by-5-in-2018

[2] See, for example, "Ranked: The world's 20 strongest militaries" *Business insider,* October 3, 2015.
Accessed April 23, 2018 at http://www.businessinsider.com/these-are-the-worlds-20-strongest-
militaries-ranked-2015-9#3-china-18

[3] "Where is the Russian economy headed?" Deutche Welle, accessed April 23, 2018.
http://www.dw.com/en/where-is-the-russian-economy-headed/a-42994677

[4] Mearsheimer, John J. "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault: The Liberal Delusions that Provoked
Putin." *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 93, No. 5 (2014), 85.

years, Russia's activity in the information realm has increased dramatically, making it important to understand the value of this element of national power to the prosecution of Russian strategy. Information operations, while not the only tool available to the Russian state, is far cheaper than purely military options. The key question to answer is this: How do information operations support Russia's strategy?

An initial assumption that Information Operations represents the most modern incarnation of Deep Operations underlines the genesis of this paper. It seemed obvious that the idea of unbalancing the enemy in the strategic rear was well suited to information operations, for that is one of the original tenets of deep operations. Instead of employing air bombing or artillery to destroy supply depots and headquarters and weaken the enemy's ability to field forces, the tools of cyber are turned to the same effect, if not in practice at least in theory. The destabilizing and crippling effects of information war, at least in their most destructive incarnations, seemed a natural addition to the arsenal of artillery, bombers, submarines and so forth. Deep operations, however, is a military theoretical and operational construct designed to defeat the enemy on the battlefield. Information operations is, at least in part, a military theoretical and operational construct designed to defeat the enemy in the phases before a conventional battle is enjoined.

Research quickly led to the origins and transformations of Soviet strategy. Therein it became clear that the initial thesis is accurate only in the broadest sense, missing several important aspects. The devil is in the details. The original thesis revealed a lack of knowledge of the Soviet view of war, the landscape of their military thought, and represented a fundamental misreading of the connection between information

operations and strategy as constructed in the Soviet Union. Research also revealed that the Soviet strategic framework retains its conceptual value, making it a logical place to begin an inquiry as to how information operations are intended to support Russia's strategy.

The thesis of this paper is that Russian Information Operations are intended as part of a larger strategy of attrition, and that both the strategy and operational line represent a fundamental challenge to the western way of war. Russia's attritional strategy is a response to constraints across the spectrum of the nation's instruments of national power, particularly the economic constraints. Russia's use of an attritional strategy is logical from a strategic planning perspective, and the use of information operations within that attritional framework maximizes the nation's particular strengths while minimizing weaknesses, and strikes at an overlooked aspect of war in the west: society.

This paper investigates the Russian and Soviet approach to military theory to illustrate several points. First, it is clear that Russia views war differently than the west for reasons of historical experience and as a product of an active body of military thought. Secondly, Russia views Information Operations as an operational line in support of current grand strategy, insofar as can be extrapolated from observation. Third, Russia's focus on the strategic importance of society since World War I has only increased. From the second and third points, we can determine that these factors have encouraged Russia to 'weaponize' the products of the Information Age. Fourth, and not least of all, Russia's strategy is more dangerous than the operation, as novel as it may be, and understanding Russian strategy is of chief importance to defense against it.

The scope of grand strategy in Russia is impossibly broad for this paper and covers detailed topics of a wide-ranging nature. Therefore, this paper will only cover military strategy and the areas it bleeds over into economics and politics, society and the security apparatus. The operational focus will be on information operations as a component of grand strategy. In Chapter 1, this paper will first examine the nature of war, strategy, instruments of national power and the role of society vis-a-vis war. The focus will then shift in Chapter 2 to the Soviet levels of war, and then with Chapter 3 to a historical analysis of how the development of Soviet strategy and operations occurred prior to World War II, providing historical context for war and strategy in general and outlining the characteristics of Soviet strategy. Chapter 4 will then turn to contemporary analysis of Russian operations and to some degree, contemporary strategy. Chapter 5 presents analysis of information operations using case studies that will seek to clarify the tools and techniques of Russian operations in order to illustrate their linkages with strategy. The role of society in a state's preparation for war and engagement with war is a common thread throughout.

A study of Soviet history and Soviet strategy reveals the genius of strategic thought in the failing Russian empire and burgeoning Soviet Union. The interwar period was a particularly vibrant time in military thought around the globe, and Russia was no different. Modern Russia has returned to its strategic roots and adapted early Soviet Deep Operations and lessons learned from decades of social control into modern Information Operations. Recent manifestations of Russia's information capabilities take the form of influencing operations and aggressive cyber attacks. These manifestations

are most matured in the former Soviet sphere of influence, or the Near Abroad, and provide better confirmation of Russian doctrine, strategy and tactics than published Russian writings.

The most important lesson that can be learned from an examination of Russian information operations is a better understanding of how the Russians use strategy in a changing world to link political objectives with the available means to achieve them. The explicity argument is that Russia's strategy in this regard is effective and properly links the elements of ends, ways and means with strategy. This professional execution of a military and political necessity is a core competency of any professional military system and should be more widely emulated. The ends, ways and means and the political system as a whole may be odious, but it is undeniable that the Russians are not behaving as amateurs.

A key insight that emerges throughout the historical context and current study is the western intellectual rejection of Soviet and Russian theoretical insights over the crux of ideological incompatibility. Russia is assumed to be too militarily insignificant to pose a conventional threat, too politically compromised to synergize against the west, and too economically weak to be considered a notable, much less great, power. Ideologically based distaste, or prejudice, hampers attempts to understand Russia.

The Russian strategist Aleksandr A. Svechin and many of his contemporaries read, studied and learned from Prussian and German theorists as well as American and French events, despite growing xenophobia and dogmatism in the young USSR. Their contributions to military theory remain relevant and in use today, even in the west. As

Kent Lee, the editor of Svechin's *Strategy* wrote, "To study war between states – an activity utterly antithetical to xenophobia – requires deep understanding of other state's experiences and histories."[5] It is in this spirit that this paper is written.

---

[5] Svechin, Aleksandr A. *Strategy,* ed. Kent D. Lee, (Minneapolis, MN: East View Publications, 1991), v.

CHAPTER 1: STRATEGY, WAR AND INFORMATION WAR

"For the art of war is an art like painting, architecture, or pedagogy, and the entire cultural existence of peoples is determined to a high degree by their military organizations, which in turn are closely related to the technique of warfare, tactics and strategy." - Hans Delbrück[6]

What is War?

War is a timeless and universal phenomenon[7] and in the context of nation-states, is the servant of policy supplied by the political leadership. Military and political objectives are not always same, but the military objectives should be designed to deliver the political ones.[8] While war does exist between individuals, tribes and other sub-national groups, this chapter shall examine only war between nations in general. In order to do this, we will examine the nature of war, strategy, national power, some of Carl von Clausewitz's foundational ideas, the role of society in war, and information war in general.

War is a state of being, but only in total war are all parts of the nation-state at war. Different cultures perceive war differently. In Western conception, war is an event with a

---

[6] Delbrück, Hans. *History of the Art of War: Within the Framework of Political History. Volume IV: The Modern Era,* trans. Walter J. Renfroe, JR., (London: Greenwood Press, 1985), x.

[7] Roland, Alex "War and Technology" *Foreign Policy Research Institute.* (February 27, 2009), accessed online November 2, 2017, http://fpri.org /article/2009/02/war-and-technology/

[8] von Clausewitz, Carl, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 91.

beginning, an end. It is therefore distinguishable from peace, by the clear transition

between states of being.   In the Eastern framework, war and peace are difficult to

distinguish from each other, being relatively constant and pervasive, and are considered

part of the same ongoing conflict.[9] A degree of this difference in the realm of military

thought can be attributed to the most influential thinkers for each framework.

Clausewitz, the seminal military theoretician for the West, wrote primarily for the

practitioner of war, the leaders who would themselves be on a battlefield. Sun Tzu, the

unarguable father of Eastern military strategy, wrote for the generals and rulers.[10]

Force is a classic component of war. According to Carl von Clausewitz, war is

"an act of force to compel the enemy to do our will." Force was the primary means of

war in his time and position as a soldier, not a statesman, with the goal of imposing of

one's will on the opponent as the object.[11] Clausewitz's intellectual context is critical for

understanding his writings. While he was very aware of the importance of political

leadership and policy in circumscribing war, his business was simply war.   The political

maneuvering and policies governing war were not his focus – he wrote chiefly about war

itself.

Certain factors circumscribe the conduct of war. Clausewitz identifies three

"broad objectives, which between them cover everything: the *armed forces*, the *country,*

---

[9] Handel, Michael I., *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought,* 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Frank Cass, 2001), 34.

[10] Tzu, Sun. *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1963), x.

[11] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 83.

and the *enemy's will"* (italics original).[12] By this he is referring, respectively, to the

capability of the armed forces, the country's resources for war, and the enemy's desire to

fight. Regarding the enemy's will, he warns that the armed forces may be destroyed and

the country occupied, but without submission of the population and the government, the

state's political will is not broken and the war is not yet won. Conversely, peace may be

concluded without the destruction of the armed forces or the occupation of the country.[13]

What the activity of war rests upon is a decision to fight or cede the field by the political

elites. The elites are in turn influenced by the capability of the military and the desires of

society.

War has different intensities. The evaluation of the relative importance of what is

being fought over, the strengths, moral opposition of the opponent, all these are factors

affecting the intensity of the conflict, or the character of war. The aims and the tools of

war modify the character of war. War aims can be either limited or total, which is a

function of the political objectives.[14] Where one nation seeks to annihilate another, as

Nazi Germany sought to annihilate Russia, the war is total. Where war is limited, as in

Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia, the character of war is carefully circumscribed to

achieve only a limited objective.

War is not limited to defeating the enemy forces. According to Clausewitz:

It is possible to increase the likelihood of success without defeating the
enemy's forces. I refer to operations that have *direct political*

---

[12] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 90.

[13] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 90-91.

[14] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 91.

repercussions [italics original], that are designed in the first place to disrupt the opposing alliance, or to paralyze it, that gain us new allies, favorably affect the political scene, etc. If such operations are possible it is obvious that they can greatly improve our prospects and that they can form a much shorter route to the goal than the destruction of the opposing armies.[15]

Of the methods Clausewitz outlines, the destruction of forces is the inherently military solution, while operations that increase the enemy's suffering are the more political, though "from the highest point of view, one is as military as the other, and neither is appropriate unless it suits the particular conditions."[16] This second way aims to wear the enemy down in the classic strategy of exhaustion. In this kind of strategy, destruction of the enemy is a secondary matter, an option but not the goal. The end state of the two is the same: primarily to destroy his will in order to compel him to submit to demands.[17] Quite clearly, the strategy is tuned to the situation. The political objectives will therefore determine the means and the ways, which may not include actual combat.

Warfare is both a verb and a noun. As a verb it means 'fight' or 'struggle'. The noun warfare refers to the waging of war, combat between enemies or figuratively as struggle or strife.[18] Throughout this paper the term will be used to refer to different types of war, using different tools. The tools of warfare of any particular time are a

---

[15] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 92-93.

[16] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 93.

[17] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 93.

[18] *New Standard Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, Vol. 2 -- M to Z,* s.v "warfare," (New York, NY: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1941), 2677.

manifestation of the current technology. They have changed over time, and will continue

to do so. Among these can be counted: the sword and shield, rifles and bullets, tanks and

projectiles, nuclear bombs and bombers, and keyboard and source code. The struggle is a

form of warfare by virtue of the political goals that direct the means.

Clausewitz's references to two types of strategies, while not the central focus of

his book, has nevertheless sparked a great deal of military thought throughout the

centuries. *On War* was published posthumously, so he was unable to flesh out many of

his ideas. Hans Delbrück was the historian and theorist who most succinctly outlined one

of Clausewitz' underdeveloped ideas – that of strategy being of two types. These he

termed a strategy of annihilation and a strategy of attrition, with the first being centered

on battle and the destruction of the enemy's main force. With the strategy of attrition,

"[defeating the enemy's main force] is to be regarded as one means that can be chosen

from among several."[19] The effect of Clausewitz and Delbrück upon the development of

Russian and Soviet strategy was very powerful, particularly during the early Soviet

period.

What is Strategy?

The etymology of the word 'strategy' can be traced to Greece. The concept of

strategy was called 'the art of war' or 'theory of war' during the Middle Ages and early

modern era. This word reflected the milieu of strategy at the time, namely the value of

---

[19] Delbrück, Hans. *History of the Art of War: Within the Framework of Political History. Volume IV: The Modern Era,* trans. Walter J. Renfroe, JR., (London: Greenwood Press, 1985), 293-294.

alliances, role of battles, the use of force, deception and other military techniques and other related political and military issues. The use of the word strategy became common in Western Europe as a result of the Enlightenment focus on reason.[20] Optimistically, the presumption developed that war could be engaged in through reason instead of passion, ending the cycle of senseless war and destruction. The development of nationalism, the embodiment of passion of a people, increased the size and scope of armies and wars. Reason was necessary to deal with the increased scope of war, and strategy became the tool of kings and commanders once again. The domain of strategy expanded to include the economy, as a necessity of mass armies and total war. While war escaped the bonds of reason on many occasions after the Enlightenment, the reasoned political control of violent military endeavor remains a foundational concept to strategy and to war in general. This general framework of reason and political control has continued to inform our understanding of modern war. Modern war, as manifested at the end of World War I, was a product of the Industrial Revolution and represented yet another enlargement of the size and scale of war.

Following the Digital Revolution in the 1950s, Western nation-states began to live in the Information Age as much as the Industrial Age. The human experience is now based substantially on computers, mobile phones, software, micro-electrics and the pervasive Internet. The Information Age has altered the physical, social, economic and political landscape as thoroughly as the Industrial Revolution, though it is not to be missed that the Information Age was precipitated by an industrial revolution in computer

---

[20] Freeman, Lawrence, *Strategy.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), xii.

technology.[21]   Modern war in the Information Age represents another expansion of the

scope of conflict to the manmade domain of cyber, and where there is war there must be a

strategy.

Strategy is a realm of "bargaining and persuasion as well as threats and pressure,

psychological as well as physical effects, and words as well as deeds...[Strategy] is the art

of creating power."[22] Technological evolution of the tools of warfare and methods of

employment have not significantly altered the timeless importance of strategy. Strategy

is the link between means and political ends, "the scheme for how to make one produce

the other."[23]   The study of war has trended towards the development of technological

means of war, largely replacing the study of the political, social and strategic dimensions

of warfare.[24] Often the technologically focused are perceived as forward looking, while

those occupied with the strategic and political dimensions of warfare are assumed to be

focused on the past. Though this dichotomy of labels is only partially accurate, the best

study of war incorporates both. While superiority in technology is important, or at least

preferable, it is meaningless without a sensible, pragmatically grounded strategy. As

---

[21] Freeman, Chris and Louca, Francisco. "Emergence of a New Techno-Economic Paradigm: The Age of
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)." In *As Time Goes By,* (New York, NY:
Oxford University Press, 2002), 301.

[22] Freeman, *Strategy,* xii.

[23] Betts, Richard, "Is Strategy an Illusion?" *International Security* 25, no. 2, (Fall 2000), 5.

[24] Handel, Michael I., *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought,* 3rd ed. (New York: Frank Cass, 2001),
xx.

Richard Betts succinctly put it, "Without strategy, there is no rationale for how force will achieve purposes worth the price in blood and treasure."[25]

Center of Gravity and the Trinity

Clausewitz determined that when looking at the "dominant characteristics" of the opponent, a "center of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends."[26] It is against that point, Clausewitz goes on to say, towards which all forces should be directed. Simply put, the center of gravity is the essential element to defeat. Every battle, operation and strategy has a center of gravity. This center of gravity may be a tactic, a piece of terrain, an operation, supply lines or even a force as nebulous as morale, and it changes. One of the strategist's key objectives is to affect the center of gravity, for it is often the most effective path to victory.

Another theoretical construct of Clausewitz's is the formulation of what is called the trinity. According to Clausewitz, strategy has a certain geometry between the society, government and military, and these forces will exert pressures on the strategy. In Clausewitz's theorizing, these elements are essential to formulating a strategy, which in the most desirable position is balanced between these elements.[27] Variable in their relationship to each other, the society, government and military also adapt in relation to

---

[25] Betts, "Is Strategy an Illusion?" 5.

[26] Howard, Michael. "Clausewitz." *Past Masters*, ed. Keith Thomas. (New York: Oxford University Press. 1988), 39.

[27] von Clausewitz, *On War,* 89.

war,[28] becoming an ecosystem with internal logic. Society he categorized as 'a blind natural force,' while government provides the 'reason' (tying war to the prosecution of a political policy governed by reason) and the military is a realm of 'chance and probability.'[29] This categorization of the military is informed by his career, which was characterized by many defeats and a few victories, but also reflects the fact that battle is often a gamble. The relationships between these three elements are neither arbitrary nor fixed, but each element exerts influence on the theory (strategy), making the development of a strategy a 'difficult task' indeed.[30] To clarify, if society does not support a war, the political body will have to adjust their strategy for achieving the goal. This could mean a less militarily oriented strategy, such as a diplomatic solution that requires less popular buy-in.   If a war is the only way to achieve a goal, then the population must be somehow convinced of the necessity of war.

Clausewitz insists that war is subordinate to policy, and the statesmen and commanders must establish "the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, not trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature."[31] This chameleon-like tendency of war is something Clausewitz observes in his lifetime, but is persistent today. Adapting to the changing nature of war characterized his career and the Prussian army of the time, and it was a difficult process.

---

[28] von Clausewitz, *On War,* 89.

[29] von Clausewitz, *On War,* 89.

[30] von Clausewitz, *On War,* 89.

[31] von Clausewitz, *On War,* 88.

War continues to change, posing challenges for retaining predictability in defense expenditures, force postures and readiness, as well as practiced tactics and operations. The natural reluctance of any military to re-invent their combat capabilities before a conflict would appear to confer an advantage to the combatant who adapts first, and to a degree it often does.[32] Modern armies, heavily invested in expensive technologies, are less adaptive to war's tendency to change.

Instruments of National Power

National instruments of power refer to the broad categories of capability a nation possesses, "the means and ways of dealing with crises around the world".[33] Military strategists in the United States have traditionally focused on four basic instruments of national power when formulating a security strategy: Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic, often referred to by the acronym DIME. Briefly, Diplomatic power refers to the powers of the government to influence and coerce, the Military power refers to military might and capabilities, and the Economic power is based on the production capacity, resilience and depth of the economy. The Informational instrument is predicated on synchronized communication, encompassing programs, plans, themes, messages and activities but does not explicitly address intelligence operations in this

---

[32] Adamsky, Dima. *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel.* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2014), 2.

[33] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-13: Information Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014), I-1, accessed February 7, 2018, http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_13.pdf

western construct. The fundamental belief relevant to informational power is that key

audience beliefs, perceptions, and behavior are crucial to the success of the strategy or

plan.[34] Information operations, of which there are many forms, are designed to influence

those beliefs and perceptions.

In each of the domains of national power, there is a duel for supremacy. The form

this duel takes is appropriate to the domain. Clausewitz's assertion that war is a duel

where each opponent seeks to compel the other to his will[35] does not require that the

combatants have armies or pistols, despite the fact they were implicit in his formulation

of the idea. Coercive competition between European societies historically occurred in the

military sphere, where military dominance granted political control in feudal societies.[36]

Economic competition is one such domain. Economic warfare, according to

Samuel Huntington, is a legitimate area of competition. Huntington uses the example of

Japan after 1950, saying:

> In the realm of military competition, the instruments of power are
> missiles, planes, warships...In the realm of economic competition, the
> instruments of power are productive efficiency, market control, trade
> surplus, strong currency, foreign exchange reserves, ownership of foreign
> companies, factories and technology.[37]

---

[34] Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States,* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017), xi, accessed February 7, 2018, http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp1_ch1.pdf?ver=2017-12-23-160207-587

[35] von Clausewitz, *On War*. 83.

[36] Howard, Michael, *War in European History. (*New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1976), 2.

[37] Huntington, Samuel P. "Why International Primacy Matters", *International Security*, Vol 17, no 4. (Spring 1993), 73.

Huntington also argues that primacy, defined as superiority in a realm of national power, enables a state to achieve its objectives without recourse to war – that is, without purely military conflict. He also goes on to note that "the threat to American economic primacy from Japan is serious because Japanese policy makes it serious."[38] The element of intent is worth consideration, for war can declared by one combatant. Where cessation of war requires mutual agreement to stop, it can begin through the actions of one. Conventional military conflict in the modern world may therefore be considered a less advanced level of competition, precisely because it evolved long before economies and polities were connected through international or inter-continental institutions. The recognition of the Economic element of national power as a realm of warfare, in addition to its other characteristics, smoothens the path to consider the more nebulous element of Information as another evolutionary addition.

War in the information domain is not as well developed as war in the classic form. Liberal democratic societies appear to lag behind authoritarian regimes in the use of the domain[39] most likely due to a strong societal reaction to anything that is reminiscent of propaganda or government control of information. For the information realm to be a domain of war, the means must be controlled in the same way governments control tanks, planes and artillery. That is, information itself and access to it must be controlled. This is antithetical to free speech and a free society. This ideological aversion to the control of

---

[38] Huntington, "Why International Primacy Matters," 70.

[39] Mills, John R. "'All Elements of National Power': Re-Organizing the Interagency Structure and Process for Victory in the Long War" *Strategic Insights*, Volume V, Issue 6 (July 2006), 1.

information is the crux of social vulnerability to modern information operations. This explains the lack of development of aspects of information warfare, but the issue of defense remains. While free societies do not need to employ such tactics, they must be able to defend against them. One author points out "we may not realize the obviousness of our disarray on [the informational element], but the enemy does."[40]

Information is a domain of war. The most recent *Joint Publication 3-13* acknowledges the existence of an informational operational environment (land and sea being examples of others). This operating environment has three dimensions, the physical (hardware), informational (data and transfer of data) and cognitive (people). The latter is the most important dimension in the information environment.[41] "Information is a powerful tool to influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp an adversary's ability to make and share decisions."[42] As an integrated process with air, land, sea, space and special operations, it is both defensive and offensive, with all capabilities being fully inter-related.[43] While efforts to adapt the armed forces to the new reality of 'cyber warfare' are underway, democratic norms and values ensure the efforts are primarily focused on adversary's military forces. The tension between a new domain of war and the political

---

[40] Mills, John R. "'All Elements of National Power': Re-Organizing the Interagency Structure and Process for Victory in the Long War" *Strategic Insights*, Volume V, Issue 6 (July 2006), 2.

[41] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-13*, I-2, 3.

[42] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-13*, I-1.

[43] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-13*, vii-x.

control exercised over it reveals a fundamental challenge that democracies face in protecting citizens from information designed to harm society and political systems.

Society at War - A Brief Historical Survey

Information warfare, as practiced by Russia, places society in a key role. One of the best recent examples is that of Crimea. Public opinion of the Crimean populace was key for the Russian annexation of Crimea, because the population's apparently willingness for Russian protection[44] lent Russian military actions a thin veneer of international plausibility. While this may not have held up under long term scrutiny, the technique employed by Russia ensured that the battlefield was in the arena of public opinion, instead of a military battlefield. Society may be the center of gravity of the modern state in certain cases,[45] but it does not need to be the center of gravity to become an important target. Society has been an inextricable component of war since the beginning of recorded history.

The value of targeting civil society for influence and information operations lies in the effect it has on the functioning of the government, popular support for policies and the capability of the military. This would seem logical to Carl von Clausewitz, and

---

[44] DeYoung, Karen. "Obama speaks with Putin by phone, calls on Russia to pull forces back to Crimea bases." *The Washington Post,* March 1, 2014, accessed online January 5, 2018 at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-and-allies-try-to-decide-on-response-to-ukraine-crisis/2014/03/01/463d1922-a174-11e3-b8d8-94577ff66b28_story.html?utm_term=.fed228b537a8

[45] Lucas, Edward and Peter Pomerantzev, *Winning the Information War: Techniques and Counter-strategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe.* (Legatum Institute, March 2016), 12. Accessed online May 31, 2017 at http://cepa.org/reports/Winning-the-information-war

would also be no surprise to Sun Tzu, who considered the mobilization and maintenance of popular support to be a requirement for success.[46] Despite Sun Tzu's emphasis on maintaining popular support 2300 years prior to Napoleon, it was the French Revolution that irrevocably altered the character of warfare in the west.

Nationalism, as first identified through the French Revolution, heralded the transition from Frederick's set piece battle to the use of willing citizen-soldiers and new tactics derided by Prussians as 'skirmishing.'[47] The rise of mass armies in France under Napoleon Bonaparte is inextricably woven with the political and social system. Nationalism, the identification of personal interest with a supra-individual group on the basis of shared culture, history and interests, animated French society and enabled Napoleon to employ massive combat formations in an unprecedentedly flexible fashion.[48] Barry Posen argues the structural realist view that successful military innovations will rapidly be copied to preserve military power and state independence. Because the development of nationalism enabled French military success, other nations in Europe were obliged to generate their own state nationalism to successfully compete.[49]

It is with the close of the eighteenth century that society and popular support became inextricably linked with the political system and the military. Carl von

---

[46] Handel, Michael I., *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought,* 3rd ed. (New York: Frank Cass, 2001), 119.

[47] [47] Delbrück, Hans. *History of the Art of War: Within the Framework of Political History. Volume IV: The Modern Era,* trans. Walter J. Renfroe, JR., (London: Greenwood Press, 1985), *403.*

[48] Posen, Barry R., "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power." *International Security* 18, no. 2 (MIT Press, Fall 1993), 82.

[49] Posen, "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power," 83.

Clausewitz, writing in the early decades of the nineteenth century and himself a Prussian officer humiliated by Napoleon's army, was part of the professional officer corps wrestling with the transition to Napoleonic warfare and the implications for war and strategy.[50] His writings are to be understood in this context of a fundamental change of relationships between society, the rulers and the military. While technology and the tools of war have changed, warfare has not changed so significantly as of this writing as to eliminate the role of the body politic or the political system.

Russia's experience with a lack of nationalistic support for World War I proved key to later Soviet thinking. While the government crumbled under the strain of modern war, the army could not be maintained due to lack of economic vitality and social unrest. The army starved while the population rioted and organized strikes. Future Bolshevik leaders observed that the success of the military front depended heavily on the morale and political and economic vitality of the civil population in the rear.[51] Serving in as director general of food supplies for the Russian forces in the south of the empire in 1918, J.V. Stalin experienced the social disruption by kulak peasant in the rear area and observed the effects at the military front. Peasants refusing to surrender their grain harvests caused widespread starvation at the front and exacerbated the rancor of soldiers

---

[50] von Clausewitz, *On War.* p.3

[51] Treadgold, Donald W. and Herbert J. Ellison, *"Twentieth Century Russia."* 9th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 92.

on the front lines.[52] Later strategic theory in the Soviet Union displays a deep concern

with the establishment and maintenance of public support for military endeavors.

Information at War

Without replacing the centrality of armed force, information operations has

become an important method of waging war. Armed troops are still required to occupy

terrain and conventional weapons are required to destroy enemy forces. Nevertheless,

cyber warfare has become a tactical reality and information operations are simply the

aggregate of tactics employed in the information domain. This paper focuses on two

main categories of information operations, the information-technical and the information-

psychological.

In equating information operations with conventional war, a challenge arises

regarding the issue of force and violence. The classic definition of force in warfare

involves such tools of war as bombs and bullets, as well as 'the forces' who employ

them. The very language of war found in dictionaries and theoretical work was

developed at a time when it chiefly involved military forces, with weapons and the killing

of soldiers to judge the outcome of battles. The importance of this point in time as

foundational to the conception of war cannot be overstated.

Information operations is not necessarily a military operation and does not require

the trappings of classical intra-state conflict. It does not occur strictly in the Military

---

[52] Schneider, James J. *The Structure of Strategic Revolution: Total War and the Roots of the Soviet Warfare State.* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1994), 234-239.

dimension of national power, but straddles all dimensions to some degree. Military theoretical constructs in the west are not yet sufficiently broad to accommodate the various types of conflict that occur between nations, as the concept of conflict and war is maintained more purely in the Military and Political dimensions. This is already showing signs of change.

Violence, defined as injury, death and physical destruction, is not the primary role or purpose of a cyber attack, as it is in purely military conflict.[53] Despite this lack of bleeding, information operations is a type of operation that can be conducted to achieve a strategic endstate, specifically the creation of power for one of the actors.

Regarding the issue of force, information operations is an application of force to a specific point of vulnerability. It can be either precisely targeted or broadly diffused. A headquarters can be taken off-line with an attack that reduces the facility to WWII technology or through a more conventional attack that eliminates most of the personnel. The result is the same, and that is always the element to examine. The enemy nation's industrial capacity can be halved through a hydroelectric dam attack, whether it manifests as a takeover of the dam's systems or a dramatic bombing attack as in the "Dambusters" mission in WWII.[54] Force has never been an absolute value in war, but has been in practice tailored to the task at hand.

[53] Lewis, James Andrew "'Compelling Opponents to Our Will': The Role of Cyber Warfare in Ukraine." Chapter 4 In *Cyber War in Perspective: Russian Aggression Against Ukraine*. ed. Kenneth Geers, (Tallinn: NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence Publications, 2015), 41.

[54] Dinniss, Heather H. *Cyber Warfare and the Laws of War.* (New York, NY: Cambridge, 2012), 1.

Russia's cyber activity is the Clausewitzian "continuation of policy with other means"[55] because the political objectives remain the same, while only the means change. Technology has changed the character of warfare[56] throughout the human history, but war has retained its timeless nature as a duel, where each opponent seeks to compel the other to his will.[57]   As in Clausewitz's time, many strategies other than the destruction of the enemy can lead to success. Information Operations is merely a recent means developed to weaken or defeat the enemy.

A unique capability of information operations is that it enables the political endstate without reliance on brute physical force, which itself requires substantial economic inputs. Populations can be controlled with media messages or bombing raids that produce fear and reduce that population's desire to fight. Propaganda has been historically used to alter the perceptions of society, thereby altering the manifestations of political will.

Targeting of civilians is not a new concept, although it is prohibited under the Geneva Conventions. The Geneva Conventions apply to conventional war, and no internationally recognized body has yet comprehensively addressed the rules governing information war. The *Tallinn Manual* has determined it is unlawful to attack individual

---

[55] von Clausewitz, *On War*. 77.

[56] Roland, Alex "War and Technology" *Foreign Policy Research Institute.* February 27, 2009, accessed online November 2, 2017, https://fpri.org /article/2009/02/war-and-technology/

[57] von Clausewitz, *On War*. 83.

25

civilians or the population at large with cyber-attacks.[58] This rule does not yet carry legal

weight, but the *Tallinn Manual* represents an important step towards applying the laws of

armed warfare to cyber war. The Geneva Conventions occurred as a reaction to world

war, so it can be expected that information war must be experienced on an international

scale before it is regulated.

---

[58] *Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare*, ed. Michael N. Schmitt (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 113.

CHAPTER 2: SOVIET FRAMEWORK OF WAR

"A scornful attitude toward new ideas, to nonstandard approaches, to other points of view is unacceptable in military science. And it is even more unacceptable for practitioners to have this attitude toward science."[59] - General of the Army Gerasimov, Valery.

Modern Russia has a long Tsarist and short Soviet heritage. Despite its relative brevity, Soviet history is of particular importance as it was the first modern incarnation of the state. During the first few decades of the Soviet Union the *intelligentsia* of the USSR remained largely intact. During this time there was significant progress in the military sphere, as well as dramatic success in industrialization and modernization across the nation. This progress did sometimes come at the expense of the lives of millions of citizens through various cruel means. A great many intellectuals were sent to GULAG, fled the county or went into hiding, but many remained as revolutionaries and were important in the development of the Soviet Union as a modern state. The USSR's communist ideology and attendant body of beliefs formed the foundations for the Soviet view of military strategy, war, and politics. This chapter will outline the way Marxism framed politics, strategy and war, and end with an overview of the classic Soviet levels of

---

[59] Gerasimov, Valery. "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight. New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations." *Military Review* January-February 2016. P 27

war and the modern operational level of information war. The Soviet period is crucial to understanding modern Russia, particularly with respect to the military sciences. While some material is dated, the current military system appears to have drawn substantial inspiration from the first decades of the USSR.

Marxist-Leninist War

Soviet views of war are not incompatible with the classical western theorists. Often it is a matter a perspective, or opinion on an observable phenomenon. Karl Marx viewed war as essentially evil and expected its disappearance under communism. He believed eliminating the causes of war would eradicate war altogether. In his view, the class system was the primary cause of war. The basic outlines of this system describe a society in which an 'exploiting' class takes advantage of the 'exploited' class. The exploiting class is inevitably the ruling class, which owns the means of production, and uses the labor (the exploited class) and means of production to further its own interests.[60] Much as Clausewitz's view of war is constrained by his experiences and point of view, Marx as an economist finds a largely economic origin to war. Nevertheless, many important points can be gleaned from his writings, and much of his theorizing can be found in communist ideology.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (and later Vladimir Lenin) found utility in wars, as much as they desired the cessation of war. They believed that revolutionary wars and

---

[60] Vigor, P. H. *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality.* (Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1975), 14-15.

wars of national liberation and civil wars were useful, as they were expected to (and sometimes did) bring communism to the masses.[61] In the opinion of Marx and Engels, all wars contained the seeds of the next war in them, as the defeated nation would seek to right the scale. If, however, war brought world-wide manifestation of communism that much closer, the ends justified the means.[62] Marx and Engels further classified wars in two ways, first as either good/bad or just/un-just and secondly by type, such as civil war, revolutionary, war of national liberation, imperialist and so forth.[63] As an example, good wars brought the state in question closer to revolution, and just wars were those against imperialists.

World Wars, as a type, were exclusively dealt with by Lenin as manifestations of imperialist states. He saw Russia's involvement as involuntary. This perspective is persistent in the Russian treatment of war with the west. Soviet literature after World War II discussed what may happen if the West attacked the USSR, not how the Soviets would launch an attack on the 'imperialists.' The USSR from the beginning viewed itself as under attack and in the defensive even while acting offensively. Of this subtle point, author P. H. Vigor writes "A great deal of Western theoretical writing omits to reckon with this point; and its conclusions must therefore be regarded with a certain amount of caution."[64] Vigor references here the basically defensive posture of the USSR, informed

---

[61] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 20.

[62] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 22-23.

[63] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 23.

[64] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 38.

by Marxist ideology. Given this, the language used to discuss war was different in the USSR than the west.

This point was salient when the west was assured that Soviet foreign policy was to prevent future world war – in the Soviet conception the specific meaning was "to prevent a war launched by the capitalists upon the socialist countries."[65] During the Cold War, a war launched against the USSR could only mean the defeat or victory of the communist ideology. The point of the Soviet Union was to be the home to communism. Therefore, any war launched by the imperialist west would necessitate nuclear war in order to protect the ideology of communism. In short, offensive war could be launched if the reason was to defend the motherland. Because the Soviet Union believed itself to be cornered by the imperialists, offensive action and capabilities were always justified.

In modern Russia, one can replace the communist ideology with Russian statehood and Russian nationality as the central ideas requiring protection from the west. Rhetoric emanating from Russia reveals a preoccupation with defending the sacred Russian from the debased west. The labels may have changed, but this basic perspective has not.

Russia's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 to quell the opposition was referred to as 'sending fraternal aid', as was the occupation of the Baltics in 1940. This was a common tactic, to frame an invasion as a rescue and offense as defense. Vigor notes "The Soviet Union will not use the dread word 'war' to describe operations conducted by her armed forces, whatever their nature may be, *so long as the operations in question have*

---

[65] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 38-39.

been initiated by the Soviet Government [italics original]."[66] Writing in 1957 of Soviet

strategy in West Germany and Afghanistan, Vigor goes on to suggest,

> in order to lend verisimilitude to...a bald and unconvincing narrative, it might be considered prudent to wait until a strike or a riot provided incontrovertible evidence of the existence of dissident citizens, who can then be labeled 'proletarians' or 'peasants' just as easily as 'strikers' or 'rioters'. And, once you have found them, you can send them 'fraternal aid.'[67]

The idea of defending supporters of communism or Russia from western liberal

values is as fresh now as it was in 1957. In the 1990s, Yeltsin categorically defended the

rights of Russians everywhere, and in 2014 Putin promised to actively defend the rights

of Russians living abroad.[68] While war might be undesirable, protecting the rights of

proletariats and Russian compatriots is not considered war, but humanitarian aid, not

aggression but defense. In the Marxist tradition, the war of the exploited class, by the

very nature of the power dynamic, is defensive in nature. Lenin noted that the character

of the war is determined by the class waging it, therefore a war started by the exploited is

defensive, while the ruling class always wages offensive war (even in the technical

defense).[69]

---

[66] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 58.

[67] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 58.

[68] Herszenhorn, David M. "Putin Vows to 'Actively Defend' Russians Living Abroad." *Atlantic Council* July 2, 2014. Accessed online February 1, 2018 at http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/putin-vows-to-actively-defend-russians-living-abroad

[69] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 73-74.

Marx and Engels also asserted that the economic base of a particular community affects the political structure of that community, together with its ideology, its art and its armies.   Vigor paraphrases Marx by saying, "An efficient man-slaughtering industry can only exist if it has a strong industrial base."[70] While of course the quality of soldier, leadership and human qualities is important, in the end war is often decided by the relative strengths of the combatants' economies. This tendency has held true through history. The economics of the situation likewise depend in significant measure on the populations of the countries, both in quality and quantity, for a meager country would be unable to man the factories and the armies to produce enough to destroy a larger country. Marx also said that human factors could, in the short term, succeed against the economics of the situation, yet went on to say that however capable humans may be, they would be defeated by superior technology.[71] Marx's central point is that the economic base of a country determines the means available to a country to fight wars. The population base was important primarily for economic means and military manpower.

Lenin not only read Marx's views, but Carl von Clausewitz as well. It is very likely that Clausewitz's writings on the concept of will (e.g. the will to win) were part of Lenin's development of the idea that the factor causing victory was the individual soldier's confidence and conviction in the rightness of his cause. He attributed the at times inexplicable victory of the Reds over better armed Whites in the civil war to the

---

[70] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 98.

[71] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 100.

White's lack of conviction – that is, it caused them to not "pull the trigger."[72] From this he derived his basic assumption that "...in modern times, where war is once more an affair of the whole people, the morale of the populations of the combatant countries is an important factor in deciding the outcome of the war..."[73] Stalin agreed with Lenin on this. In 1942, Stalin formulated his "permanently operating factors which decide the outcome of a war," which included: stability of the rear, morale of the army, quality and quantity of divisions, armament, and the organizational abilities of the command.[74] From the very beginning of the Soviet Union, the masses of citizenry were a serious matter requiring management and control by the government.

Soviet and Russian Levels of War

Soviet Doctrine, Strategy, Operational Art and Tactics are not unique in their concepts. The hierarchy of organizing doctrine and strategy varies from the western framework, so some nuances of meaning require clarification. The Soviets used exceptionally precise terminology in their study of war, dividing warfare into a framework of strategic, operational and tactical levels. This precision is unique and distinct. No single term in this framework can be understood without understanding the relationship of all the terms and the broader relationship of the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. The terminology and precision are carried forward into the military

---

[72] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 104.

[73] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 106.

[74] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality,* 106.

establishment of the Russian Federation. Such an understanding provides a necessary context for studying Russian operations and operational art, and the Russian approach to the conduct of war in general.[75]

Russian operational art is a true distillate of vast military experience. Prominent Soviet historian David Glantz, with regards to the value of the Soviet framework, says:

> It is that [military] experience which undergirds the validity [of the Russian framework for operations]. Because of that study and reflection, the terminology automatically has meaning to those who have properly studied war. The logic of the structure will be apparent to all those who wish to understand how and why the Soviet Army operates the way it does.[76]

In the sketching of the Russian framework, we should start with the basic reason wars are fought: politics. In the Marxist-Leninist definition, politics is the word describing the relations between social entities. Politics is "not simply the activity of governments, the state apparatus and [political] parties. Politics embraces the aggregate relations of huge masses of people"[77] who compose the social entities – or in the parlance of the times – compose the classes. When a certain group controls the power of the state, they will direct the state's power to securing the economic base of their group's power. It is of course the struggle to maintain power and gain power that characterizes Marx's 'class struggle,' making it relevant today in foundational ways. This struggle for control

---

[75] Glantz, David. *Soviet Military Operational Art: In Pursuit of Deep Battle.* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1991), 48-49.

[76] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 49.

[77] *Marxism-Leninsm: On War and Army*, trans. Donald Danemanis. (USSR, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), 17.

of the economy and state power can be conceived of as the power to allocate the economy's resources among classes. For Marx, politics is the concentrated expression of the economy, and "politics play the main role in classes between social forces, in the struggle of classes, states and international coalitions."[78] This means that war is subject also to the relations between societal groups, specifically between classes in the Marxist definition. This view is not incompatible with the classic western view of war (i.e. the Clausewitzian trinity), however the Soviet concept of war specifically included civil society as a component of every manifestation of war.

Politics in modern Russia has inherited this class struggle. Rule by oligarchs is Marx's prediction manifested. In official parlance, the 'bourgeois class' is now the liberal, immoral west, and the exalted 'proletariat' is the Russian person. This Russian person may be ethnically Russian (or partly), speak Russian, live in Russia, are descendants of Russians or hold "various cultural, political and spiritual affiliations with the Russian Federation, the historical Russian Empire, and the 'Russian World.'"[79] Although the term 'class struggle' is subjected to extensive judgment in the West, the underlying concept (struggle for deserved greatness) is at the center of President Vladimir Putin's rhetoric regarding a Great Russia and the encroachment of the west.

Putin's pronouncements are important. Politicians determine the grand strategy of the state, which can be further divided into more particulate strategies. A military strategy may or may not be combined with an information strategy or an economic

---

[78] *Marxism-Leninsm: On War and Army*, 17.

[79] Grigas, Aniga. *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 2.

strategy in the service of the grand strategy. Before strategy comes the Russian term doctrine.

Russian military *doctrine* refers to "a nation's officially accepted system of scientifically founded views on the nature of modern wars and the use of armed forces in them" as well as the "requirements arising from these views regarding the country and its armed forces being made ready for war."[80] Doctrine encompasses two aspects: social-political and military-technical, and incorporates "scientifically founded views" of military science with official party sanction, thereby uniting objective findings of military analysis with the objective political truths of socialism.[81] Though this term is couched in communist terms, there is no reason to believe that 'socialism' cannot be replaced with 'Putinism' to update the definition. Putin and his government control the truth much as Communist Party did – the truth is fungible and it serves the master.

The Soviets defined *military science* as "a system of knowledge concerning the nature and laws of war, the preparation of the armed forces and nation for war, and the means of conducting war." Already the nation and society are defined as important factors. There is also a clear delineation between *war*, which includes economic diplomatic, ideological, scientific-technical and other forms of struggle from *armed conflict,* which is actual military fighting on the battlefield.[82]

---

[80] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 2.

[81] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 2.

[82] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 5.

The Soviet definition of *military art* is "the theory and practice of preparing and conducting military operations on the land, at sea, and in the air."[83] Military art includes the highly interrelated fields of strategy, operational art, and tactics. Each of these is a distinct level of warfare measured by mission, scale, scope and duration. Each level has objective principles in common. These tenets, or principles, reflect "the objective existing normality of armed conflict. The preparation and conduct of wars, operations, and battles conform to them."[84]

Military science, in a dialectic fashion, confirms the scientific basis of these principles of military art and examines how they relate to the laws of war. These principles "have a historical nature: some of them lose their importance, others operate over a long period and take on new meanings, while still other new principles of military art appear."[85] The principles are a "reflection of the practical problems of war..."[86] and the examination of them over time can provide insight to the Russian body of military thought.

At the time of David Glantz's book, these principles of military art included such basic tenets as; high combat readiness; surprise, decisiveness, securing the initiative; full use of various means and methods of struggle to achieve victory; combined arms;

---

[83] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 6-7.

[84] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 7.

[85] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 7.

[86] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 7.

concentration of forces at the decisive point; calculated and full use of the morale-political factor; inexorability and decisiveness in fulfill assigned missions; etc.[87]

The highest of the levels of war, *military strategy*, is the highest level of military art in the Soviet system. It is derived from military doctrine, past military experience, and a careful analysis of contemporary social-political, economic, and military conditions. It also has a significant impact on politics. Because doctrine refers to scientifically founded views on the nature of modern wars and the use of armed forces in them, strategy is both a consideration of how modern war works, the combatants, and the desired endstate. [88] This results in a dialectic process producing a military strategy specific to 'now,' with an assumption of persistent change as a static variable.

On a theoretical level, Soviet military strategy is the embrace of "the theory and practice of preparing the nation and armed forces for war, planning and conducing strategic operations, and war as a whole."[89] The theory of military strategy studies the laws and nature of war and the methods for conducting it and works out the "theoretical basis of planning, preparing and conducting strategic operations and war as a whole."[90] Practically speaking, strategy is concerned with "definite strategic missions" and the forces and equipment required to achieve them. Within this are elements such as the theater of operations, the national economy and the population, the planning of strategic

[87] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 8.

[88] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 8

[89] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 8.

[90] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 8.

operations, organizing deployments in war and peace, and the study of the enemy's capabilities and strategy.[91]

The second level, below strategy, is *operational art*. A theoretical construct defined in the interwar period, Soviet theorists developed the concept in reaction to their experience with war and difficulty with making tactical success equal strategic success. The operational level governs war in general, and deals with planning and orchestrating tactics and battles. It "determines methods of preparing for and conducting operations to achieve strategic goals" and "establishes the tasks and direction for the development of tactics."[92] The operational level is in dialogue with both the strategic and the tactical level, and is in reality where theory becomes manifest into elements such as the production of tanks, calculation of fuel, sequencing of military events and movement of logistics and forces. In modern war, operations must be successful to achieve the desired endstate.

The operational level of war also scrutinizes the results of these tasks, and produces and articulation of the basic theoretical positions, the contents and characteristics of contemporary operations, the role of various units in a formation, and the means of coordinating those forces.[93] In essence, operational art includes a feedback mechanism to adjust the basis of knowledge to current conditions. It is dialectical in nature.

---

[91] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 9.

[92] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 10.

[93] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 11.

The Soviet study of operational art, similarly to war in general, was studied in the broader context of human political, economic and technological development.[94] David Glantz notes the major theories of operational art through time were: successive operations (1920s); the theory of deep battle and deep operations (1930s); the artillery offensive (1943); and the air offensive (1943); then lying dormant during the 1960s when "Soviet attention was transfixed by strategic nuclear matters;" and followed by a resurgence of interest in operational art in the late 1960s.[95]

Tactics are the lowest level of military art in the Soviet levels of war and are the basic building blocks of operations. Their success in the correct pattern provides operational success, which enables strategic success. The Soviets saw tactics as applicable to units of the division and corps and smaller. Tactics "investigates the rules, nature and context of battle and works out the means of preparing for and conducting battle."[96] The matter of tactics is not proscriptive, but often debated in literature "illustrating the dynamic nature of Soviet tactical thought."[97] Quite logically, tactics is the level of war which is subject to the most change and adaptation.

The dialectical nature of the entire Soviet system bears mentioning. Strategy determines "the nature and methods of conducting future war," as well as the proper place of combat in that war, while operational art determines the specific tasks that tactics

---

[94] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 12.

[95] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 12-13.

[96] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 13.

[97] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 15.

must address.[98] The capabilities of tactical forces dialectically influence or determine the

goals, scale and methods of operations.[99] The design of this system is centered on the

detection of change and adaptation to it, rather than resistance.

Information Operations at the Operational Level

The operational level of war "determines methods of preparing for and

conducting operations to achieve strategic goals" and "establishes the tasks and direction

for the development of tactics."[100] *Information operations* is a term specifically used in

Russia and represents what is variously termed in analysis as information warfare

(compromised of disinformation, psychological operations, electronic warfare and

political subversion), cyber war and cyberspace operations.

Information operations in the Russian definition represents a conceptual

distinction which places Russian cyber activity of all types within the framework of

information warfare (*informatsionnaya voyna).* Information operations includes computer

network operations, electronic warfare and psychological operations. Cyber is regarded

as a mechanism through which the state can dominate the information landscape, which

is regarded as a domain of warfare. Information operations is a declared part of the

government's integrated grand strategy and incorporates modern and traditional weapons

---

[98] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 13.

[99] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 13.

[100] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 10.

of Soviet and Russian information warfare – disinformation, psychological operations, electronic warfare and political subversion.[101]

The concept of information operations has been recently sub-categorized by Russia's General of the Army Valery Gerasimov as *information-technical* and *information-psychological*.[102] Although Gerasimov does not fully clarify what is considered to fall under each of these categories, this paper assumes the information-technical focuses on the physical manifestations of the cyber domain (including data and processes) while the information-psychological refers to the psychological effects occurring in an individual mind or a social consciousness as a result of information operations. Clearly the technical category can be used to produce psychological effects in the target, though the reverse is less causally obvious.

Information-technical appears to refer to the physical and technical effects of information operations. This could be electronic warfare,[103] forms of hacking, malware[104] and other actions designed to damage, disrupt or affect the environment formed by physical and non-physical components, characterized by the use of computers

---

[101] Connell, Michael, and Sarah Vogler. *Russia's Approach to Cyber Warfare*. (Center for Naval Analyses, 2017), 3.

[102] Gerasimov, Valery. "Contemporary Warfare and Current Issues for the Defense of the Country." *Military Review*. (Army University Press, Ft Leavenworth. November-December 2017, Vol 97. No. 6.), 23.

[103] *Tallinn Manual, 259.*

[104] *Tallinn Manual, 259-260.*

and the electro-magnetic spectrum, to store, modify and exchange data using computer networks.[105]

Information-psychological is often dismissed as propaganda, with the attendant judgement that current operations must resemble the ham-handed Soviet propaganda efforts of the Cold War, where citizens could easily identify the flaws in the logic or the source of the message. Despite the dismissal many have had for Russian propaganda activities, recent events prove that the Russians have greatly improved the subtlety and nuance of current measures.

Maskirovka is the Russian word for a massive deception operation, implying a range of political, military and civil activities.[106] *Desinformatsia* may be a more useful term, as it lacks the military operational nuance of *maskirovka*, though it also lacks the name recognition. Disinformation, or *desinformatsia*, can be overt or covert, but the latter is the primary form as it is more effective. *Desinformatsia* can consist of non-attributed or falsely attributed communication containing false, incomplete or misleading information often deliberately mingled with true information. The target can be foreign governments, elites, or a foreign mass audience. The point is to induce the target to act to Russia's benefit in some way. *Desinformatsia* is also commonly called *active measures.*[107] *Reflexive control* is another specific Russian concept, a theory of control

[105] *Tallinn Manual,* 258.

[106] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 249.

[107] Schultz, Richard H. And Godson, Roy. *Dezinformatsia: The Strategy of Soviet Disinformation* (Berkley Publishing Corporation, New York. 1986), p 191.

that influences the decisions of the opponent by manipulating information in order to get inside that opponents decision-making cycle and cause them to take actions favorable to Russia. This *maskirovka*-type theory is a combination of deception and disinformation, secrecy and security.[108] Observation suggest that these deception operations are a key component of current Russian information operations efforts.

Information operations refers to all manner of activity. The broadness of the term is at times problematic, causing some analysts separate cyber warfare and information warfare into discrete activities[109] that can be respectively categorized as offensive activity and propagandistic activity. In order to reduce the number of Russian terms, this paper will lump both concepts together, except where it is necessary to clarify.

---

[108] Shea, Timothy C. "Post-Soviet maskirovka, Cold War nostalgia, and peacetime engagement" *Military Review.* Vol 82, No 3. (June 2002).

[109] Civvis, Christopher. "Understanding Russian "Hybrid Warfare": And What Can Be Done About It" Testimony presented before the House Armed Services Committee on March 22, 2017. (Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, 2017), 3.

CHAPTER 3: RUSSIAN AND SOVIET STRATEGIC THOUGHT

"We did not understand modern war." - Lieutenant Colonel A. Neznamov, speaking of the Russian defeat in Manchuria.

"The proper topic of military history [is] the study of those tendencies shaping future war."[110] - A.A. Svechin

Soviet military history informs current Russian military theory. The Soviets created the first modern army in Russia, produced the first notable military theorists in Russia, and most importantly, were victorious in World War II. As a result, modern Russian military thought looks to the Cold War Red Army and the early Soviet period as especially successful military periods.[111] The Russian military establishment continues to adhere to a dialectical model of theory and the outlines of a congruence between Soviet military theory and Russian practice is evident. Recent speeches to the Academy of Military Science have mentioned theorists from the early Soviet period. This does not suggest that Russia is returning to Soviet ideological thought, but rather to a rich period of military theorizing for ideas and theories with which to inform current understanding of modern war.

---

[110] Svechin, *Strategy*, 24.

[111] Luttwak, Edward N. *Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 55.

Russian officer and Soviet military theorist Aleksandr A. Svechin wrote "In essence, all of strategy is basically a contemplation of military history."[112] Only by retreating into history is one able to look into the 'future' and engage in a full observation of the patterns, tendencies and constant elements. It is precisely this practice of retreating into history which conditions the ability to look into the future with greater perspective and provides context to what is otherwise the murky nature of the future as it occurs.

Military history in the Russian tradition is made up of the following components: the history of wars, the history of the art of war, the history of the organization of armed forces, the history of military technology, and the history of military thought. Military history literally includes 'now' in addition to all that has come before.[113] In the Marxist-Leninist view, the developmental process of history is what produces war, a socio-political phenomenon, characterized as a continuation of politics with violent means. Thus, "armed forces are used as the chief and decisive means for the achievement of political aims, as well as economic, diplomatic, ideological and other means of struggle."[114] All of history, spanning the gamut of human experience, progress, society, politics and war, are all involved in this definition.

---

[112] Svechin, *Strategy,* 77.

[113] This according to Lt. Gen. P.A. Shilin, Head of the Institute of Military History of the Soviet Ministry of Defense (at the time of writing: 1986), Vigor, Peter H. "Transformation in Russian and Soviet Military History." In *Proceedings of the Twelfth Military History Symposium, United States Air Force Academy 1-3 October 1986.* Office of Air Force History, Washington D.C. 1990), 117.

[114] This quote is drawn from the definition of 'War' in the Soviet Military Encyclopedia from 1976. Glantz, David. *Soviet Military Operational Art: In Pursuit of Deep Battle.* (Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 1991), 1.

The Soviets, particularly in the period before the Stalinist purges, and after the 1960's, exemplified the ethos of clear-minded historical study focused on discovery of how the military arts can be applied to current problems. As one of the preeminent historians of the Soviet period David M. Glantz emphasizes, "...beneath the theory and surface rhetoric there exists a tough-minded, practical and comprehensive analytical process for understanding and exploiting the dynamics of war."[115] It is apparent to the student of strategy that the legacy of military inquiry within the Soviet Union is worthy of careful study and is even now a rich source of intellectual grist.

Many military officers, civil and political figures and innumerable military specialists were engaged in the development of a Soviet military doctrine during the interwar period. The proliferation of important personalities and events are covered exhaustively elsewhere.[116] This paper will focus on Aleksandr A. Svechin and Mikhail N. Tukhachevskii for the value of their writings and their role in developing the major military strategies of the Soviet Union.

Soviet strategy in the 1920s sought to place the use of military force in the proper context with Soviet political goals, which were also evolving, as well as establishing the character of the appropriate strategy. Theorists disagreed on the character of strategy for

---

[115] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 2.

[116] For a more detailed and in depth discussion of the personalities and events surrounding military theoretical development in Soviet Russia, see: Richard Harrison's book *The Russian Way of War*; David Glantz's book *Soviet Military Operational Art;* and all forwards written in the translation of A.A Svechin's *Strategy.* These can be found in the references to this paper.

the Soviet Union, which provided the context for operations. The source of the

disagreement centered on the role and importance of offense in relation to strategy.

Tsarist and Soviet Military Experience

Imperial Russian officer Aleksandr A. Svechin entered the Nikolaevsk Academy

of the General Staff in 1903. The officer corps in Russia then was heavily aristocratic,

the formations of soldiers marched and maneuvered in a Napoleonic fashion and military

thought focused on the tactical engagement in grand battle. Recent failures in the Russo-

Turkish war of 1877-1878 were necessarily overlooked by the officer corps to avoid

blaming any officers with royal or consequential connections. Lacking in necessary

methods or leadership to examine the experiences of the Russo-Turkish war, the primary

military thinkers of the time relied instead on didactic tools and sought a doctrine of

permanency and set answers to provide relief from the evolutionary pressures and

challenges of war such as railroads, weapons and national economic mobilizations.[117]

It was with this army that Svechin went to war in Japan in early 1904. He

commanded an infantry company in Manchuria and served as a staff officer in General

Kuropatkin's headquarters. The Manchurian campaign was Russia's introduction to

modern warfare, with the fighting along the Sha-ho river is considered by many to be the

first modern operation in history, with a front 150 km long and 85 km deep.[118] The scope

---

[117] Svechin, *Strategy*, 25.

[118] Harrison, Richard W., *The Russian Way of War: Operational Art, 1904-1940.* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 16-17.

of this multi-day battle posed difficulties for combined arms maneuver, as well as the concentration of firepower and mass to achieve success. Most crucially, the great culminating battle of the past manifested in modern war as a series of tactical engagements into a single operation, linked by the commander's concept, framed within the theater concept, which was slaved the strategy of the war. General Kuropatkin and his contemporaries struggled and largely failed to provide effective leadership over a battlefield which had been expanded in time, space and scale, thereby failing to link and direct tactical efforts into a theater whole.[119] Tactical victories usually only matter in their aggregate, and managing the aggregate on the modern battlefield proved significantly more difficult than during a single episodic battle. In the aftermath of the humiliating military and moral defeat in Japan, Svechin authored a major strategic survey of the Manchurian campaign, desiring to capture the core lessons and avoid future defeat.

With World War I, the practice of war overtook the practice of intellectual speculation. WWI experience contradicted with Russian theories of positional warfare and after several years of defeat and limited maneuver, the July Offensive of 1917 "ruined [the Soviet Army] as a fighting organization." [120] The Russian Revolution soon followed. After the Revolution, the struggle between Reds and Whites manifested in the Russian Civil War, a typically bloody and destructive period covering several years. Once the Red forces won and the USSR consolidated as a nation, the questions naturally

---

[119] Svechin, *Strategy*, 25-27.

[120] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War*, 61; 71.

arose of what military strategy was appropriate, and how to deal with the operational challenges of the increased scale of modern war.

At the end of the Civil War, Lenin's government approved of the General Staff's post-1905 study and use of military history. The Commission for the Study and Use of the Experience of the War, 1914-1918 was created, engaging many former General Staff officers with Svechin at the helm. It was later expanded to include experiences of the Civil War. Svechin's analysis lacked the Marxist analytical framework but included Russian nationalism as a coherent theme, linking past achievements and national military valor into a whole concept.[121] Not unsympathetic to the new Russian officer, hardened in WWI and the civil war, Svechin and many of his contemporaries engaged with these new officers in "vigorous debate and sharp polemics."[122] The Napoleonic framework of tactics as the management of forces on the field of battle and strategy as the maneuver of forces to the field proved inadequate to describe modern warfare. Those in search of new theories of war for the Soviet Union cast the net wide, plumbing Russian, German, American and French military theory for strategic lessons and operational data. Later these officers would be denounced for the use of foreign sources. During this time, Russian officers began to develop the concept of the operational level of war as the level "between strategy and tactics, war and battle."[123]

---

[121] Svechin, *Strategy*, 32-33.

[122] Svechin, *Strategy*, 34.

[123] Svechin, *Strategy*, 28.

The Russian Civil War prompted much of this study of military theory. Contrasting sharply with the Manchurian and WWI experience, the Civil War was characterized by maneuver. The use of scarce assets across the broad Russian terrain, employment of cavalry corps and armies and the creation of shock groups permitted tactical breakthroughs and exploitation to the operational depths of Bolshevik enemies. The range of modern war from 1904 to the 1920s therefore prompted intense interest in solving operational and strategic dilemmas.[124]

In the field of operations, Tukhachevskii, Leer, A. A. Neznamov, Triandafillov and others pursued the development of operational art in modern war. Russia's military officers were the first to recognize, codify and set about theorizing with regards to the operational level of war, prolifically producing various works on the subject from the early 1900s up to the Stalinist Purges in 1937.

It would be incorrect to characterize this period in Russia as fraternal or especially broad-minded. In concert with the social conditions of the early 1900's, a strong undercurrent of hostility existed between the professional officers, from the poor nobility and service estates, and the higher aristocracy with court access and connections.[125] While war had changed dramatically during the last years of the tsarist regime, the officer corps had not. The military establishment was characterized by factions, infighting, subversion and intrigue[126] as much as by the impressive progress.

---

[124] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 20.

[125] Svechin, *Strategy*, 28-29.

[126] Svechin, *Strategy*, 29.

The struggle between traditionally conservative military specialists and the futurists who emphasized the Marxist analysis and sought world revolution characterized the next decade of military thinking at the General Staff Academy. Svechin played a critical role in this debate by promoting the study of military classics from within and beyond Russia's borders, the translation of major theoretical and classical works and memoirs. Svechin focused on the central requirement to practically apply insights to issues of current military importance.[127]

Svechin published several books and voluminous other works. In the 1920s he wrote his best-known, most influential work, *Strategy.* This book would be the single most important book on the topic published for four decades[128] and incorporated the best of military thought from Russia, the young Soviet power, Germany, France and other foreign countries, and was a result of his two years of teaching a strategy course at the Military Academy of the Workers and Peasants Red Army (RKKA) from 1923-1924.[129]

A Strategy for the Soviet Union

Svechin's nuanced view of strategy considered the history of war, the work of other theorists and most importantly, Russian history and capabilities. As the Soviet Union's undisputed authority in the field of military and history and strategy until 1935,

---

[127] Svechin, *Strategy*, 34-35.

[128] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 129.

[129] Svechin, *Strategy*, 4.

his contributions to the development of operational art in the Red Army and Soviet military theory were important and foundational.

Svechin's book, *Strategy*, deals in depth with operational art, but also with strategy in general and contains many substantiated views of a decidedly non-Soviet nature. This attempt to examine strategy in depth and breadth led to the division of 'strategy' into two ideal types: destruction and attrition.[130] His methodology was not in line with the "proletarian ideology of a revolutionary rupture of power," and provided fewer solutions than observations and questions. This view of strategy was influenced by his readings of Carl von Clausewitz, who intimated that there were two kinds of war, wars of destruction and wars of exhaustion.[131]

Svechin also read the historian Hans Delbrück, who ferreted out this undeveloped thought of Clausewitz's and expanded significantly on this two types of strategy (which Delbrück terms annihilation and attrition). As a historian and practitioner, Svechin wrote *Strategy* to marry the past with the future in an attempt to understand war during a period where war was undergoing dramatic adaptation on all levels. In his analysis and in the book, Svechin determined that of the two types of war, the Soviet Union's appropriate strategy would be one of attrition.[132]

---

[130] Svechin, *Strategy,* 55.

[131] von Clausewitz, Carl, *On War*, ed. and trans Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1989)*,* 92-93.

[132] Svechin, *Strategy,* 3-6.

Attrition

Svechin based his analysis of the USSR's best strategy on the country itself from a military, political, economic and historical standpoint, against probable enemies. Given the technical superiority of the likely enemies, he believed the Soviet Union should focus on a protracted, defensive war in the first stage. The Soviet Union was not vulnerable to the sort of decisive blow that may annihilate a smaller state.[133] Moreover, the technical capacity of the Soviet Union was clearly behind the western world, but the available manpower and vast expanses of Russia far exceeded that of any possible attacker.

"The term attrition is a very poor expression of all the diverse shades of different strategic methods outside the realm of destruction,"[134] Svechin laments in the first paragraph of his concentrated section on the topic. Common misconceptions about Svechin's attritional strategy are apparent in the subtext of his explanations. For many officers who had experienced nothing but WWI and the Russian civil war, a strategy of attrition was inseparably linked to their experience of limited war, positional warfare, societal unrest, revolution, endless military stalemate, pointless killing and economic ruin. This caused many to believe he was advocating for the type of limited, positional war experienced in World War I. Attrition was certainly not a limited war, Svechin argued, and "in no way renounces in principle the destruction of enemy personnel as a

---

[133] Svechin, *Strategy,* 41.

[134] Svechin, *Strategy,* 246.

goal of an operation."[135] He goes on to explain that destruction is only a part of the entire mission, which is complex across the breadth and depth of the front. [136]

According to Svechin, the strategy of attrition "follows the path of least resistance, gradually accumulating political, economic, and military advantages that enable it to eventually deliver the knockout blow."[137] The strategy of attrition, he argued, would guide and mobilize economic development within the USSR. He advocated for a proportional build-up of a very strong economy to survive the prolonged pressure of a war of attrition. [138] The key element of attrition is the multitude of forms it can take, the options are almost unlimited.

Considering the relative technological and industrial backwardness of Russia, Svechin's analysis assumed that only in a war of attrition would Russia's natural advantages (vast territory and large population) become decisive. In his opinion, Russia was not capable of a war of destruction. Where the "decisive point," which was analogous to the center of gravity, was difficult to determine or in flux, he believed attrition was more appropriate.

Svechin noted that geographical objectives and secondary operations held greater importance in an attritional strategy. By secondary operations, Svechin referred to all operations that shepherd the war towards that likely event:

---

[135] Svechin, *Strategy,* 246.

[136] Svechin, *Strategy,* 246.

[137] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 130.

[138] Svechin, *Strategy,* 42.

Like a strategy of destruction, a strategy of attrition constitutes a search
for material superiority and the fight for it, but [it] is not limited solely to
the desire to deploy superior forces in a decision section. We must still
create the conditions for a "decisive point" to exist.[139]

A strategy of attrition is appropriate when a war cannot be ended by a single

blow, but Svechin is aware that the limited nature of the blows landed during an

attritional strategy constrain the enemy much less than the extreme blows of a strategy of

destruction. The attritional strategy grants a limited character to operational goals, where

the war is not a decisive assault but a struggle for positions in the realms of military,

political and economic fronts from which it is possible to launch the decisive blow.[140] In

this way, limited warfare is common in a strategy of attrition.

The Soviet strategy of attrition is one of flexibility, patience, and varied

operations. Decisive operations and battles of annihilation are included in a strategy of

attrition. The strategy itself seeks to make the most of available resources and seek

advantage in multiple domains through means that are not linearly logical.

Destruction

Svechin explains the strategy of destruction as comparatively simpler and with

only one main characteristic. The focus is the single decisive battle intended to result in

the destruction of enemy forces that cause the immediate capitulation of the other

political entity.

---

[139] Svechin, *Strategy,* 247.

[140] Svechin, *Strategy,* 247-248.

The three basic elements of an operation; strength, time and space, are always combined in a strategy of destruction so that gaining time and space is a means and defeating the mass of the enemy's army is the end. Everything depends on the decisive point, and all operations are singularly focused on the decisive point. "A strategy of destruction is characterized by a unit of purpose, time, place and action."[141] According to Svechin, a "destruction [sic] offensive" consists of a series of operations that have a constant direction and a series of goals that compose a single straight logical line.[142]

Svechin states that destruction requires great efforts to supply such an army and the line of operations relies on successive, outstanding operational victories. The success of destruction requires "taking hundreds of thousands of prisoners, destroying entire armies and capturing thousands of guns, depots and carts. Only successes of this kind can prevent complete disaster in the final analysis." [143] The strategy of destruction, Svechin insists, is historically rare and absolutely rests upon the attainment of "the extraordinary victory."[144]

The requirements for a strategy of destruction also posed problems for development. Svechin understood that it would require a military with substantial men in arms and high readiness, a theater with dense railroad and road networks, significant superiority of combat power such as mechanized assets, and an opponent with a weak

---

[141] Svechin, *Strategy,* 241.

[142] Svechin, *Strategy,* 242-243.

[143] Svechin, *Strategy,* 241.

[144] Svechin, *Strategy,* 241.

state and social system wracked by conflict and vulnerable to an external blow. "If the resources at our disposal are inappropriate," Svechin writes, "we must completely avoid a strategy of destruction."[145] Total war is one natural outcome of a strategy of destruction.

Svechin believed a strategy of attrition to be easier to control, adjust and anticipate than a strategy of destruction. In the final paragraph of his explanation of the strategy of destruction, Svechin notes the central problem that a strategy of destruction faces – the inability of one blow to force capitulation of the enemy.[146] Also, the strategy of destruction narrows strategic thinking and limits choices, while providing constantly changing circumstances that must be adapted to rapidly.[147]

Even with total commitment of the Soviet Union on economic, social and political fronts, Svechin believed a strategy of destruction was nearly impossible to achieve in the real world and could prove fatal to the USSR. However, Tukhachevskii and many like him, perhaps the majority of officers, vehemently opposed a strategy of attrition.

Mikhail V. Tukhachevskii channeled the revolutionary proletarian spirit of the Red Army; extremely political, aggressive, dynamic and preoccupied with the possibilities of future war. Graduating from a tsarist military academy in 1914, Tukhachevskii served briefly on the Russo-German front before being captured. Escaping after two years, he returned to Moscow and joined the Bolsheviks, holding many high military positions during the Russian Civil War including command of the ill-

---

[145] Svechin, *Strategy* 241.

[146] Svechin, *Strategy* 244.

[147] Svechin *Strategy* 244.

fated invasion of Poland.[148] His poor showing in Poland earned him more or less

permanent disfavor with Stalin, but the Polish experience also significantly influenced his

theoretical foundations, specifically regarding operations and the value of the offense.

In 1920, his experiences along the Vistula in particular led him to realize the

impossibility of destroying a modern army deployed along a wide front with one mighty

blow. This did not dampen his enthusiasm for offensive maneuver operations, but rather

led him to theorize about the most effective method. Tukhachevskii's chief conclusion

indicated that a series of successive operations was necessary to destroy the modern

army.[149] In 1926, Tukhachevskii wrote:

> the nature of modern weapons and modern battle is such that it is an
> impossible matter to destroy the enemy's manpower by one blow in a one
> day battle. Battle in a modern operation stretches out into a series of
> battles not only along the front but also in depth until that time when either
> the enemy has been struck by a final annihilating blow or when the
> offensive forces are exhausted. In that regard, modern tactics of a theater
> of military operations are tremendously more complex than those of
> Napoleon, and they are made even more complex by the inescapable
> condition...that the strategic commander cannot personally organize
> combat.[150]

The Russian Civil War was for many revolutionary officers the single important

war they had experienced, and of those who fought in previous campaigns, it was the

only successful one from their point of view. Svechin and others believed that many of

the civil war leaders, now in higher positions in the Red Army due to their class

---

[148] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 130.

[149] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 20-21.

[150] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 22.

credentials, made too much of the experiences of the civil war. The conditions of the

Civil War, such as the expanse of terrain, favored maneuver over all other forms of

warfare. Where the revolutionary officers saw evidence for a new type of warfare, the

more historically informed theorist saw only a logical tactical solution to the given

conditions. But logic did not always rule in Soviet Russia, nor were the former Tsarist

officer's less revolutionary opinions widely accepted. The atmosphere in Soviet Russia

was one of change in every domain of human endeavor.

Given Tukhachevski's limited experience, all gained during brief service in

World War I, it must have seemed logical to avoid the type of positional, attritional

warfare that bled Germany white in the west. To all appearances an ardent Bolshevik,

Tukhachevskii and his 'new officer' contemporaries along with no small number of the

old military generation believed that the "soul of revolutionary class war" was a strategy

of destruction, where "all future class wars [would] always be destructive" and be

"characterized by extreme energy, decisiveness and rapidity of execution."[151]

Tukhachevskii was advocating for a strategy of destruction in conjunction with

the budding operational concept of Deep Operations, which he and a substantial group of

officers viewed as the fundamental characteristic of modern war. Those who argued for a

strategy of attrition intended to develop a military strategy that accommodated the

resources of the nation. Those who argued for a strategy of destruction planned to build

the nation which the strategy required.   The technological backwardness of the Red

---

[151] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 131-132.

Army and the USSR, as well as the underdeveloped economy and infrastructure, would have to be overcome to create the Red Army capable of a strategy of destruction.

In *War as a Problem of Armed Struggle*, Tukhachevskii echoes Svechin's summary of a strategy of destruction and the immense requirements of such a type of war. [152] Tukhachevskii and his fellow advocates of deep operations and the strategy of destruction did clearly recognize that the Soviet Union was not ready for this type of warfare. Tukhachevskii wrote in 1928, "revolutionary spirit, without the necessary equipment, cannot triumph in a future war."[153] The iron-clad ideological linkage of offense with the righteous export of revolution and the defense of the sacred home of communism is clear in writings at the time.

Also in the spirit of the times, Tukhachevskii attacked Svechin and those who agreed with him, denouncing them as being "infested with bourgeois ideology," categorizing them as class enemies. Invoking ideological purity and party loyalty, Tukhachevskii thus sought to establish his own credibility and sway others to his side of the debate. Almost singlehandedly, but not without effort, Tukhachevskii contributed to the end of professional debate within the Red Army.[154] Stalin would later deliver the *coup de grace* to independent thought and the intellectual capital of the military during the purges.

---

[152] Simpkin, Richard, *Deep Battle: The Brainchild of Marshal Tukhachevski.* (Virginia: Brassey's Defense Publishers,1987), 117.

[153] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 135.

[154] Svechin, *Strategy,* 49.

Operational Art in the Soviet Union

In 1924, the RKKA Chief of Staff M.V. Frunze oversaw the publishing of an operational manual that begins with the declaration "the task of each operations and battle is the destruction of the enemy's armed force," through "daring and decisive actions" employing maneuver assets of various sorts.[155] Another staff document, *Future War*, published in 1928 under the auspices of the current RKKA Chief of Staff, M.N. Tukhachevskii had much the same tenor, though it emphasized the importance of destroying the enemy "in order to exhaust him and create the conditions for a civil war in the enemy rear."[156] The authors of this document may not have been historians at large, but the link to the Russian experience with the causes of the Russian Revolution is clear. Also of key importance was the dependency of military power on civil society and the economy, those elements being key components of the strategic rear.

Tukhachevskii served in the Leningrad Military District, where he conducted numerous experiments related to mechanization. As one of the many Soviet officers who followed the developments of mechanization in Great Britain, France and the United States, he was deeply interested in the development of the tank, aviation and airborne forces and their potential for the multi-echeloned offensive.[157]

From about 1930-1936, Tukhachevskii achieved a number of influential positions where he directed the mechanization of the Red Army, constructing the foundations of

---

[155] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 138.

[156] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 138.

[157] Svechin, *Strategy,* 47-48.

mass mechanized forces designed to conduct successive deep operations in a war of destruction. The 1936 dated Provisional Field Regulations of the Red Army emphasized the "decisive offensive on the main axis, complete by relentless pursuit" as the only means to bring about the total destruction of the enemy. This emphasizes Tukhachevskii's twin themes of combined arms and mechanized forces.[158] In deep operations,

> Tanks were to be used in mass, and mechanized formations, composed of tank, motorized infantry and self-propelled guns, were expected to strike deep into the enemy's rear, using their mobility to outflank and encircle enemy forces. Aviation formations, apart from independent air operations, were expected to act in close operational-tactical cooperation with combined-arms formations. At the same time, airborne unites were to be used to disorganize enemy command and control and rear services.[159]

Development of Deep Operations

The operational concept of deep operations is inextricably intertwined with a strategy of destruction. Soviet theorists were the first to treat the operational level as a distinct theoretical construct separate from strategy and tactics. Considerable intellectual capital was developed in this realm, with creative, imaginative and brilliant intellects bent to the task of defining and exploiting not only the spatial but also the technological tools and concepts of operational art. The challenge was to consolidate tactical success in a meaningful way, that is, to fulfill the strategic goal.

---

[158] Svechin, *Strategy,* 50.

[159] Svechin, *Strategy,* 50.

Deep battle, a concept formulated in the 1920s by Triandafillov, Tukhachevskii, A.I. Egorov and others, emerged first. They concluded that the new tools of war, namely long-range artillery, tanks and aircraft as well as new formations such as mechanized infantry would allow for more maneuverable forces.[160] These forces could penetrate tactical defenses, a problem that had bedeviled almost all forces during WWI. However, deep battle was only a tactical concept. By 1933 the concept of deep battle was tested and sanctioned by the Red Army. By 1936 it evolved into deep operations and became an established tenet in operational art. Deep battle had focused on tactical defense and combat by units, while deep operations focused on operational level combat involving fronts and armies. The theoretical basis of deep operations was described in the 1936 regulation as:

> simultaneous assault on enemy defenses by aviation and artillery to the depths of the defense, penetration of the tactical zone of the defense by attacking unites with widespread use of tank forces, and violent development of tactical success into operational success with the aim of the complete encirclement and destruction of the enemy. The main role is performed by the infantry and the mutual support of all types of forces are organized in its interests.[161]

Deep operations was intended as the operational concept used to prosecute a strategy of destruction. The emphasis on penetration reflected the preoccupation with maneuver and speed. The clear linkages of tactical and operational success to the destruction of the enemy reveals the overarching concern, namely the destruction of the enemy's forces. The unspoken assumption was that destruction of armies would

---

[160] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 78-79.

[161] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art,* 79.

necessarily cause political capitulation by the enemy. It is this assumption, of course, that Svechin disagreed with, believing that "armed struggle is only a part of the overall political struggle"[162] and that the enemy may not give up even if his army is destroyed. Napoleon did march through the streets of Moscow, but without Russian surrender he was unable to win. As Carl von Clausewitz narrates, having been involved in the 1812 Russian campaign in a staff officer capacity: "[Napoleon's] retreat was unavoidable, and his whole campaign a failure, from the moment that the Emperor Alexander refused him peace: everything was calculated on this peace..."[163]

The concept of mechanized operations in depth, and as a combined arms effort, was not unknown in other armies and the Soviets watched the interwar development of tank warfare in other countries nervously. The solution to the Soviet Union's lack of these elements was to remake the economy of the USSR. Most importantly, Stalin supported a strategy of destruction. Of course, his support for destruction and for deep operations was entangled with his desire to industrialize the country and create the proletariat in respectable numbers. As V. K. Triandafillov noted in 1929, in Eastern Europe and Russia, lagging industrialization and economic development prohibited large scale mechanization. Tukhachevskii and others viewed mechanization and "machinization" (sic) of the Red Army to be essential, and the complete militarization of the national economy was a natural precondition for this.[164] Stalin shared this interrelated

---

[162] Svechin, *Strategy,* 96.

[163] von Clausewitz, Carl, *The Campaign of 1812 in Russia.* (United States: Da Capo Press, 1995), 192.

[164] Svechin, *Strategy,* 47.

view of backwardness and defeat, saying in 1931, "We are 50 to 100 years behind the leading countries. We must make up this distance in ten years. Either we do that or they will suppress us."[165] The Soviet leadership was thus goaded both by existential fear and revolutionary ideology.

The development of operational art as a theoretical construct and the buy-in from Stalin made all the difference. The requirements listed earlier, a large trained army, dense logistical networks, combat power superiority, and a weak opponent, were well understood. After all, the weakness of bourgeois capitalist countries was a fact in the ideology. With Stalin's sanction, a significant portion of "Five Year Plans" were geared to provide the industrial capacity and production needed to implement the concept.[166] By the mid-1930s, the Soviet Union led the world in production, planning and fielding of mechanized forces.[167] Triandafillov determined that large armies would be required in future war, as millions would be killed, so massive reserve forces and drafts would be necessary.[168] A massive draft was instituted to catch, train and release millions of Russian peasants for later service if necessary. The Red Army's strategy, operations and tactics were admirably streamlined, at least in theory.

---

[165] Svechin, *Strategy,* 47.

[166] Glantz, David M. *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler.* Edited by Jonathan M. House. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 9.

[167] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed,* 10.

[168] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 135.

Svechin's attempts to widen the strategic and operational aperture to include a range of options, instead of just a strategy of destruction and focus on deep operations as the centerpiece of war, was "a hopeless rearguard action."[169] The winds were blowing in the revolutionary direction. All across Western Europe the march of industrialization and economic transformation of these countries created the ability to mechanize armies, in turn creating the perceived necessity to arm against neighbors.

The Stalinist Purges

In early December 1934, Sergei Kirov was assassinated. Stalin swiftly initiated a purge of the party apparatus and government, using a series of arrests, show trials and executions. In the Central Committee, 98 of 139 were shot, with others sent to gulag, 1,108 of 1,966 delegates to the seventeenth congress (1934) were arrested, with various fates of execution, detention, torture and gulag.[170]

The military establishment at first seemed safe from the purges. In the winter of 1936-1937, it was announced that the discovery of a "treasonous, counterrevolutionary, military fascist organization" was uncovered in the Red Army. Marshal Tukhachevskii, it was announced, led a group of high ranking officers that confessed to treason. He was shot in the summer of 1937 by a firing squad commanded by his old friend, Blyukher, purportedly recalled from the Far East by the ever-devious Stalin for just this purpose.[171]

---

[169] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 139.

[170] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 218-219.

[171] Simpkin, *Deep Battle,* 8.

Svechin was shot in 1938. By the end of autumn 1938, over 40,000 people had been purged from the ranks of the military. Three of five marshals were executed along with 75 of the 80 members in the Military Council, both fleet admirals, also both admirals, all six vice-admirals and nine of 15 rear admirals. Two of four army commanders first class, all 12 army commanders second class, 60 of 67 corps commanders, 136 of 199 division commanders and 221 of 397 brigade commanders were liquidated. From a structural perspective, in 1937-1938, all but one of the military distinct commanders were replaced along with their entire staffs and their deputies, along with 79 percent of the regimental commanders, 88 percent of the regimental chiefs of staff, and 87 percent of all battalion commanders. The replaced officers suffered the variety of fates available to an individual deemed to be politically unreliable. From 1937 to 1940, political commissars were appointed with military officers in a system of dual command. While this was intended to ensure the political righteousness of the command, the same percentages of political commissars were liquidated as well. The purge eliminated former czarist officers and red commanders alike. Families of political and military leaders were tortured, executed or endured long prison sentences. The teaching staff at the General Staff Academy and Frunze Military Academy were not spared. [172]

The political and military leadership was gutted by Stalin's insatiable killing machine. Promotion was rapid and turnover was high. It affected the high and mid-level ranks most deeply, causing very abnormal promotions based on little more than vacancies and warm bodies, often feeding those into the next wave of arrests and executions.

---

[172] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 220-223.

The quality of Soviet military thinking entered a period of free-fall. Ideas associated with the disgraced, such as Tukhachevskii's theory of deep operations, were shelved. The lively and vigorous debates that characterized the period between 1918-1937 were replaced with "bombastic declarations" of the Red Army's invincibility and works covering the civil war which were "little more than hosannas to Stalin's 'wise' leadership."[173] Of course, some thinkers attempted to further develop and explore the idea of deep operations, but the audience was small and intellectually timid, albeit with good reason.

One Red Army officer, G.S. Isserson, endured a long prison sentence but returned to teach at the General Staff Academy. Stifled by the atmosphere, he nonetheless managed to publish a few works that trod near the idea of deep operations. Following the Spanish Civil War and the experience of Soviet troops there, in 1938 he published a few works noting the importance of the defensive operation. Essentially reverse-engineering the deep operational concept into a deep defense, his work was pioneering and surprising, considering the very idea of defense was "considered indecent and almost in contradiction to [Soviet] offensive doctrine."[174] Isserson was also one of very few voices in the wilderness following the 1939 German, and subsequent Russian invasion of Poland. The smooth coordination of German air, armor and motorized infantry stood in sharp contrast to the Red Army, which possessed a great deal of equipment but lacked the

---

[173] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 224.

[174] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 225.

theory of operational art following the purges, much less the leadership capability.[175]

The experience of the neutered officer corps in Spain appeared to prove that deep operations would not work, causing the temporary disbanding of mechanized corps and the dispersal of tanks into penny packets in infantry division. This incorrect view persisted until the German use of the concept of blitzkrieg conversely proved the concept of mechanized forces and the Soviets hastily reassembled the concept in 1940. [176] German troops themselves were unimpressed by the Soviet forces they met at the Vistula as the two countries drew the curtain on Poland. The whole world was surprised at the weakness displayed by the USSR when they invaded Finland in December 1939 and were held at bay for 106 days.[177] Although the Finnish campaign was plagued by issues with logistics, climate, training and general hubris, the lack of experienced leadership to control the conflict serves as a measure of the rot introduced by Stalin's Purges.

A rich and productive chapter of military thought was closed with the purges. The destruction of books and publications attempted to erase all trace of these theorists from Russia's history. The Red Army in 1941 was a monolith without a brain, without eyes and without heart. The invasion of Soviet Russia by German troops nearly shattered the Red Army, that it did not is a testament to the motivation of a nation fighting for its survival as much as any military capability. The very characteristics of vast territory and

---

[175] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 227-228.

[176] Eremenko, A. *The Arduous Beginning*. (Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 2004), 23.

[177] Trotter, William R., *A Frozen Hell: The Russo-Finnish Winter War of 1939-40.* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill,1991), *3.*

large population which Svechin saw as key elements to attritional warfare enabled the

Soviet Union to suffer, recover, and eventually deliver the successive blows that defeated

Nazi Germany.

Soviet Strategy in World War II

A. Eremenko's 1966 book, *The Arduous Beginning*, is a valuable source on the

time immediately before Operation Barbarossa. While it was highly standard for authors

to publish their 'tell all' books after Stalin's death in 1953, and equally standard for their

claims to be ultimately self-serving, Eremenko's book is worthy even if it does contain

the standard ration of faults.

In January 1940, at a planning conference, Stalin announced the impending war.

There is no sense that this was a surprise, and the conference dealt with preparations for

war. Eremenko's notes indicate that a war of maneuver was expected, and deep

operations was the essential form to be used. The word 'defense' curiously never crops

up in his list of essential factors, but in his analysis he says "Many important aspects of

the country's defense were neglected."[178] In peace time he expected a thin array of

troops, but when expecting a war, he says

> a more effective disposition of strength should have been envisaged, based
> on the war plan and the pertinent strategic objectives. It may appear that a
> country pursuing peace need not have framed a plan of war. After all, the
> very idea of war was contrary to its peaceful aspirations. But this, I think
> was an immature view to take. A war plan need not necessarily be
> aggressive. It may be a plan of defense following a line of active offensive
> warfare in the event of a military attack. The war plan should take
> account of numerous factors, including the political and strategic war

---

[178] Eremenko, *The Arduous Beginning*, 40.

objectives (at least for the initial stage), and specify the disposition of troops and the time schedule for combat readiness and engagement...What we witnessed [in the beginning of the invasion] was not an objective military lag on the part of a peace-loving state, but the effect of subjective mistakes made by Stalin.[179]

This rather long quote is worthy of reproduction for the wealth of information captured. Written in 1966 it reflects the continuing prominence of strategy in the Soviet system and the use of the war plan. It also indicates the lack of defensive preparation in 1941as a fundamental result of the focus on a strategy of destruction, and a relatively clear analysis of some of the points of failure. Equally important is the reference to defensive and offensive operations in a dialectic sequence. Svechin's book would have been republished in the USSR in 1966 when Eremenko's book debuted, but in any case, Eremenko speaks directly to a strategy of attrition with this paragraph. Lastly, Eremenko ascribes the military failure to Stalin's failures, which is most likely objectively correct. Svechin would have said mistaken policies bear "the same pitiful fruit in war as they do in any other field."[180] Despite the effects of the purges on military readiness, Russia had to contend with purely domestic issues, namely immense geography, a poor economy based mostly on agriculture and a general lack of infrastructure.

Eremenko closes his chapter on the lead up to war with an analysis of Polish and French failures to hold off German forces. The Poles, he says, "had a totally wrong conception of the future war" and assumed it would be positional in nature. As a result

---

[179] Eremenko, *The Arduous Beginning,* 40-41.

[180] Svechin, *Strategy,* 83-84.

they did not modernize their forces. Considering the prevalence of Polish horse cavalry

forces in 1939, this can hardly be argued with. He also considers the French military

situation 'tragic,' but ascribes it to mistaken understanding of future war, where despite

their use of both defensive and offensive tactics ('criminal' reliance on the Maginot line

notwithstanding), it was "...wrong to expect the enemy to operate as the French would

wish..."[181]

Condoleezza Rice's chapter on Soviet Strategy in *Makers of Modern Strategy*

does a brilliant job of explaining Soviet military thought and development in the Interwar

Period. Regarding the defense, she notes that in 1937, just prior to the purges,

Tukhachevskii and many others were beginning to speak of defensive operations and

position warfare as necessary, if undesirable, methods of warfare. They were swept up

into the purges before progress was made. According to Rice's account, the Red Army's

remaining leadership, Voroshilov among them, began to reformulate strategy to reflect a

positional strategy which they believed did not expose the technical backwardness of

Soviet forces. [182]

In 1942, defense was considered for the first time in the Field Regulations to be a

'normal' form of combat. Offense was still the "fundamental aspect of combat action for

the Red Army,"[183] a perfectly understandable statement given the military situation. As

---

[181] Eremenko, *The Arduous Beginning,* 45-46.

[182] Rice, Condoleeza. "Soviet Strategy" in *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age.* ed. Peter Paret. (Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 1986), 668-669 (see footnotes on these pages also).

[183] Rice, "Soviet Strategy," 672.

defense improved, along with materiel availability, offense and defense were combined, and in 1943, after Stalingrad, the war of maneuver envisioned by Triandafillov, Tukhachevskii and others brought the Red Army to gates of Berlin.

The Great Patriotic War was "above all one of attrition, just as Svechin had imagined." [184] The mobilization of the entire country for the war, manpower and factories alike, while the vast distances provided strategic depth, conferred a distinct advantage to the Soviet Union. The Soviet's contested 1941 retreat, defensive and offensive maneuvering until 1943 would have fit Svechin's rubric, for these attritional aspects "did not involve a decisive movement toward the ultimate goal of the war,"[185] and intensity varied between battles, seasons, and years. With the German military spread out across Russia, from Leningrad to Stalingrad, the battle lacked a 'decisive point' which would enable complete destruction of Germany through one mighty blow.

---

[184] Rice, "Soviet Strategy" 673.

[185] Svechin, *Strategy,* 246-247.

CHAPTER 4: CURRENT RUSSIAN MILITARY THOUGHT

"The state of Russian Military science today cannot be compared with the

flowering of military-theoretical thought in our country on the eve of World War II." [186]-

General of the Army Gerasimov, Valery.

Antiquated Ways of War?

Bringing to mind Frederick the Great's victories over the Austrians "in the quiet

of their antiquated ways of war," as well as his own Prussian nation's astonishment at the

military fruits of the French Revolution, Clausewitz says, "Woe to the government,

which, relying on half-hearted politics and a shackled military policy, meets a foe who,

like the untamed elements, knows no law other than his own power!"[187] Clausewitz's

exclamation, equal parts chagrin and admiration, was penned at a time of substantial

change in the ways of war in Europe and clearly indicates the surprise of the Prussian

military establishment. Napoleon had seized upon the social phenomenon of nationalism

and bent it to his advantage on the battlefield, "with a brilliance that shocked as much as

---

[186] Gerasimov, Valery. "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight. New Challenges Demand Rethinking
    the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations." *Military Review* (January-February
    2016), 27.

[187] von Clausewitz, Carl, *On War*, ed. and trans Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton
    University Press, 1989)*,* 219.

did his ruthlessness."[188] The states Napoleon fought were forced to adjust to this new way of fighting war after repeated losses.

The French Revolution represented a shift in society that echoed across all domains of human experience, to include war. Within a century, the Industrial Revolution enabled death on the industrial scale. This was the modern war the Soviets first experienced in Manchuria and the western powers in the battlefields in France. The world wars together represented a coming of age for Industrial Age warfare, with an integrated national effort of all elements of national power. The weaponry of the Industrial Age: tanks, planes, artillery, communications and munitions, enabled and demanded a new way of war. World War II represented the maturity of modern warfare, however by 1945 the Nuclear Age presented another political and military capability, again altering how nations thought of war and strategy.

While the unique manifestations of nuclear war may seem a natural topic for a paper on strategy, as they are considered 'strategic' weapons, nuclear weapons actually have little to do with military strategy in the more conventional sense. Nuclear weapons are 'strategic' in that they do not require the accumulation of tactical victories along an operational line, enabling the operational success and eventual success of the military strategy. In short, they bypass the aggregation of successes and deliver the political endstate – provided that the endstate was destruction, eradication, or holocaust. In light of the idea that strategy is the creation of power, a process is implied. The use of nuclear weapons is therefore another branch of strategy, where the process is abrogated. We will

---

[188] von Clausewitz, *On War,* 9.

therefore leave the interesting but largely unrelated discussion of nuclear strategy mostly unexplored with two exceptions.

First, it must be kept in mind that destruction of the enemy is always an important goal of both types of strategy, and nuclear weapons provide the ultimate destructive capability. In important ways, nuclear weapons decrease the requirement for conventional forces as the sole guarantor of the state's safety. Therefore, as we examine Russian information operations it must be kept in mind that nuclear capability continues to fulfill a destructive role in their military strategy, perhaps being the only destructive power that is required.

Secondly, the nuclear age did emphasize the issue of society, though that aspect was most clearly visualized by the Soviet Union. The strategic depth provided by oceans and buffer states are much less relevant in nuclear and information war than conventional war. Given the interconnectedness and lack of distance in the cyber domain, Russia is as close to the state of Georgia as it is to the country of Georgia. The compression of distance between states was first experienced with the advent of nuclear weapons and inter-continental ballistic missiles. An important result of cyber technology has been a similar compression of distance between states. Although the domain of cyber does not literally or figuratively deposit an enemy soldier in every home across the globe, the medium presents a number of unique challenges that oceans, borders, distance and time used to provide. One of the broadest challenges is the inclusion of a population into the inter-state competition dynamic. As in total war, where the population becomes a

legitimate target, information operations directly target the population in addition to front line soldiers.

The Role of Society in Contemporary War

An earlier chapter discussed the historical role of society with regard to the practice of warfare in history, particularly prior to World War I. The role of society has not entirely transformed, but it has changed. Nationalism is often discussed in the context of going to war, but it also has implications on the ability to wage war. What does a government do if the population does not want to commit to war? Increased availability of information has placed the societies of many democratic in the driver's seat. This poses different challenges for strategic planners and policy makers in the modern world. The societally repressive political regime in Russia appears to have the goal of ensuring the population is unable to control the levers of power. There is a fundamental requirement for stability of the populace in Russia's political model. The ancillary assumption is that instability in civil society is bad for Russia's enemies.

Michael Howard, historian and author, authored an article in 1979 discussing the role of society and technology in strategy. The 'forgotten dimension' of society in the west was conversely a point of emphasis in the Soviet Union. Howard argues that the west ignores the role of society in war at their own peril. Howard wrote this article during a time when technology referred not only to conventional weaponry but more importantly to nuclear capabilities. About the role of a stable society, Howard observes "We appear to be depending on the technological dimension of strategy to the detriment of its

78

operational requirements, while we ignore its societal implications altogether-something

which our potential adversaries, very wisely, show no indication of doing."[189] The

operational requirements he mentions are logistical support and the conventional military,

whose development took a back seat at that time to active theorizing about nuclear war.

The Soviets focused extensively on social cohesion, considering it to be an

essential element of strength in the eventuality of nuclear war. Having a long history of

concern regarding social stability, originating at least in part from the extreme social

unrest in WWI that culminated in the Russian revolution, the Marxist-Leninist view of

war as a social struggle demands that Russian theorists consider the role of socio-political

factors. The west's military thinkers have rarely concerned themselves with society and

its role in war and nuclear weapons only exacerbated this thinking. As Walter Lipmann

notes, Americans viewed the atom bomb and rockets as:

> The perfect fulfillment of all wishful thinking on military matters: here is
> war that requires no national effort, no draft, no training, no discipline, but
> only money and engineering know-how of which we have plenty. Here is
> the panacea which enables us to be the greatest military power on earth
> without investing time, energy, sweat, blood and tears, and – as compared
> with the cost of a great Army, Navy, and Air Force - not even much
> money.[190]

When the United States votes to go to war, the U.S. economy enables mass

production of war materials and the projection of power to other continents. War is not

joined on American soil. For Europeans, war has often happened out their front or back

---

[189] Howard, Michael, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy," *Foreign Affairs 57,* no. 5 (1979), 9.

[190] As cited in Freedman, Lawrence, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy,* 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Macmillian Press, 1989), 48.

doors, and a lack of economic capacity has demanded a fuller involvement of the society in war. Ironically, a limited availability of means has also worked to ensure that war remained limited itself. In short, the population of European countries and the attendant economic system has long been a critical component of the political decision to wage war and determinate of success.

In another example Howard gives, the environment of Vietnam subjugated operational and technological factors to the sociopolitical struggle, where a lack of analysis of that situation meant "no amount of operational expertise, logistical backup or technical know-how could possibly help."[191] More recently, socio-political factors in the Middle East evade operational or technical solutions, possibly indicating that warfare's reliance on operational, technological and logistic primacy in World War II, which transitioned somewhat to technological and social primacy in the Cold War, has again transitioned to a new type of war where society plays an equally important and more central role along with technology and operational expertise.

The idea that society plays an increasingly important role is not wholly lost on the west. Strategies that include 'winning hearts and minds'[192] and combatting narratives now operate alongside conventional operational strategies. But much like the operational dimension was characterized by a panoply of tools (formations, tactics, weapons) the social dimension should also have a structure of interaction and tools. The permeation of

---

[191] Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy," 5.

[192] Mockaitis, Thomas., "Winning hearts and minds in the 'war on terrorism,'" *Small Wars & Insurgencies 14,* Iss. 1, (2003), 21.

technology and the internet in advanced societies opens up avenues of access to populations beyond a country's borders. The west has used this to the great advantage of democracy for decades, understanding that truth, like sunlight, has a sanitizing effect. While Soviet and Russian theories emphasize the control of information to influence people, western democratic regimes emphasize free access to information as a method to support the democratic rule of law and various institutions. In the modern world, methods of communication are paramount to keep the society informed, which in effect modifies their behavior.

The west's current socio-political strategy is the support of democracy and market capitalism. This activity is based on the assumption that democracy breeds agreeable nations through peace, stability and happy populations.[193] The Russian approach to a socio-politically centered strategy is based on an evolution of Soviet strategic thought, social measures and historical dialectic materialism. It is based on an understanding that the political system requires social cohesion. The inclusion of society in strategic planning in Russia is predicated on the importance of social cohesion to the functioning of the political body, and the desire and ability to wage war. Societal cohesion is not simply a function of war-time necessity. Tukhachevskii wrote of the necessity of planning for the 'ideological preparation of the country for war' when writing the war plan.[194] Much like the Soviet Union determined the need to build tanks and airplanes to conduct deep operations, they determined a need existed to prepare the citizens along

---

[193] Hobsbawm, Eric J., "Spreading Democracy," *Foreign Policy*, no. 144 (Sep-Oct 2004), 40.

[194] See Chapter 3.

with the factories. Current information operations represent the natural evolution of this thought through Soviet times, the Cold War and into contemporary conflict.

The Soviet View of War and Peace

As noted in 1975 by P.H. Vigor, "...unless [the ordinary Western citizen] bears in mind the Soviet view of the matter, which *does* view war as a political act, he will not understand the Soviet approach to war, peace and neutrality."[195] Lenin never expected the western "bourgeois" to understand the Soviet approach, saying "to such people peace has always been a fundamentally distinct concept, something quite *different* from war; and they do not realize that 'war is the continuation of the policies of peace; and peace, the continuation of the policies of war."[196] In short, the government's policies do not change in times of apparent war or peace. Also, war, peace and neutrality are merely tools to be used as the circumstances require – as Clausewitz noted "War is the tool of policy."[197] A specialist on the Soviet Union, Raymond Garthoff, writes that

> War is not the goal of Soviet (political) strategy; the Soviets prefer to gain their objectives by pacific means-by forcing appeasement on the enemy...[Soviet strategy] judges the long-term trends and possibilities in determining what risks are worth taking in the short run.[198]

---

[195] Vigor, P.H. *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality.* (Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1975), 8.

[196] As cited in Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality*, 8.

[197] Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality*, 9.

[198] As cited in Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality*, 8.

Western Perspectives on Russian Information Operations

The 2008 invasion of Georgia and the annexation of Crimea represent important milestones in the western realization that Russia's operational art has undergone significant change. Opinions range from hysterical to dismissive, with the states closer to Russia tending towards increased anxiety caused by likelihood of interference. In the west, however, military literary establishments have demonstrated increased interest in the Russian way of war. Among military writers, a range of opinions can be found, but the generation gap of those who have studied Russia is evident. Military studies written before the fall of the Soviet Union are often historically grounded and nuanced while the more recent work lacks a sense of historical perspective. Many modern articles offer disappointing analysis[199] amounting to a bewildering compendium of Russian operations and tactics. Still others lack understanding of classical theory, leaving their analysis lacking in relevance.[200] Most articles either paint Russia as the bogey-man or as a paper tiger. The broader, more contextually grounded studies offer greater opportunity to understand recent events through a pragmatic lens.

One military writer has determined that the Russian way of war is characterized by the sublimation of 'peace' into 'war,' with an additive of 'crime.' In short, the author determines that war and peace are now no longer separate spheres of activity. "Modern

---

[199] See, for example: Sinclair, Nick. "Old Generation Warfare: The Evolution – not Revolution – of the Russian Way of Warfare." *Military Review* 96 no. 3, (May-June 2016), 8.

[200] See, for example: Harr, Scott J. "Expanding Tolstoy and Shrinking Dostoyevsky: How Russian Actions in the Information Space are Inverting Doctrinal Paradigms of Warfare." *Military Review,* Vol 97, No 5. (September-October 2017), 42.

warfare," he writes, "has eliminated the discrete boundaries between war and peace conditions and expanded the states of conflict that can exist short of declared war; all instruments of national power now participate in the contested space along the continuum between war and peace."[201] While somewhat accurate, this is only a restatement of the Marxist-Leninist view on war and can be found in older English language books on the subject. What this author's analysis most clearly reveals is the western conceptual framework of war as existing in discrete spheres. Russia's activities in East Central Europe, Ukraine and the Baltics indicate to one analyst that Russian activity is blurring the lines between military, economic, diplomatic, intelligence and criminal means to achieve a political goal.[202] Analysts struggle with the temptation to keep war in a "neat intellectual box."[203] Where westerners see discrete boundaries to these areas of competition, Russian military theory sees only gradations of the same thing.

Analysts have astutely noted that the western military has a requirement for operations to be perceived as legitimate and credible, with that legitimacy resting on "actual and perceived legality, morality, and rightness."[204] In contrast, information

---

[201] Harr, Scott J. "Expanding Tolstoy and Shrinking Dostoyevsky: How Russian Actions in the Information Space are Inverting Doctrinal Paradigms of Warfare." *Military Review,* Vol 97, No 5. (September-October 2017), *41*.

[202] Symonds, Matthew. "The future of war," *The Economist*, January 29, 2017, accessed 29 Jan 2017 https://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21735477-war-still-contest-wills-technology-and-geopolitical-competition-are-changing

[203] Hoffman, Frank. "Not-So-New Warfare: Political warfare vs Hybrid Warfare," *War on the Rocks*, July 29, 2014, accessed online January 29, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2014/07/on-not-so-new-warfare-political-warfare-vs-hybrid-threats/

[204] Harr, "Expanding Tolstoy," 43.

operations by Russia create perceived legitimacy rather than being based on actual

legitimacy. This is not a great leap for Russia, as the state does not have strong tradition

of the rule of law. Immediately after the seizure of power, the Bolshevik party eliminated

the courts almost immediately and the Communist Party became the sole judge and

arbiter of right and wrong. Despite reforms enacted most strongly after 1991, the supply

of laws is low, and the demand from the cynical Russian people is lower.[205] Lacking

high requirements for legitimacy lends Russian information operations significant

advantages in speed and agility.[206] Despite this advantage in information operations, the

traditional battlefield and conventional forces have not lost their importance. [207]

Much of the literature regarding information operations returns to this point – that

conventional forces will retain their timeless importance in war. While this is

undoubtedly correct, the overall impression is that many authors explore information

warfare with the intent of dismissing it and asserting the primacy of conventional forces.

Rarely do the authors address the military theoretical establishment in Russia, perform

rigorous analysis of history to contextually locate Russian contemporary military thought,

or assess the practice as posing a credible threat. One notable exception is the Soviet and

Russian analyst Timothy Thomas, whose familiarity with the subject is evident, though

---

[205] Aron, Leon, "Russia Reinvents the Rule of Law." *Russian Outlook.* American Enterprise Institute for
Public Policy Research*,* Spring 2002, 14. Accessed March 2, 2018.
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAWJUSTINST/Resources/aronRussiaJudicialReform.pdf

[206] Harr, "Expanding Tolstoy," 44;46.

[207] Harr, "Expanding Tolstoy," 45.

he also does not assess the implications so much as the structure of information warfare in the publications discussed herein.

Recent Developments in Russian Military Theory

Timothy Thomas is currently a senior analyst at the Foreign Military Studies Office at Ft. Leavenworth, KS. One of his major areas of research covers information war. The author of many articles and six books on the subject of information warfare,[208] his treatment of recent Russian developments in military theory is both lucid and pragmatic. For this, as well as the simple lack of Soviet-informed analysis in other arenas, his work deserves extensive attention.

In his article comparing the three recent Russian produced military writings, Thomas compares and collates the information in all three. These three articles are: the transcript of General Staff Chief Valery Gerasimov's early 2013 speech at the Academy of Military Science (known colloquially as 'Gerasimov's Doctrine'), retired General-Lieutenant S. A. Bogdanov and Reserve Colonel S. G. Chekinov's article in late 2013 in the Russian journal *Military Thought,* and the transcript of then General-Lieutenant (now Colonel-General) Andrey V. Kartapolov's early 2015 speech at the Academy of Military Science. Bogdanov and Chekov's 2013 article introduced 'New Generation Warfare', but the term disappeared to be replaced with Kartapolov's 2015 use of 'new-type warfare.' The so-called Gerasimov Doctrine generated considerable reaction in the west, but Thomas points out that lack of access to the original article led to basic misstatements

[208] Strategic Studies Institute. "Timothy Thomas Biography" Accessed April 30, 2018.
https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/people.cfm?authorID=2051

regarding the content of the article. It dealt with "trends in warfare, and forms and methods of confronting them." Furthermore, for Gerasimov and Kartapolov's articles, the published graphs or charts were not translated or discussed in western circles. This contributed to misunderstandings. Also, they make it clear that 'hybrid warfare' is a western term that does not apply, because Russian forces conduct a different type of warfare. The west, in the Russian view, does use hybrid warfare techniques against Russia.[209]

Russian military thought, according to Thomas, consists of five basic elements: "trends in war's changing character, forecasting, strategy and the correlation of forces along strategic axes, forms and methods of the means of struggle and the use of past lessons."[210]

Gerasimov, 2013

Gerasimov's oft-misunderstood article is about trends, forms (meaning military organizations) and methods (including weapons and types of military art). In his opinion, war continues to change. Specifically, Gerasimov notes that wars are no longer declared, 'color revolutions' (popular uprisings to undermine governments) occur quickly, new-type wars are like regular wars (he never uses 'new-generation warfare' as a term), and

---

[209] Thomas, Timothy "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War." *Military Review,* Vol 97, No 4. (July-August 2017), 35.

[210] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 35.

that non-military methods are at times more effective than military ones.[211] One of

Gerasimov's first assertions could easily be aimed at the United States. He notes that a

combination of nonmilitary methods such as the protest potential of the people, covert

military operations, information operations and special forces actions, are "being

implemented by some nations to control conflict."[212] The annexation of Crimea occurred

approximately a year later, but the overview of Soviet military thought and hierarchy of

organizations and ideas would suggest that Gerasimov's speech was on a topic already

explored and possibly even implemented. Gerasimov's reference to peacekeeping and

"crisis regulation" as a way to open a military deployment of forces[213] struck a particular

nerve with the Baltic states whose Russian populations appear to put them in a similar

predicament as Crimea.

Gerasimov also lists developments that appear to describe how contemporary war

would be fought – a view that is in direct contradiction to how the United States and

NATO *want* to fight. He asserts "the principle tactic...is non-conflict or remote

engagement, since information technology has greatly reduced the spatial and temporal

distances between opponents."[214] Interestingly, he describes how the levels of war

(strategic, operational, tactical) have 'leveled off' due to information technologies.[215]

---

[211] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 36.

[212] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 36.

[213] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 36.

[214] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 36.

[215] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 36.

Gerasimov also specifies that the use of "joint mobile forces operating in a reconnaissance and information environment is growing," and the use of precision munitions, unmanned aerial vehicles and "weapons based on new physical principles" will be new main methods for engaging enemies.[216] These last two elements (with others being omitted for reasons of irrelevance to the topic) are certainly within the current thinking in many western nations and indicate that conventional forces will remain relevant though their weapons and employment may change. Nevertheless, Gerasimov stresses the new requirement for civil-military integration and to the Academy of Sciences he insists that Russia must not "copy" foreign experience, but must "outrun" adversaries.[217] The diagrams he handed out show that non-military to military methods are expected to be used at a ratio of 4:1. His closing comments make reference to Aleksandr Svechin and to his assertion that "each conflict has a logic all its own."[218]

Chekinov and Bogdanov, 2013

The second key publication that Thomas examines is from Chekinov and Bogdanov, issued in late 2013 in *Military Thought*. They state that information superiority and anticipatory operations are the main requirements for success in new-generation wars. Thomas notes that by 'anticipatory operations' the authors refer to forecasting, and the Russian translation is "the first to see will be the first to start decisive

[216] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 36-37.

[217] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 37.

[218] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 37.

actions."[219] Furthermore, the authors expect that information superiority will be necessary for victory, not despite, but because of advanced weapon systems. Their greater range, accuracy and speed require superior information technology[220] because the qualities of these weapons reduce the tolerance for mistakes.

The next main point of the Russian authors is the requirement to establish information and psychological warfare superiority, that is superior control over "information pressure that can be exerted against an adversary through the media, nongovernmental organizations, foreign grants, religions organizations, propaganda, and disinformation designed to stoke chaos in a society."[221] It also becomes clear that in their view information-psychological warfare is being waged against Russia through non-military and deterrence means. Non-military means are information, moral psychological, ideological, diplomatic, economic and so forth, while deterrence means include force readiness demonstrations (e.g. NATO exercises), dialogue concerning a nuclear option, and information operations that highlight Russia's willingness to fight.

Regarding forecasting, the authors focus on the opening period of war, considered to be pivotal to success and includes information operations and equipment associated with Deep Operations, and the closing period of war, which focuses on conventional means as a 'mopping up' operation. Targets they note for the opening period of war consist of the usual military targets of economic centers, government and military

---

[219] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 38.

[220] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 38.

[221] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 38.

controls centers and so forth, and also includes targets that ensure the opponent's "political and economic system is made ungovernable, its population demoralized, and its key military-industrial complexes destroyed or damaged beyond repair."[222] The trends in warfare they note exactly echo's Gerasimov's speech earlier that year.   Also, the use of new-type warfare as a term in this article signals the end of new-generation warfare as a proper term. The conduct of military operations has changed, according to the authors, blurring lines between opponents, increasing flank exposure, the appearance of gaps in orders of battle, challenges due to the superiority and range of weapon systems that both threaten and enable destruction of economic and control centers, and the military role of space.[223]

Kartapolov, 2015

    The last article that Thomas examines was published by Kartapolov in early 2015. Kartapolov's speech at the Russian Academy of Military Science covers non-standard forms and methods that he states are being "developed for the Armed Forces, making it possible to level the enemy's technological superiority."[224] His main focus in this article is on unconventional and precision munitions and weapons systems, though he goes on at length about America's anti-Russia campaign and American use of information-psychological effects, which he says are covert activities used to exacerbate internal

---

[222] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 38-39.

[223] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 39.

[224] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 39.

problems in the populations and disinformation campaigns. In short, the actions he

accuses the United States of were used in Crimea by the Russians only a year prior, but

he is referring to the accusation that the United States and the EU instigated the entire

event in Ukraine. Kartapolov says this use of new type warfare methods by the west

violates humanitarian standards, displaces populations, is a type of genocide, and is

conducted under false pretexts to stabilize the situation. [225]

The methods and ways he mentioned earlier are outlined in a graphic that depicts

new-type war development and phases of that war. This is perhaps the most important

portion of his speech. The phases of new-type war, according to Kartapolov, begin with

political, economic, information and psychological pressures, disorienting the leadership

and institutions of the state-victim and spreading dissatisfaction among the population.

Following this is the preparation and deployment of "armed opposition detachments" to

the area. The second phase is covert deployment and use of special operations forces,

cyber attacks, reconnaissance and subversion on a large scale, support for the internal

dissidents and the employment of new weapons systems. The new-type war then

transitions to "classical methods" of waging war, using both weaponry and large-scale

information operations to destroy "forces and targets to the entire depth of [the enemy's]

territory."[226] As discussed earlier, operational art in the Soviet description "determines

methods of preparing for and conducting operations to achieve strategic goals" and

---

[225] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 39-40.

[226] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 40.

"establishes the tasks and direction for the development of tactics."[227] By understanding the strict hierarchical organization of Russian levels of war, it can be determined that Kartapolov is referring to operational art and tactics. The logical question is then to ask how these operations we observe inform our understanding of Russian strategy.

Gerasimov, 2017

Gerasimov addresses the characteristics of new-type war in March 2017 during a speech on the topic "*Contemporary Warfare and Current Issues for the Defense of the Country.*" While the speech as a whole is fascinating, several points are particularly apropos to this paper. Speaking on the characteristics of war, he notes that wars in the past few decades have varied widely in terms of weaponry, forms and methods of troop employment and composition of participants. "At the same time," he says, "military conflicts have not gone beyond the bounds of the conventional nature of war; their components are types of struggle such as direct armed struggle, political struggle, diplomatic struggle, information struggle, et al."[228] He then notes that "the correlation of the contribution of one type of struggle over another" in regards to the political success of a war, will vary.[229] Clearly he envisions that the importance of direct armed struggle as the primary contributor to conflict has shifted from its position as a central element. This

---

[227] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art*, 10.

[228] Gerasimov, Valery. "Contemporary Warfare and Current Issues for the Defense of the Country" *Military Review* Vol 97, No 6. (November-December 2017), 24.

[229] Gerasimov, "Contemporary Warfare," 24.

does not mean that direct armed struggle is not an indispensable function, but that it's contribution is now changed from primary importance to something else.

While Gerasimov goes on to discuss "hybrid operations" he does it in the context of United States and NATO actions,[230] echoing Kartapolov's accusations. He acknowledges that the lines between war and peace are blurred. He notes Russian action in Syria as a Russian use of new-type warfare, though he terms it "'hybrid' methods of operation," and then notes that the phrase "hybrid warfare as an established term is, at present, premature."[231] Then in seeming contradiction he goes on to note that the "main content of contemporary warfare and warfare in the foreseeable future remains as before, and its principle indicator will be the presence of armed struggle."[232] He concludes his speech to the Academy of Sciences by issuing a task list to the Academy, the first item of which is "the study of new forms of interstate confrontation and the development of effective methods for countering them."[233] His emphasis on armed struggle as a contemporary characteristic and the exploration of new forms of confrontation demonstrates a broadening concept of war. It also emphasizes that Russia's enemies will continue to use military forces as the primary forms of competition, so Russia must be prepared to fight on this classic level.

---

[230] Gerasimov, "Contemporary Warfare," 24.

[231] Gerasimov, "Contemporary Warfare," 25.

[232] Gerasimov, "Contemporary Warfare," 25.

[233] Gerasimov, "Contemporary Warfare," 27.

Implications

The implications of these operational points for the strategic level of war must be extrapolated. Examining them in the context of history is logical, for this is what the Russians appear to have done. Following the persistent repression of innovation, opinion and history during Stalin's lifetime, a resurgence of interest in early Soviet thought characterized the 1960s. The concurrent publishing of older works of military theory, such as Svechin's work *Strategia,* heralded a change in the Soviet Union during the Cold War. During this time many authors published books that would not have been permitted under conditions of Stalinism. The renewed interest in operational art, no longer slaved to nuclear strategy, was an important return to the theoretical heritage of the Red Army.[234] The importance of this turn to the past is the relegation of nuclear strategy and the influences of Stalinism to their proper place, that is a less central role to the military theoretical establishment. More currently, we find Gerasimov quoting from Svechin and Isserson's works during his 2013 and 2017 speeches. This of course does not mean that the dictums from Svechin's pen are taken without digestion and thought, but that they are a part of the conversation on the current character of war. This poses a question for the west: If the Russians are reading their history, why are we not as well?

Taking these articles together, during a period from 2013-2017, it is clear that the authors and speakers are certain that warfare is changing. The many references to forms and methods, information operations and psychological warfare and hybrid warfare are balanced by the equally common appearance of discussions of precision weapons and

---

[234] Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art*, 35-36.

munitions, weapons based on new physical principles, and the primacy of armed struggle. This does not reflect an inconsistency in thought, but a broad focus on the phased war concept outlined by Kartapolov, which begins with so-called non-conventional means and ends with deep operational attacks. This phased war concept itself is a clear indicator that the military strategy of the Russian Federation is predicated on a strategy of attrition. Gerasimov's discussion of the varying types of struggle and their varying importance is in harmony with this. As Svechin notes in his explanation of a strategy of attrition, the intensity of armed conflict may vary, and each level of intensity will have its own correct decision.[235] When he refers to decision, he is deliberately making a comparison with the idea that a wholly destructive operation (annihilating the enemy forces) compels the enemy to a decision. In that, a strategy of destruction is decisive – it makes the decision occur. The decision in question is to give in to the aggressors will, because no other choice (with no military resistance remaining) is to acquiesce. The 'correct decision' for a given level of intensity is therefore the operation that forces a decision at that level of intensity.

By way of example, a lower level of intensity could be political maneuvering and diplomatic overtures. In 1939, Russia demanded the lease of the Finnish peninsula of Hanko, Soviet fortification of several islands in the Gulf of Finland, the northern port of Petsamo and the supervision of Finnish fortification of the Åland Islands.[236] This territory was determined by the USSR to be essential to defense against attack by

---

[235] Svechin, *Strategy,* 246.

[236] Upton, Anthony F. *Finland, 1939-1940.* (Cranbury, NJ; Associated University Presses, Inc, 1979), 25.

Germany. This political level of intensity demanded a decision in the political realm, namely an agreement between governments. The request to occupy the areas in question was backed with an implicit threat, but it was not a conflict. Finland did not agree to the terms, causing Russia to increase the intensity of demands, and finally to transition to an invasion of the Karelian peninsula. This invasion was intended to force the government to agree to the demands, or to simply take the land by force. The intended 'decisive blow' launched by Russia failed to annihilate the Finnish resistance, due largely to Russia's internal military weakness at the time. Finland still would not agree to the demands. After regrouping, however, the Russian attack was considerably more successful, destroying the Finnish resistance and taking significant territory. Under threat of annihilation, the Finnish state agreed to the terms of the initial Russian demand, plus some. This example illuminates Svechin's point of the variation of intensity inherent a strategy of attrition, and how the operation can be altered from diplomatic (low intensity) to military (high intensity). The endstate never changed.

These speeches and publications make it clear that Russian strategy no longer expects a massive conventional battle to decide the outcome of war. This currently hypothetical war will likely be finished with a conventional operation, but the success of that conventional operation rests on the success of the opening acts of war. The ideal war would be won with little or no conventional action, which would expose the political system to the risk that they may lose. With a limited economic base Russian theorists understand the military means are similarly limited. As the inheritors of Marxist dialectic materialism, they know this necessitates another way of war altogether, one that they can

use even with a limited economy. If the military element of national power is limited in scope, other elements must be expanded. Any survey of Russian elements of DIME reveal that either diplomatic or informational elements are the only ones not harnessed almost exclusively to the economy. Russian military theorists are therefore interested in creating a new way of competing internationally that creates power for the Russian state, and this way will not feature military forces as it traditionally has in the past.

CHAPTER 5: RUSSIAN INFORMATION OPERATIONS CASE STUDIES

"Victory in any war is achieved not only by the material, but also by the spiritual resources of the nation, its cohesion, and the attempts by all forces to oppose aggression." - Valery Gerasimov, 2017

The nations in Russia's traditional buffer zone have been frequent targets of the information-psychological operational line. Many of these nations were under Russian or Soviet rule, often with complicated cultural and historical memories of their subjugation and advancement under communism, and many have a substantial ethnic Russian or pro-Russian population. While nothing suggest that Russia's information operations are confined to any particular nation or region, so far these operations appear to be focused on answering strategic issues. Nothing about the tactics used suggest a prescriptive approach, therefore these case studies serve as an example of how Russia has used information operations, without attempting to offer solutions. The careful tailoring of tactics to the target population reveals a broad range of activities rather than a narrow one. If information-psychological operations could be summed up, it may be labeled as 'seeking and creating opportunities.'

Russia believes the west, and United States in particular, is engaged in information operations against countries in their claimed sphere of influence such as

Ukraine and around the world, such as in Libya.[237] This fits well with the defensive

nature of Russian strategy and the culture of offensive retaliation for purposes of defense.

Russia can claim to be slighted and find social support in defending the motherland

against aggressors.

Russia is first threatened by the rise of western power and influence on their

border, in their historically claimed sphere of influence. This predominantly takes the

form of NATO. While NATO does not pose a credible threat of invasion, in the western

opinion, it objectively still constrains Russia's activities in the near abroad. This is

debated,[238] but we can say by virtue of being admitted to NATO, a country becomes less

useful to Russia than the West.

The second threat is in the form of western liberal values, the development of

which is largely shielded by NATO. Democracies so near Russia threaten the current

(and evolving) system of rule by "crooks and thieves." The Russian government must

control the information environment of their own population to maintain their system of

rule, and the near abroad must be heavily influenced or controlled to insulate Russia from

the sanitizing power of the truth and the undermining influence of democratic values.

Built on a foundation of fabricated information, the Russian government is forced

to attempt a contamination of the west in order to maintain credibility and power. The

existential political threat of the west, from Narva to Los Angeles, cannot be faced with

---

[237] Gerasimov, Valery. "Contemporary Warfare and Current Issues for the Defense of the Country."
    Military Review, Vol 97, No 6. ((November/December 2017), 24.

[238] See, for example, Mearsheimer, John J. "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault: The Liberal
    Delusions that Provoked Putin." *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 93, No. 5 (2014).

conventional military force because it is itself not such a force, but it can be contested in the information and social dimensions through operations designed to confuse society, to discredit, distract and dilute the basis of western values. Democratic liberalization is considered to be a destabilizing social movement, as Putin clearly does with regards to 'color revolutions.' Putin in fact has blamed the west for sponsoring movements that have created a "system of 'permanent revolution' in the post-Soviet space."[239]

Russia's view of Color Revolutions is critical to understanding their use of information operations as a defensive operation. Jeanne Wilson says Russian elites recognized that Color Revolutions employ "tactics that in many respects posed greater challenges to the state than the more straightforward conventional threat of military intimidation."[240] These bring to mind the Bolshevik tactics of infiltration for some. Western and Russian analysts circa 2005-2009 agreed on the key elements of Color Revolution operations; foreign support for local democratic movements, diplomatic pressure and election monitoring, mobilized social movements, particularly youth groups, pro-Western media promotion and NGOs.[241]   Russia's defense against these social forces was to enact laws and procedures against NGOs and emphasize the role of the state in civil-political relations, in effect raising barriers to foreign influence in Russia.[242] Writing

---

[239] Wilson, Jeanne L. "The Legacy of the Color Revolutions for Russian Politics and Foreign Policy."
Problems of Post-Communism, vol 57, no 2, (March/April 2010), 22.

[240] Wilson, "The Legacy of the Color Revolutions," 22.

[241] Wilson, "The Legacy of the Color Revolutions," 22.

[242] Wilson, "The Legacy of the Color Revolutions," 23-26.

in 2010, Wilson sums up by noting "Russia is still in the process of political and economic transformation," and that Color Revolutions have affected foreign and domestic policy decisions, and issues posed by the Color Revolutions, "especially with respect to Russia's identity, sovereignty, and relationship to the west" will remain relevant to the Russian state in the future.[243]

The compatriot policy of the 1990s has been used as a persistent tool of influence, providing political leverage in Estonia, Latvia and Ukraine, as well as Central Asia. In the Ukrainian case, it created the necessary pretext for a military invasion. Author Agnia Grigas has focused extensively on the meaning of Russian compatriot policies. She argues that the compatriots themselves serve "as an effective pretext for and instrument of much of Russia's expansionist foreign policy." She notes that many of these policies were ambiguous and that "not many discerned a connection between the seemingly disparate Russian policies of compatriot support, humanitarian agendas, handing out Russian citizenship, and information warfare in remove parts of the former Soviet space."[244]

It is difficult to prove or disprove the secret purpose of the compatriot policy. Aniga Grigas argues that it was instituted for the express purpose of an operation like the annexation of Crimea. Historical precedent exists for a nation to invade an area to protect its citizens, but proving intent is a different matter. Certainly, the governments of the

---

[243] Wilson, "The Legacy of Color Revolutions," 32.

[244] Grigas, Agnia. *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire.* (New Haven, Conn:, Yale University Press, 2016), 3.

Baltic states have long wrestled with the presence of Russians and the interference of Russia in their affairs with regard to these residents. Grigas believes that Russia is deliberately using compatriots as an avenue of influence. Regardless of her accuracy, the presence of 'compatriots' represents another avenue of influence for Russia which fits in with an attritional strategy.

General of the Army Gerasimov's March 2017 speech to the Russian Military Academy of Sciences notes that information superiority is "an indispensable condition of combat operations in [the leading countries'] concepts for the employment of armies."[245] The information domain is therefore not simply a propaganda medium, but also a military tool with purely military applications.

Information operations in the Russian sense has two primary components mentioned by Gerasimov, the information-technical and information-psychological. While he does not elaborate, this paper assumes these broadly refer to (respectively) physical effects and manifestations, and psychological effects and manifestations. Also, these two components are inter-related, for a cyber attack on the financial system has an undeniable psycho-social effect.

Three key characteristics have emerged from study of Russian techniques, according to a 2017 Rand Corporation study that covers what Rand analysts term 'hybrid warfare' and includes techniques beyond cyber. The study identifies these characteristics

---

[245] Gerasimov, Valery. "Contemporary Warfare and Current Issues for the Defense of the Country." *Military Review,* Vol 97, No 6. ((November/December 2017), 24.

as; economy of force, persistence despite conditions of war or peace, and targeting of the population.[246]

Russian information operations coalesce around three objectives: capturing territory without conventional military forces, creating a pretext for conventional military forces and influencing the policies and politics of other nations, particularly in the traditional sphere of influence and in the West.[247]

Case Study – Information-Psychological Operations

This case study will focus on information-psychological operations and Eastern Europe, to include the Baltic States. The experience of nations in the Near Abroad and Europe in general demonstrate the depth and breadth of Russian information operations. The tactics used are not prescriptive and instead of providing a recipe for information operations, demonstrate that the approach is carefully tailored to the target instead of existing as a one-size fits all.

In Latvia, a substantial Russian population, nearly a third of the country's total population. Latvian law requires language proficiency in Latvian for residents to become citizens. Russians living in Latvia who do not meet the language requirements are 'stateless' citizens, lacking many of the rights of integrated or natural citizens. Russia has

---

[246] Civvis, Christopher. "Understanding Russian "Hybrid Warfare": And What Can Be Done About It" Testimony presented before the House Armed Services Committee on March 22, 2017. (Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, 2017), 2.

[247] Chivvis, "Understanding Russian 'Hybrid Warfare,'" 3.

called these exclusionary language laws 'human rights violations'[248] and the Russian

population in Latvia generally consists of a second and separate civil society within the

country. This second society of Russians is considered to be especially vulnerable to

broadcast media from Russia. Broadcast messages for Latvia are targeted on two main

issues. First is the fabricated claim that Nazism is resurgent in Latvia, and Russia is

again in danger from the "brown plague."[249] This message paints President Putin as a

"standard-bearer of the victorious" Russian people and supports the narrative of Russia as

a "besieged fortress" against western encroachment and corrosive ideology.[250] It is an

attempt to justify Russia's revanchist foreign policy. Secondly is the message that

Russian Latvians need to support local parties and politicians who desire closer ties with

Russia and wish to ease EU sanctions.

Commemorative WWII parades by Latvians are portrayed in Russian media as

demonstrations and marches by Nazi's, and the veterans are labeled as "murderers and

criminals who had taken part in the Holocaust."[251] Online trolls, now a familiar facet of

social media, flood message boards and articles with pro-Putin content in both Latvian

and Russian. Russian-affiliated NGOs in Latvia, such as the Gorchakov Foundation of

Public Diplomacy and the Foundation for Support and Legal Protection of Russian

---

[248] Lucas, Edward and Peter Pomerantsev. *Winning the Information War REDUX: Expanded and Revised Edition.* (Center for European Policy Analysis, April 2017), 19. Accessed at: http://cepa.org/reports/Winning-the-information-war-redux

[249] Lucas, *Winning the Information War REDUX,* 19.

[250] Lucas, *Winning the Information War REDUX,* 19.

[251] Lucas, *Winning the Information War REDUX,* 20.

Compatriots Abroad, publish media that seeks to discredit Latvian policy and convince Russian Latvians that their best source of protection is Russia itself.[252]

Lithuania has a substantially smaller Russian population, less than 10 percent. Russian disinformation is therefore not aimed inside of Lithuania, but rather at Western audiences particularly Poland, whose narrow border with Lithuania is the narrow isthmus of Europe between greater Russia and Kaliningrad. This disinformation is designed to "alienate them from Lithuania by portraying it as unreliable and not worth defending."[253] Domestic issues such as dissatisfaction with political leaders, social and economic conditions are targeted, though this is common across Eastern Europe. Traditional conservative Lithuanian values are highlighted as being more compatible with Russian values and traditions than European ones, in an attempt to drawn an ideological line between Lithuania and Europe.[254]

Poland, long a pro-European, pro-NATO ally of the west has also been successfully targeted. Kremlin narratives attempt to promote "extreme Polish nationalism-even anti-Russian nationalism-with the goal of making Poland seem unreliable and "hysterical" to its Western allies."[255] Much of the activity and effort is done by Poles in pursuit of their political objectives. The lack of public discourse and waning confidence in democracy is coupled with an inclination to believe "the world is

---

[252] Lucas, *Winning the Information War REDUX,* 21.

[253] Lucas, *Winning the Information War REDUX,* 21.

[254] Lucas, *Winning the Information War REDUX,* 21.

[255] Lucas, *Winning the Information War REDUX,* 23.

manipulated-by big capital, American imperialism, the political elite, world Jewry, mafias, the Vatican, etc."[256] Widespread weaknesses for conspiracy theory thinking allows trolls to operate with more legitimacy than in other information spaces. Recently Polish nationalist magazines and websites have begun to use "harsh anti-EU rhetoric," "language and symbols common on Russian state-run media and in Russian social media."[257] In order to drown support for Ukraine's fight against Russia, the true atrocities of Ukrainians massacring Poles in WWII are recirculated, EU images are overlaid with swastikas and the EU labeled a "homosexual empire."[258]

Key similarities exist in these brief examples. First, the society is the target in order to move a state's political policy in a direction that helps Russia. This does not mean pro-Russian policies are always the most beneficial. In some cases, antagonistic policies serve to separate nations and populations, making them weaker. States consumed with domestic problems have less ability to focus beyond their borders, and political leaders have less support. Secondly, the audiences are targeted based on the opportunities they present. Polish anti-Semitism is stoked while ethnic Latvians are accused of Nazism and Ukrainians are accused of killing Poles. Third, media is naturally saturated, but legitimate political parties, academic organizations, civic groups, fringe groups and other avenues for citizen activity are infiltrated and used as organic vehicles for creating fissures in society or moving the political system in a direction favorable to

---

[256] Lucas, *Winning the Information War REDUX,* 23.

[257] Lucas, *Winning the Information War REDUX,* 24.

[258] Lucas, *Winning the Information War REDUX,* 24.

Russia, or at least in the direction of increased social upheaval. Fourth, there is no need to deploy troops or hold ground to influence events in another country.[259] Fifth, the use of unconventional forces creates "an asymmetric advantage" for Russia, the militarily weak opponent.[260]

The use of information-psychological operations in Eastern Europe are coherent with the Russian view of war. Social cohesion is necessary to win and makes a logical target in Russian adversaries. Declaration of hostilities is unnecessary, for Russia continues to view itself as involved in a war against the West. The genesis of this may be primarily in President Putin's search for electoral support, but it remains a common feature of Soviet and Russian life for at least a century. Hot war is avoided. Information-psychological offers the opportunity to "gain their objectives by pacific means."[261]

Across Europe and likely beyond, Russia uses soldiers such as internet trolls and fake news farms, direct cyber tools handled by hackers (i.e. malware or worms), proxies like the Kremlin's biker gang the Night Wolves, economics or so called 'gas diplomacy', clandestine options such as espionage, and political influence doled out to targeted leaders.[262] Use of 'compatriot policies' double as a tool and an audience.[263]

---

[259] Lucas, *Winning the Information War REDUX,* 9.

[260] Lucas, *Winning the Information War REDUX,* 10.

[261] As cited in Vigor, *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality*, 8.

[262] Chivvis, "Understanding Russian 'Hybrid Warfare,'" 3-4.

[263] Grigas, *Beyond Crimea*, 2.

Gerasimov spoke in 2013 about the frequency of non-military methods being

used at a ratio of 4:1, and Chekinov and Kartapolov spoke of the necessity of superior

control over "information pressure that can be exerted against an adversary through the

media, nongovernmental organizations, foreign grants, religions organizations,

propaganda, and disinformation designed to stoke chaos in a society."[264] The importance

of these information operations, both psychological and technical, was to ensure the

adversary's "political and economic system is made ungovernable, its population

demoralized, and its key military-industrial complexes destroyed or damaged beyond

repair."[265] These he envisioned as the opening phases of a war that would eventually

become a shooting war instead of an information war. As seen in Latvia and Poland,

(and elsewhere not covered here), "when the space for a democratic, public discourse and

open society is broken down, a society becomes atomized and is easier to manipulate

through a policy of divide and conquer."

Case Study – Information-Technical Operations

Direct information operations against an opponent's systems and machines is the

simplest facet of information warfare, and conforms with the western notion of

cyberspace operations. This threat is also pervasive, manifesting itself daily for

consumers, businesses, corporations, hospitals and governments. Securing information

from prying eyes and the fingers of adversaries is an enterprise as old as conventional

---

[264] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 38.

[265] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 38-39.

warfare. Indeed, the very name of 'information warfare' or 'cyber war' connotes the parry and thrust, offense/defense model of Napoleonic warfare. The Russian conception of information operations does include this system level, information superiority on the battlefield (and at the government and military leadership level) where superiority confers an advantage to the opponent. In many cases this advantage created by cybernetic activity is exploited by military force, either by design or by circumstance.

Due to the unavailability of concrete knowledge regarding Russian strategy, it is necessary to instead examine operations. The logically nested structure of Russian strategy and operations makes this possible and somewhat useful. While Russia appears to have operational schizophrenia, and has been pilloried by analysts for behaving in ways that don't make sense to the United States. Russia has a strategy, more accurately it has multiple strategies, designed to create power for Russia.

The west, initially beginning with states in Russia's Near Abroad and spreading westward over the past decade, has discovered, identified, named and exposed multiple Russian operations in the information dimension. Operations are of critical importance to practitioners of military art and science, while strategy is more crucial to policy makers and military leadership and should inform operations.

Estonia

Estonia is one of the most wired nations in the world. The small nation also has a significant Russian population that has not acculturated into Estonia well, resulting in a

Russian population that retains a separate Russian identity.[266] After World War II, the

Soviet Union erected bronze soldier monuments in capitals within their control. From

Vienna to Estonia, these bronze soldiers were reviled by the anti-communist population

as a symbol of their oppression and mistreatment by the USSR, while the Russians

viewed them as memorials to the Great Patriotic War and symbols of liberation.[267] In the

center of Tallinn, Estonia, one such statue stands, known to Estonians as 'the rapist.' In

February 2007, the Estonian government voted to remove the symbols of the Soviet

Union. Russia signaled displeasure and complained of the defamation of Russian dead

buried around the statue in the town square. On April 27, 2007, a riot broke out between

ethnic Russians and Estonians at the site of the monument, causing the government to

relocate the monument to a nearby Soviet military cemetery. The Russian Duma and

media reacted immediately and negatively.[268] The Estonian government was almost

immediately with a cyber attack. The direct cyber attack flooded and locked up internet

sites and servers that controlled the country's communications, financial system, or

government services. The attack, a distributed denial of service (DDOS) attack which

lasted for weeks, included not only public 'Surface Web' public and private webpages,

but also non-public sites and servers that managed traffic for banking, telephone

networks, government services and websites. The largest recorded attack was crippling

---

[266] Vihalemm, Triin, and Veronika Kalmus. "Cultural Differentiation of the Russian Minority." *Journal of Baltic Studies* 40, no. 1 (2009): 95-96.

[267] Clarke, Richard A. and Robert Knake, *Cyber War: The Next Threat to National Security and What to Do About It*, (New York, NY: ECCO, 2010), 13.

[268] Clarke, *Cyber War,* 14.

for the nation and the residents.[269] Cyber experts discovered the attack was coordinated

through over a million 'zombie' computers, also known as a botnet, with the controlling

computers located in Russia. Russia denied allegations of engaging in a cyber war

against Estonia. Later some government officials admitted some "patriotic Russians"

may, perhaps, have been angered over the movement of the Russian monument and

attacked Estonia.[270] The Russian security services, after the statue was moved,

"encouraged domestic media outlets to whip up patriotic sentiment against Estonia."[271]

Russia may have instigated, facilitated, or permitted and encouraged the cyber attacks.

Organized crime, which is at times indistinguishable from the state security services,

employs most adept hackers who are already in the state's employ.[272]

Georgia

The Republic of Georgia has long been viewed by Russia as being within its

sphere of influence.   Two regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, broke away from

Georgia in 1993 and have been supported by Russian funding and de facto protection. In

July 2008, South Ossetian rebels (Georgia claims they were Russian agents) instigated

missile raids against Georgian towns just across the contested border. In August,

Georgian forces began bombing the town of Tskhinvali in South Ossetia in response to

---

[269] Clarke, *Cyber War*, 13-14.

[270] Clarke, *Cyber War*, 15.

[271] Clarke, *Cyber War,* 15.

[272] Clarke, *Cyber War*, 15.

this reportedly Russian provocation, and invaded on August 7. Russia responded by

invading militarily on the next day, pushing back Georgian forces. Simultaneously with

the Russian invasion, cyber attacks isolated the nation's access to information and the

internet outside of Georgia. Interestingly, the Georgians stated that for the three weeks

prior to the beginning of the conventional war, online attackers were assaulting Georgia's

websites. While Georgian officials are unable to definitely prove this, and Russia denies

involvement, the fact remains that the attacks after the shooting war officially began were

carried out in coordination with the conventional invasion on land, sea and air that

occurred on August 8. [273]

What started as hacker activity, for example defacing the Georgian leader

Mikheil Saakashvili's website with pictures comparing him to Adolf Hitler, soon

increased in scope and sophistication in concert with the conventional invasion.[274] These

DDOS attacks targeted media and other communications and "information exfiltration

activities" which were used to gather political and military intelligence.[275] The effect of

the DDOS attacks, seizure of servers, routers and control of the ".ge" domain was that

Georgians could not connect to any outside news or information, or send emails outside

of the country. The hackers barraged international banking sites with traffic appearing to

be from Georgia, resulting in many of the international banking outlets shutting down

---

[273] Clarke, *Cyber War,* 13-16.

[274] Clarke, *Cyber War*, 15.

[275] Hollis, David M. "Cyberwar case study: Georgia 2008." *Small Wars Journal,* January 6, 2011.
Accessed February 16, 2018. Accessed online at: http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/cyberwar-
case-study-georgia-2008

113

connections with the entire Georgian financial system. The telephone and credit card system also went down, paralyzing not only the citizenry, but also the political and military response. "Patriot hacker" groups in Georgia were able to deflect some Russian activity, though their response was hasty and uncoordinated. After blocking incoming traffic from Russia, the attackers routed through servers and botnets in China, Turkey and Estonia.[276]

The Russian government claimed the hacking was a populist response to Georgian bombing of South Ossetia, although Western computer scientists linked the launch sites of the online attack to the Russian intelligence apparatus.[277] Evidence suggests that Russian hackers conducted a dress rehearsal in July 2008. Significantly, the air bombing campaign and the hacking campaign had a distinct similarity – the physical and online infrastructure of the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline was precisely spared any attack, a clear message that such an attack was merely a withheld option. The importance of Georgia's small and short war lies in the doubtful honor of being a first; it marked the first time a state invaded another in 'four domains' – land, sea, air and cyber.[278] This action followed weeks of arguments, but in the end the international committee determined that Georgia was the instigator of the war.[279]

---

[276] Clarke, *Cyber War*, 16.

[277] Clarke, *Cyber War*, 16.

[278] Hollis, "Georgia 2008."

[279] Cheterian, Vicken. "The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars." *Central Asian Survey* 28, no. 2 (2009): 160-162.

Crimea

The example of Ukraine is interesting because it informs the observer of what the

logical extension of the indirect attack could be. Although elements of a direct attack

similar to Georgia and Estonia occurred, the preparations were non-kinetic, later

combined with a kinetic outcome. Russia's use of information-psychological operations

on the Crimean and Donbass populations and information-technical against the Ukrainian

government could represent a new level of complexity for integrating domains.

According to a Minority Staff Report for Congress, Ukraine "has borne the brunt

of Russian hybrid aggression in all of its forms – a lethal blend of conventional military

assaults, assassinations, disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks and the deionization of

energy and corruption."[280] Ukraine is likened by some as a cyber test lab for Russia, with

almost every sector of economic and civil life being targeted at various times. The

media, finance, transportation, military, politics and energy have all been targeted, with

the attacks graduating from exfiltration of data to physical attacks on infrastructure. [281]

In 2014, Russia's information operations were less practiced, but effective nonetheless.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine began with Crimea in February 2014 and

continued into the industrial Donbas region. The groundwork for encouraging separatism

began no later than November 2013, when pro-Russian separatists began a "low level

---

[280] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Putin's Asymmetric Assault on Democracy in Russia and Europe: Implications for U.S. National Security (House Minority Report)*,115th Cong., 2d sess.,2018, S. Prt. 21, 73, https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FinalRR.pdf

[281] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Putin's Asymmetric Assault on Democracy in Russia and Europe: Implications for U.S. National Security (House Minority Report)*,115th Cong., 2d sess.,2018, S. Prt. 21, 74, https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FinalRR.pdf

hacking."[282] The goal was to discredit pro-European Ukrainians, both those in the

government and public sectors, but also the Ukrainian people who desired a shift west.

As clashes erupted between riot police and protestors, those against Yanukovych's

decision to not sign with the EU, those in the vicinity received threatening cell phone

messages linking them with the disturbance. An information campaign was employed

with the intent to create or change the information people were consuming to alter their

opinion.[283]

The military takeover of Sevastopol airfield and Simferopol airport on 27-28

February occurred in concert with the cessation of communication between Crimea and

Ukraine. Armed soldiers entered the region on March 2. Soldiers subsequently tampered

with fiber optic cables, hackers targeted the cell phones of Ukrainian parliamentarians

and the Ukrainian government website was shut down for about 72 hours. Crimea was

effectively cut off from Ukraine. Before the March 16 referendum, an information

campaign increased in saturation.[284] This information campaign on the internet and

Russian broadcast media, which had replaced the Ukrainian, convinced Russian ethnic

citizens that Kiev was taken over by fascists and their safety was threatened due to their

Russian language and ethnicity. Crimean Russians proved the most vulnerable to this

---

[282] Maurer, Tim and Janz, Scott. "The Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Cyber and Information Warfare in a
        Regional Context." Page 1. White paper for ISN, Center for Security Studies (CSS), ETH Zurich,
        Switzerland accessed online at: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/187945/ISN_184345_en.pdf

[283] Maurer and Janz, "The Russia-Ukraine Conflict", 2.

[284] Maurer and Janz, "The Russia-Ukraine Conflict", 3.

widespread messaging, which spread across the country. The Crimean population was overwhelmingly in support of Russian intervention,[285] which occurred within days.

The Donbas region was less overwhelmingly supportive of Russian occupation, but the 'little green men' from Crimea and purported pro-Russian separatists occupied the region during the summer of 2014, in conjunction with a confusing flood of information that emphasized the size and scope of the pro-Russian separatist movement and the heinous crimes of the government in Kiev. The armed men insisted they were only there to protect the separatists from the predations of the western-influenced government in Kiev. The narrative emerged slowly from a confusing mash of information containing just enough truth, then settled into a more steady-state campaign. This form of cyber attack created an "operational space for coercive action" that voided many of the political risks of kinetic warfare[286] and combined well with un-attributable kinetic forces.

The lack of a coherent response from Kiev was not entirely predicated on the information war Russia unleashed on the country, though it complicated the response. Deeply corrupt and divided, the government instead provided a weak opponent to Russian aggression. The Crimea fell swiftly, mostly due to the ideological vulnerability of the pro-Russian population and the careful grooming of their understanding of the issues but also because of the previous stationing of Russian military assets in Sevastopol.

[285] "Ukraine Crisis: Timeline," *BBC News,* November 13, 2014. Accessed online at
	http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275

[286] Lewis, "'Compelling Opponents to Our Will,'" 40.

Key Points

The informational-technical operations on display in Estonia, Georgia and the Crimea show how this capability can further political goals. Russia does not need to invade Estonia to exercise some measure of control over political decisions. Rather, cyber attacks can be used to control political decisions in a similar way to old-fashioned threats of invasion.

Georgia was most interesting for the use of cyber as another coordinated avenue of invasion. This clearly demonstrates the merging of cyber with conventional as outlined by Kartapolov, and the way it can be used to destroy "forces and targets to the entire depth of [the enemy's] territory."[287] The paralysis of communication systems, government and financial systems ensure that the military and political response, even the international response, suffers from lack of information. The war was lost immediately.

Crimea is an unfolding conflict. During the annexation of Crimea, the combined information operations to convince the Crimean population their basic freedoms were in jeopardy and the rapid deployment of non-conventional forces to claim territory show how the information domain blurs into the operational domain.

A point of emphasis should be placed on the centrality of non-conventional methods to the apparent Russian strategy. As classic Soviet strategy intimates, the capability requirements for an attritional strategy are lower (or conversely, it can be said that lower capability demands an attritional strategy). The context of Russia is foundational to understanding Russian actions and anticipating their future moves, if such

---

[287] Thomas, "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War," 40.

a bold attempt can be made. Given the economic situation in Russia and the outlook for the future, emphasizing less expensive operations is not only natural, it is arguably the correct strategic orientation for the state.

The use of non-conventional soldiers and avoidance of state on state conflict highlights the use of an attritional strategy. Despite the original genesis of Deep Operations as a strategy of destruction it appears to be adapted to include information operations in both aspects as a method to soften the target. In point of fact, it has been demonstrated as simply another operation within the rubric of an attritional strategy. Russia's leaders cannot fail to see that pure conventional military power will not deliver the desired end state – a strategy of destruction is untenable.

It is logical that non-conventional means are appropriate to achieve a non-conventional strategic endstate. States often become more cohesive in military conflict, as the "us against them" mentality often brings peoples together and strengthens the government. Therefore to divide a society and weaken a government, the assets employed in a strategy of attrition can weaken the enemy without triggering a collective defensive response.

CHAPTER 6: IN CONCLUSION

"War may be waged only by the will of a united people. Hence the purpose of a state which has taken up arms is to exert pressure on the consciousness of a hostile people so that the people would compel their government to sue for peace." – British Field Regulations, as cited in Svechin's book *Strategy.*[288]

Answering the Question

How does Russia use information operations to create power for the state? As the case studies indicate, primarily through reducing the power of their opponents. Adopting an essentially defensive posture, Russia is conducting offensive information operations. The larger attritional strategy that information operations are nested within links political objectives with the available means to achieve them. The means Russia uses are extremely varied from country to country, the methods are diverse but tailored, and the manifestations demonstrate admirable ability to morph and adapt.   It is to be expected that the results will also vary among targets.

Russia's adoption of information operations adheres to the principle that political objectives remain the organizing principle for modern war. The available resources of Russia have necessarily shaped the strategy for achieving those objectives. The manmade domain of cyber has provided an opportunity for the character of war to shift

---

[288] Svechin, *Strategy*, 103.

yet again. War, conceived as a struggle between states, naturally inhabits all domains of human experience. The information realm has penetrated human experience almost entirely, therefore it is only natural for information in the technical and psychological sense to become an element of national power and a tool in pursuit of political objectives.

It is not surprising that Russia has sought to use the information dimension to create power. Their lack of capability in the military realm, a withholding of political legitimacy by western powers and a perennially weak economy all limit Russia's capacity to achieve militarily significant objectives. The use of information operations is the result of a pragmatic assessment of ends, ways and means. Acceptance of information operations as a central facet of war and the intellectual work to place it within the strategic and operational frameworks of war demonstrates Russia's commitment to the new way of war.

The centrality of society in the Russian view of war, coupled with the belief that war and peace are indistinct states of being makes information operations a particularly potent weapon for the state. The concept of a center of gravity is not a static one and prescriptions for success are foolhardy, nevertheless it can be said that in information operations, the society is often the center of gravity. Russian information operations as practiced in Eastern Europe and Ukraine show a clear focus on the role of society in all aspects of war and national power.

Although any idea with the world 'Soviet' attached to it can be dismissed as the product of a failed and cruel political system, the lifecycle of the USSR is of great significance to understanding Russia today. Regarding military theory, many Soviet

ideas remain relevant in Russia today for their basic truth and consistent use rather than their association with the communist ideology. The Soviet view of war as a necessary evil, the righteousness of the defense against the West and the use of offense as a defensive measure remain as true today as when Lenin and his inheritors interpreted Marx's opinions on the matter. Lacking a strong industrial base upon which to build a mighty military, Russia has adapted itself to its economic circumstances, at least for the time being.

The Soviet levels of war provide a useful framework to assess the probable Russian strategy, for it appears the conceptual structure remains. Russia's use of doctrine, military science, strategy, and operational art demonstrates the concepts are highly interrelated and in many cases, proscriptive. Indicative of the Marxist and communist trust in the products of reason, science and dialectical thinking, the levels of war and the Russian study of military experiences predisposes them to adapt, particularly when internal circumstances dictate it. The importance of these structures and tendencies is that clear causal assumptions can be drawn from analysis of only one part of the whole. Specifically, information operations illustrates the outlines of Russian strategy when analyzed historically.

Categorizing the use of information operations as a form of Deep Operations can be done, but only if the Russian military theoretical establishment has re-worked the concept into an attritional framework. What must be considered is the very likely possibility that this has occurred. Although much of the theoretical framework appears

similar to Soviet times, it must also be assumed that operational concepts have undergone extensive revision.

Russian military thought, as outlined by Gerasimov, Kartapolov and others, indicates that the military science establishment in Russia is convinced that war has a new character. Specifically, they are convinced that information operations and information superiority are important new characteristics of modern war, so much so that they presage even a declaration of war in Kartapolov's phased war concept. The publishing of these assertions indicates the political system is also convinced of their veracity. The conclusion can subsequently be drawn that the political system has determined an attritional strategy is currently appropriate.

Attrition is not historically the preferred strategy of nations. Since Napoleonic war, nations have been tempted to consider war in only the context of destruction. The lure of the decisive operation, so boldly prosecuted by leaders from Napoleon's time up to the current age, is powerful due to its simplicity, perceived lack of risk and immediacy. Countries adopt strategies and often live or die by them, and typically allocate significant resources towards preparing the state for conflict.

Svechin's 1920s era analysis of Russia's capability can be extrapolated to today. The nation remains immense, even with the loss of territory after 1991. The economy is weak, though not as backward and lacking technological prowess as the new Soviet Union was in the 1920s. Russia's population is currently estimated at 143 million,[289] but

---

[289] Russia Population 2018 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs), retrieved 2018-04-23, from
http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/russia-population/

expected to decline.[290] Unlike an industrially based military, information operations does not require a large population or a robust economy to produce effective operations. Russia seeks to offset its relative weakness in the economy and military through emphasis on other instruments of national power. Nuclear forces, which also do not rely on conventional force requirements, remain viable in the context of delivering the 'knockout blow.' Considering Russia's probable enemies, nuclear capability is an essential requirement for being able to reduce reliance on conventional forces and transition to a more 'whole of Russia' approach to creating power.

As Svechin noted, "...a strategy of attrition constitutes a search for material superiority and the fight for it, but [it] is not limited solely to the desire to deploy superior forces in a decision section. We must still create the conditions for a 'decisive point' to exist."[291] In the context of modern war, it is clear that the 'search' includes information superiority, the use of which will create conditions for the decisive point to exist. Russia does not seek to destroy enemy forces with brute force, but rather to pursue the goal of attrition, which "follows the path of least resistance, gradually accumulating political, economic, and military advantages that enable it to eventually deliver the knockout blow."[292] These operations, of which information operations is but one, are not

---

[290] Chamie, Joseph and Mirkin, Barry. "Russian Demographics: The Perfect Storm," *Yale Global Online,* accessed April 23, 2018 at: https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/russian-demographics-perfect-storm

[291] Svechin, *Strategy,* 247.

[292] Harrison, *The Russian Way of War,* 130.

necessarily logical in the same way that decisive operations tend to be. Nor does success

rest on one single event or operation.

Russia's information operations in Eastern Europe, the Baltic states, Georgia and

Crimea are of most use as examples of the possibilities the Russian government is

exploring. They illuminate the importance of society, a facet of strategy previously more

closely considered by the Soviets than the western powers. Most importantly, they

indicate that Russia has already intellectually explored the viability of information

operations and integrated them into political and military operations. These operations

have tested concepts and frameworks, tactics and tools. They demonstrate a facility with

exploiting the medium against military and civic targets and a fundamental shift away

from conventional military forces as the centerpiece of grand strategy.

Opposing Arguments

Opinions differ on the viability of information operations to produce long-term

gains for the Russian state. Some of this skepticism is based on the method, specifically

propagandistic messaging, while others doubt the importance of society with regards to

war, and most western analysts dismiss Russia as impotent.

Russian information operations are considered by some to be nothing more than

grown up Soviet propaganda – flashier but equally ideologically questionable. Soviet

propaganda was long considered crude and unsophisticated[293] and maintained a leftist

---

[293] Lucas, Edward and Pomerantzev, Peter. "Winning the Information War: Techniques and Counter-
strategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe" (Legatum Institute, March 2016),
2.

and communist ideological cast[294] which did not resonate authentically with western

audiences. The overarching belief is that Russian propaganda has inherited this childish,

ineffective quality and will be defeated through righteous "narratives of American

confidence and invincibility... that propagate American messages of prosperity and

liberty."[295] This argument is predicated on the likewise propagandistic idea that good

triumphs over evil, an ideological perspective that fails to take into account the greater

effort 'good' has to exert over 'evil' in order to succeed.

Erik Gartzke argues that information war is unlikely to be pivotal in the

competition between states, and has yet to "actually function as war."[296] He believes that

violence is the key to war, the defining characteristic. This popular argument is

predicated on a dismissal of society's role in the state's political system. His argument

that information operations has the same effect on politics as conventional war[297] is

perhaps premature, given the limited examples of information warfare in actual use.

Gartzke's analysis can be described as dated, though the viewpoints he espouses remain

popular. It does reveal that Western nations view warfare largely in a conventional sense,

which is both understandable and problematic in the current environment.

---

[294] Lucas and Pomerantzev, "Winning the Information War" 7.

[295] Harr, Scott J. "Expanding Tolstoy and Shrinking Dostoyevsky: How Russian Actions in the
        Information Space are Inverting Doctrinal Paradigms of Warfare." *Military Review,* Vol 97, No 5.
        (September-October 2017), 47.

[296] Gartzke, Erik. "The Myth of Cyberwar: Bringing War in Cyberspace Back Down to
        Earth." *International Security* 38, no. 2 (2013): 42.

[297] Gartzke, Erik, "The Myth of Cyber War," 53.

Celeste Wallander opined that "Russian grand strategy is neither grand, nor strategic, nor sustainable."[298] Andrew Monaghan states that critics of Russian grand strategy "tend to assume a central Russian strategy, and emphasize it by matching lists of perceived Russian strengths against western weaknesses." He goes on to note that skeptics, of which he is one, "doubt Moscow's ability to design a coherent strategy" so that one may even say that Russia's history suggests a tradition of 'anti-strategy,' where Russian strategy was "merely tantamount to a combination of improvisation and accident, bolstered by a celebration of the moral strength and patriotism of ordinary Russians."[299]

After examining the history of Soviet strategy, the errors in Monaghan's assertions are clear. First, he demonstrates a culturally or racially motivated perspective on Russian thought that undermines his argument and may cloud his analysis. Secondly, he and Wallander demonstrate no knowledge of the way in which Russia has historically generated and exploited strategic concepts to their advantage. Russia has always been backwards and poor, yet it has persistently posed military and political challenges to the West, often in unexpected ways. Western difficulties with generating strategy and reaching the desired endstate indicate that the enterprise of strategy itself is difficult,

---

[298] As cited in Monaghan, Andrew. "Putin's Russia: shaping a 'grand strategy'?" *International Affairs,* Vol 89, No 5 (2013), 1226. Accessed online January 16, 2018 at https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12068

[299] Monaghan, Andrew. "Putin's Russia," 1225.

imprecise, inefficient and even uncontrollable in application,[300] and often lacks strategic rigor and sustainability.

The dismissal of Russian strategy because it does not make sense, to Monaghan at the very least, is unhelpful. Analysts in the west have long been familiarized with the strategy of destruction and the powerful, simple logic that accompanies those operations. With regards to a strategy of attrition, it is much more difficult to determine what the operations will be or even what the operational line is. Obvious logic is not a prerequisite for a well-designed strategy, particularly one of attrition.

In light of the thesis that Russian Information Operations are intended as part of a larger strategy of attrition, and that both the strategy and operational line represent a fundamental challenge to the western way of war, the argument could be made that this project has found what it was looking for, that it identifies only the appearance of something and not the actual reality of it. Perhaps there is no plan, no design or intent to Russian Information Operations, and Russia's seemingly pernicious operations are merely manifestations of luck and chance. In this case, I would be the fabled Chicken Little, warning of danger where none truly exists.

It is true that a few successful operations do not make Russia into a great power. Others argue, as Wallander does above, that Russia is simply too dysfunctional to be a true threat. This is true in some respects. Russia's conventional military capabilities do not pose an existential threat to much of the west. Unfortunately, Russia has historically

---

[300] See for example, Betts, *Is Strategy an Illusion?* for thoughtful analysis on the importance and challenges of creating strategy.

been terribly poor, dysfunctional and led by cruel, exploitive persons, and has posed a significant threat to the west at various times. For this and their clear interest in information operations, or cyber warfare as it is often termed, the west must devote resources to exploring the concept. Contextualizing Russian military theory and contemporary operations are important and necessary endeavors.

A Revolution in Strategic Thought?

Does the recent emphasis on information operations as a legitimate and distinct form of warfare represent a Russian revolution in strategic thought? It would appear not, particularly in the case of Russia.

A revolution in strategic thought is well articulated in Schneider's exemplary book, *The Structure of Strategic Revolution.* The framework he uses is based on how scientific revolutions work. It has four stages. Briefly, the first is the intellectual revolution, where the practitioner introduces new concepts, frameworks, information or theories. Secondly is the recording of data, or proof, of the new findings. Third is the social phase, where ideas are entered into circulation. Fourth is the culmination of the actual revolution, where all practitioners accept the new information and begin to practice in accordance with it.[301]

Using this four-stage framework with respect to information operations, the first three stages have occurred nearly world-wide. Both state and non-state actors are exploiting the cyber dimension and developing new methods every day, sharing and

---

[301] Schneider, *The Structure of Strategic Revolution,* 273-275.

stealing information and imitating each other's forms and methods. The fourth stage has yet to occur, for the great powers of the world have yet to agree on how information operations works in the rubric of war and inter-state conflict. Nation-state cyber capabilities outstrip the internationally recognized rules of information war, of which there are very few, and states have fundamental disagreements on the permissible elements and activities.

The historical evidence of Russian military thought indicates that the Russian military science establishment has reached all four stages. Operations in the information sphere indicate that Russia has a new conceptualization of information warfare. Despite the apparent novelty of Russia's information operations, the underlying frameworks, concepts, information and theories are traceable to Soviet theorists, if not earlier. Only the tools they use have changed, as is to be expected, for those simply relate to the character of war. Despite how new some of Russia's activities may appear to be, they do not indicate any sort of revolution in strategic thought, but rather a thorough updating of Soviet concepts.

The question that remains is how western nations can or should react to the operationalization of the Russian theory. As the first nation to strategically conceptualize of information operations in this specific way, and employ it against other nations with some success, Russia stands to gain if other nations adopt their method of warfare. If Russia is able to generate significant advantage, and many other nations adopt their practices, there will be a revolution in strategic thought. This appears unlikely, but it is possible that Russia's actions will change the conduct of war in the future.

Recognizing and countering the Russian threat should not necessitate the adoption of nefarious methods. It should include full understanding of information operations and evaluation of the role of society in war. Russian use of information operations is in direct contradiction to the norms and institutions that bind western nations. The role of society, the value of the truth, the freedom of information and the rule of law are key elements of the strategic rear for western states and political systems. The military and political establishment should determine the best course of action with an eye to the long-term repercussions of an information war.

The Interwar period should stand as a warning when considering the trajectory of this line of inquiry. During the Interwar period, military leadership and theorists debated at length about the role of tanks, bombers and fighters in war. Each nation sought and developed their own solution, but in the final analysis, all nations gravitated towards what was most successful in the desperate attempt to prevail. Each war has its own logic, as both Clausewitz and Svechin realized in their day.

Questions

Is the strategy of destruction appropriate for contemporary war with Russia? Russia's opponents must meet them on a battlefield, and the strategy Russia intends to use is an important element to consider. Napoleon assumed in 1812 that destroying Russia's military would cause the Tsar to capitulate and was unprepared to fight an attritional war.

Given the role of society in political systems and in conventional military action, society must be considered as a key target of information operations. Confining war and preparation for war to conventional forces is anachronistic. While the protection of society from information is particularly difficult to operationalize, society remains a point of vulnerability. What are the defensive operations in an information war?

In the case of information operations, Russia's intent as outlined by their military leadership is to avoid the initial conventional phases of war. They intend to achieve this by first engaging the enemy in the informational sphere. Subsequently, they will focus their efforts on the opponent's society to weaken their social cohesion and/or political will. Russia either possesses or is trying to develop the capability to destabilize societies for this purpose. Their framework of military thought ensures that they will attempt to develop weapons, tactics and operations to achieve these goals.

Michael Howard's questions regarding nuclear war and society retain their relevance even today. To reframe his central question, "...how will the peoples concerned react, and how will their reactions affect the will and the capacity of their governments to make decisions? And what form will military operations take?"[302] What, in short, will be the 'social and the operational dimensions' of an information war?

---

[302] Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy," 6.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adamsky, Dima. *The Culture of Military Innovation: The Impact of Cultural Factors on the Revolution in Military Affairs in Russia, the US, and Israel.* Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Aron, Leon. "Russia Reinvents the Rule of Law. *Russian Outlook.* American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research*,* Spring 2002, Accessed March 2, 2018. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLAWJUSTINST/Resources/aronRussiaJudicialReform.pdf

Betts, Richard "Is Strategy an Illusion?" *International Security* 25, no. 2 (2000): 5-50.

Caffrey, Craig. "Russian defense budget expected to be cut by 5% in 2018," *Janes Defense Industry,* September 20, 2017. Accessed January 25, 2018, http://www.janes.com/article/74248/russian-defence-budget-expected-to-be-cut-by-5-in-2018

Chamie, Joseph and Mirkin, Barry. "Russian Demographics: The Perfect Storm," *Yale Global Online,* December 11, 2014. Accessed April 23, 2018 at: https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/russian-demographics-perfect-storm

Cheterian, Vicken. "The August 2008 War in Georgia: From Ethnic Conflict to Border Wars." *Central Asian Survey* 28, no. 2 (2009): 155-170.

Civvis, Christopher. "Understanding Russian "Hybrid Warfare": And What Can Be Done About It" Testimony presented before the House Armed Services Committee on March 22, 2017. Rand Corporation: Santa Monica, 2017.

Clarke, Richard A. and Robert Knake. *Cyber War: The Next Threat to National Security and What to Do About It*, New York, NY: ECCO, 2010.

Connell, Michael, and Sarah Vogler. *Russia's Approach to Cyber Warfare*. Center for Naval Analyses, 2017.

Delbrück, Hans. *History of the Art of War: Within the Framework of Political History. Volume IV: The Modern Era,* Translated by Walter J. Renfroe, JR., London: Greenwood Press, 1985.

DeYoung, Karen. "Obama speaks with Putin by phone, calls on Russia to pull forces back to Crimea bases." *The Washington Post,* March 1, 2014. Accessed online January 5, 2018 at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-and-allies-try-to-decide-on-response-to-ukraine-crisis/2014/03/01/463d1922-a174-11e3-b8d8-94577ff66b28_story.html?utm_term=.fed228b537a8

Dinniss, Heather H. *Cyber Warfare and the Laws of War.* New York, NY: Cambridge, 2012.

Eremenko, A. *The Arduous Beginning.* Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 2004.

Freedman, Lawrence. *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy,* 2nd ed. Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Macmillian Press, 1989.

Freeman, Chris, and Francisco Louçã. "The Emergence of a New Techno-Economic Paradigm: The Age of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)." In *As Time Goes By*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Freeman, Lawrence. *Strategy.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Garamone, Jim. "Trump Signs Fiscal Year 2018 Defense Authorization," *DoD News, Defense Media Activity,* December 12, 2017. Accessed January 25, 2018, https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1394990/trump-signs-fiscal-year-2018-defense-authorization/

Gartzke, Erik. "The Myth of Cyberwar: Bringing War in Cyberspace Back Down to Earth." *International Security* 38, no. 2 (2013): 41-73.

Gerasimov, Valery. "Contemporary Warfare and Current Issues for the Defense of the Country." *Military Review* 97, no. 6. (November/December 2017): 22-27.

Gerasimov, Valery. "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight. New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations." *Military Review* (January/February 2016): 23-27.

Glantz, David. *Soviet Military Operational Art: In Pursuit of Deep Battle.* Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1991.

Glantz, David M. *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler.* Edited by Jonathan M. House. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995.

Grigas, Aniga. *Beyond Crimea: The New Russian Empire.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016.

Handel, Michael I., *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought,* 3rd ed. New York, NY: Frank Cass, 2001.

Harr, Scott J. "Expanding Tolstoy and Shrinking Dostoyevsky: How Russian Actions in the Information Space are Inverting Doctrinal Paradigms of Warfare." *Military Review* 97, No 5. (2017): 39-47.

Harrison, Richard W., *The Russian Way of War: Operational Art, 1904-1940.* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2001.

Herszenhorn, David M. "Putin Vows to 'Actively Defend' Russians Living Abroad." *Atlantic Council,* July 2, 2014. Accessed online February 1, 2018 http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/putin-vows-to-actively-defend-russians-living-abroad

Hobsbawm, Eric J., "Spreading Democracy," *Foreign Policy*, no. 144 (2004): 40-41.

Hoffman, Frank. "Not-So-New Warfare: Political warfare vs Hybrid Warfare," War *on the Rocks*, July 29, 2014, accessed online January 29, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2014/07/on-not-so-new-warfare-political-warfare-vs-hybrid-threats/

Hollis, David M. "Cyberwar case study: Georgia 2008." *Small Wars Journal,* January 6, 2011. Accessed online February 16, 2018, http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/cyberwar-case-study-georgia-2008

Howard, Michael, "Clausewitz." *Past Masters*, edited by Keith Thomas. New York: Oxford University Press. 1988.

Howard, Michael, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy," *Foreign Affairs 57,* no. 5 (1979), 9.

Howard, Michael, *War in European History.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Huntington, Samuel P. "Why International Primacy Matters", *International Security* 17, no 4. (1993): 68-83.

Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Joint Publication 1: Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States,* Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017, accessed February 7, 2018, http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp1_ch1.pdf?ver=2017-12-23-160207-587

Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 3-13: Information Operations,* Washington, D.C.:
        Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014, accessed February 7, 2018,
        http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_13.pdf

Lewis, James Andrew " 'Compelling Opponents to Our Will': The Role of Cyber
        Warfare in Ukraine." In *Cyber War in Perspective: Russian Aggression Against
        Ukrain*e. edited by Kenneth Geers, Tallinn: NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense
        Centre of Excellence Publications, 2015.

Lucas, Edward and Peter Pomerantzev, *Winning the Information War: Techniques and
        Counter-strategies to Russian Propaganda in Central and Eastern Europe.*
        Legatum Institute, March 2016. Accessed online May 31, 2017 at
        http://cepa.org/reports/Winning-the-information-war

Lucas, Edward and Peter Pomerantsev, *Winning the Information War REDUX: Expanded
        and Revised Edition.* Center for European Policy Analysis, April 2017. Accessed
        February 7, 2018 at http://cepa.org/reports/Winning-the-information-war-redux

Luttwak, Edward N., *Grand Strategy of the Soviet Union.* New York, NY: St. Martin's
        Press, 1983.

Marxism-Leninism: On War and Army, translated by Donald Danemanis. USSR,
        Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972.

Maurer, Tim and Janz, Scott. "The Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Cyber and Information
        Warfare in a Regional Context." Page 1. White paper for ISN, Center for Security
        Studies (CSS), ETH Zurich, Switzerland accessed online at:
        https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/187945/ISN_184345_en.pdf

Mearsheimer, John J., "Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault: The Liberal
        Delusions that Provoked Putin." *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (2014): 77-89.

Mills, John R., "'All Elements of National Power': Re-Organizing the Interagency
        Structure and Process for Victory in the Long War" *Strategic Insights*, Volume V,
        Issue 6 (July 2006), 1.

Mockaitis, Thomas. "Winning hearts and minds in the 'war on terrorism,'" *Small Wars &
        Insurgencies* 14, Iss. 1, (2003), 21-38.

Monaghan, Andrew. "Putin's Russia: shaping a 'grand strategy'?" *International Affairs*
        89, no. 5 (2013). Accessed online January 16, 2018 at
        https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12068

New Standard Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, Vol. 2 -- M to Z, s.v "warfare," New York, NY: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1941.

Posen, Barry R. "Nationalism, the Mass Army, and Military Power." *International Security* 18, no. 2, MIT Press (1993): 8-124.

"Ranked: The world's 20 strongest militaries" *Business insider,* October 3, 2015. Accessed April 23, 2018 at http://www.businessinsider.com/these-are-the-worlds-20-strongest-militaries-ranked-2015-9#3-china-18

Rice, Condoleeza. "Soviet Strategy" in *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age.* edited by Peter Paret. Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 1986.

Roland, Alex "War and Technology" *Foreign Policy Research Institute.* February 27, 2009. Accessed online November 2, 2017, http://fpri.org /article/2009/02/war-and-technology/

Russia Population 2018 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs)," retrieved 2018-04-23, from http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/russia-population/

Schelling, Thomas C. *Arms and Influence.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008.

Schneider, James J. *"The Structure of Strategic Revolution: Total War and the Roots of the Soviet Warfare State,* Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1994.

Schultz, Richard H. and Roy Godson, *Dezinformatsia: The Strategy of Soviet Disinformation,* New York, NY: Berkley Publishing Corporation, 1986.

Shea, Timothy C., "Post-Soviet maskirovka, Cold War nostalgia, and peacetime engagement" *Military Review* 82, no. 3, (2002).

Simpkin, Richard, *Deep Battle: The Brainchild of Marshal Tukhachevski.* Virginia: Brassey's Defense Publishers, 1987.

Sinclair, Nick. "Old Generation Warfare: The Evolution – not Revolution – of the Russian Way of Warfare." *Military Review* 96, no. 3, (2016): 8-16.

Svechin, Alexsandr A. *Strategy,* edited by Kent D. Lee, Minneapolis, MN: East View Publications, 1991.

Symonds, Matthew. "The Future of War." *The Economist*, January 29, 2017, accessed January 29, 2017 at https://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21735477-war-still-contest-wills-technology-and-geopolitical-competition-are-changing

Tallinn Manual on the International Law Applicable to Cyber Warfare, edited by
Michael N. Schmitt. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Thomas, Timothy "The Evolving Nature of Russia's Way of War." *Military Review* 97,
no. 4, (2017): 34-42.

"Timothy Thomas Biography" Strategic Studies Institute. Accessed April 30, 2018 at
https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/people.cfm?authorID=2051

Treadgold, Donald W. and Herbert J. Ellison, *"Twentieth Century Russia."* 9th edition,
Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000.

Trotter, William R. *A Frozen Hell: The Russo-Finnish Winter War of 1939-40.* Chapel
Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1991.

Tzu, Sun. *The Art of War*, Translated by Samuel B. Griffith, New York, NY: Oxford
University Press, 1963.

Upton, Anthony F. *Finland, 1939-1940*. Cranbury, NJ; Associated University Presses,
Inc, 1979.

U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Putin's Asymmetric Assault on
Democracy in RRussia and Europe: Implications for U.S. National Security
(House Minority Report)*, 115th Cong., 2d sess.,2018, S. Prt. 21,
https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FinalRR.pdf

"Ukraine Crisis: Timeline," *BBC News,* November 13, 2014. Accessed online at
http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275

von Clausewitz, Carl, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton, NJ:
Princeton University Press, 1989.

von Clausewitz, Carl, *The Campaign of 1812 in Russia*. Da Capo Press, 1995.

Vigor, P. H. *The Soviet View of War, Peace, and Neutrality*. Boston, MA: Routledge &
K. Paul, 1975.

Vigor, Peter H. "Transformation in Russian and Soviet Military History." In
*Proceedings of the Twelfth Military History Symposium, United States Air Force
Academy 1-3 October 1986.* Office of Air Force History, Washington D.C., 1990.

Vihalemm, Triin, and Veronika Kalmus. "Cultural Differentiation of the Russian
Minority." *Journal of Baltic Studies* 40, no. 1 (2009): 95-119.

Wilson, Jeanne L. "The Legacy of the Color Revolutions for Russian Politics and Foreign Policy." *Problems of Post-Communism* 57, no. 2, (2010): 21-36.

"Where is the Russian economy headed?" Deutche Welle, accessed April 23, 2018. http://www.dw.com/en/where-is-the-russian-economy-headed/a-42994677