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The continuity and discontinuity of fundamental military concepts in Russian military thought between 1856 and 2010

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Chapter-1

Introduction

1.1. The importance of the topic

This study sets out to investigate the rise, evolution, relevance, and genealogy of Russian military concepts between the late 19th and early 21st centuries. Military concepts are crucial to decipher the historical dimensions of contemporary Russian military thought. Therefore, the conceptualization of Russia's approaches to modern war from theoretical and practical observations has been an object of influential academic and policy debate within the field of modern war studies over the last decade. The Russian military campaigns conducted in Ukraine since 2014 have only increased the need to carry out research on Russia's conceptualization of modern war. Thus, the introduction gives a brief overview of the significance of the topic and the controversy surrounding it within the field of Western strategic studies. It will then go on to present a summary of the historical antecedents of Russian military concepts, which are the main focus of the study. Finally, this chapter ends with a short literature review, a research question, and the chosen methodology.

In the first place, Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 has been a matter of great interest. The character of the operations there contrasted with that of the Russian military intervention in Georgia in 2008. Rolling tanks, the firing of artillery, and fighting over key territory, such as occurred in Georgia, were not visible on the battlefield. Instead, the Crimean intervention was characterized by indirectness, non-violence, and surprise. Under the shadow of Russia's special troops in unmarked uniforms, total silence symbolized a victory without a war. The intervention did not showcase the peculiarities of 'old' conventional forms of war or the 'new' Western military methods displayed in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Nevertheless, the Crimean campaign attained Moscow's political objectives by keeping the use of force below the threshold of the conventional justifications of war. On the one hand, there is a growing interest among Western scholars in Russia's reliance on more traditional military means over the past several years, which, unlike in Crimea, has been visible partly in Russia's covert campaign in Donbas (Eastern Ukraine) and fully in Moscow's recent (February 2022)

massive military offensive in Ukraine. As a result, Western thinkers' attention has shifted to concepts of conducting traditional military operations.

Russian thinkers' views on contemporary warfare have drawn considerable attention from Western scholars. For instance, the ideas formulated in 2013 by the Russian Chief of General Staff, Valeriy Gerasimov on the *obscurity between war and peace* have dominated scholarly discussions on Russia's conceptualization of modern war.¹ Deciphering the Russian way of war has been an object of research especially since Russia's Crimean intervention of 2014. Recently, there has been renewed interest in Russian strategic thought, following Russian thinkers' studies on *new generation warfare (voynu novogo pokoleniya)* and *Russian hybrid warfare (gibridnaya voyna)*.² These two concepts have triggered scholarly debate on the presupposed features of Russia's conceptualization of contemporary war. Subsequently, a considerable literature has grown up around the theme of Russian military thought and strategy from a Western standpoint. As a result, most Western studies in the field of Russian strategy have focused on the *Gerasimov doctrine, hybrid war, or full-spectrum conflict*. Nevertheless, these studies have failed to systematically specify the concepts of Russian military culture and their impact on military strategy.

Principally, scholars have studied the Russian military's thinking and activities through a Western conceptual lens. For instance, in 2014 Mark Galeotti described the dramatic turn in Russian military thought as the "Gerasimov Doctrine".³ Under this doctrine, Galeotti associated Russian Chief of General Staff Valeriy Gerasimov's ideas with the Russian military's acts in Ukraine. In this regard, Galeotti argued that the Russian military had devised new non-military means and methods to achieve political objectives. Nevertheless, a careful examination of Gerasimov's ideas has demonstrated that he puts emphasis on how the employment of non-military means of war has grown in modern warfare generally (not Russian in particular) and, in some cases, has exceeded military instruments of power.⁴ Thus, contrary to Galeotti's interpretation, Gerasimov presented the Russian Chief of Staff's analyses about the Western way of war trajectory. Later in 2019, Galeotti admitted that his conceptualization had not

¹ Valeriy Gerasimov "The value of science is prediction," *Military-Industrial Courier* 8 (2013): 1–3.

² Ofer Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare' Resurgence and Politicization* (London: Hurst & Company, 2018), 131 and 141. In the first study, the Russian military's non-military means are intended to soften the enemy before decisive military operations. In the second attempt, Russians ascribed decisive importance to non-military means of power.

³ Mark Galeotti, "The "Gerasimov Doctrine" and Russian Non-Linear War," *Moscow's Shadows*, <https://inmoscowshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war/>

⁴ *Ibid.*

reflected actual Russian military practice.⁵ Instead, this concept could be a placeholder for Valery Gerasimov's ideas on particular kinds of modern wars in the 21st century (i.e. color revolutions).⁶

Misinterpreting Gerasimov is partly associated with Western short-sightedness regarding Russian military concepts. Instead of understanding and employing Russian military concepts, western scholars have tended to use concepts developed by Western strategic culture. For instance, as stated in his article, Gerasimov's ideas would be characterized by a key Russian military concept, *forecasting*, that would predict the trends in the character of war. Therefore, Gerasimov's forecasts do not necessarily indicate how Russians would implement the war. Instead, these forecasts represent global trends and tendency's in war's character. Forecasting is prominent in the history of modern Russian military thought. Therefore, this concept will be meticulously examined in this study.

Other Western scholars have described the perceived shift in Russian strategic thought by using the term *hybrid warfare*.⁷ When Russia annexed Crimea and destabilized Eastern Ukraine in 2014, researchers examined it under the hybrid warfare concept developed by US Major William Nemeth and later Frank Hoffman.⁸ In his 2002 thesis, Nemeth argues that hybrid modes of warfare are equally connected with hybrid societies that are governed by modern and traditional social orders.⁹ By examining the Chechen wars, Nemeth reveals the risks posed to conventional forces by hybrid actors who rely on unconventional means, guerrilla tactics, and modern equipment.¹⁰ Hoffman's 2007 definition of "hybrid wars" incorporates a range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence, coercion, and criminal disorder.¹¹ After 2014, Western scholars and practitioners have tended to put Russian acts in a conceptual framework drawn

⁵ Mark Galeotti, "The Mythical 'Gerasimov Doctrine' and the language of threat," *Critical Studies in Security* 7:2 (2019): 157.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Maria Snegovaya, "Putin's Information Warfare in Ukraine: The Soviet Origins of Russia's Hybrid Warfare," *Institute for the Study of War* Washington (2015); Christopher Chivvis, "Understanding Russian Hybrid Warfare," *Rand* (March 2017); K. Kilinskas, "Hybrid Warfare: An Orientating or Misleading Concept in Analyzing Russia's Military Actions in Ukraine?," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* 14 (2015-2016).

⁸ Guillaume Lasconjarias and Jeffrey A. Larsen, *NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats* (Rome: NATO Defence College Division, 2015)

⁹ William J. Nemeth, *Future war and Chechnya: a case for hybrid warfare* (Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School, 2002), 74.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, Virginia, USA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies), 27.

from hybrid warfare. Although the advocates of this tendency cannot agree on what *Russian hybrid warfare* means, they have reached a consensus on the simultaneous employment of a mix of conventional and unconventional means and methods.

Nevertheless, a large number of published studies criticize the tendency to associate the concept of hybrid warfare with contemporary Russian military thought.¹² To begin with, Bettina Renz argues that hybrid warfare inadequately reflects the Russian approach to modern war.¹³ According to Renz, the use of indirect approaches and unconventional tactics is not peculiar to Russia.¹⁴ Consequently, Renz concludes that Russia's success in Crimea is not the result of applying the war-winning formula of *hybrid war*.¹⁵ In another significant study, Ofer Fridman warns against associating Russian acts with the hybrid warfare concept. According to Fridman, Russia's employment of disinformation campaigns and cyber-attacks has distracted scholars' attention and prevented them from focusing on the vital role of the Russian military threat in Ukraine.¹⁶ Furthermore, Fridman investigates whether Western and Russian definitions of hybrid warfare are conceptually similar. Fridman concludes that Russia's reconceptualization of hybrid warfare (*gibridnaya voyna*) is not identical to its Western mirror image.¹⁷ Contrary to Western definitions of the term, Russia's *gibridnaya voyna* focuses on how the West has employed non-military means and methods in a subversive manner to overthrow regimes.¹⁸ On the whole, the second major scholarly attempt at deciphering and conceptualizing Russian military thought with a Western concept is equally riddled with problems.

The third instance of contemporary Western conceptual confusion is highlighted in the work of Oscar Jonsson and Robert Seely, where they develop the concept of *Russian full-spectrum conflict*.¹⁹ In a 2015 article, Jonsson and Seely admit that Western attempts to conceptualize and understand the Russian way of war are flawed.²⁰ To improve this, they create a new concept; they argue that the *full-spectrum conflict*

¹² S. Rinelli and I. Duyvesteyn, 'The Missing Link: Civil Military Cooperation and Hybrid Wars.' In *A Civil Military Response to Hybrid Threats*. ed. Eugenio Cusumano and Marian Corbe. 17-40 (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

¹³ Bettina Renz, "Russia and Hybrid Warfare," *Contemporary Politics* 22, 3 (2016), 283

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 284.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Fridman, p.115.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 93.

¹⁹ Oscar Jonsson and Robert Seely. "Russian Full-Spectrum Conflict: An Appraisal After Ukraine," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 28:1 (2015)

²⁰ *Ibid.*

supposedly describes Russia's approaches to waging modern war in Ukraine with a model that encapsulates a mix of conventional and clandestine forces, economic threats, political influence, information battles, and traditional subversion.²¹ Even though Jonsson and Seely's model shows substantial similarities with hybrid warfare, it has been devised using different linguistic forms (*full-spectrum conflict*). According to this model, Russian warfare relies on the simultaneous use of violent and non-violent means "in differing degrees of intensity from peace to war and the space in between."²²

However, full-spectrum conflict is not a true reflection of Russian military thinking. This concept is not used in the Russian military's lexicon. Instead, Russian military thinkers have used the concept of *new generation warfare*.²³ Russian new generation warfare is based on the notion that non-military means are intended to soften the enemy before decisive military operations.²⁴ Contrary to full-spectrum conflict's emphasis on non-violent means of war, contemporary Russian war theory ascribes decisive importance to military means and methods. Moreover, the boundary between war and peace is more evident in Russian new generation warfare. Therefore, full-spectrum conflict is ill-suited to explain the Russian military's approach to modern warfare. Consequently, this third Western attempt to decipher the Russian way of war projects preconceived notions of Russian practices without proper investigation.

Scholars have noted the all-pervasive problem with interpreting Russian military thought. Dmitry Adamsky emphasizes Western unfamiliarity with the peculiar concepts of Russian strategic thought.²⁵ While studying the Russian approach to deterrence theory, Adamsky asserts that Russian concepts deviate substantially from Western conceptualizations.²⁶ He demonstrates to what extent mirror imaging may cause Western scholars to invent non-existent attributes of the Russian approach to war and disregard its fundamentals.²⁷ Furthermore, Adamsky draws scholarly attention to how strategic concepts evolve differently in the Russian cultural realm. For instance, he validates the counter-argument that the term *hybrid warfare* has been used in the Russian military lexicon only after 2014, in reference to the Western standoff with

²¹ Ibid. p. 5

²² Ibid. p. 1.

²³ Fridman, p. 131 and 141.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 131

²⁵ Dmitry Adamsky, "From Moscow with coercion: Russian deterrence theory and strategic culture," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41:1-2, (2018), 34.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 51.

Russia.²⁸ In return, Russia has resorted to distinct methods to cope with the perceived Western hybrid threats. Adamsky argues that Russian *cross-domain deterrence theory*, which correlates nuclear, conventional, and informational deterrence, is well-suited to counter Western hybrid threats.²⁹ Therefore, a Russian concept, *correlation*, offers a more compelling explanation for Russia's conceptualization of modern warfare. Correlation represents the Russian military's holistic approach (*kompleksnyi sistemnyi podhod*), which seeks to determine a war's outcome by specifying the mixture of conventional, nuclear, and non-military methods.³⁰ Correlation is also a critical military concept in Russian military thinking. For this reason, it will be examined in this study.

The common thread among these studies is that they have attempted to analyze war based on ethnocentric and flawed theoretical and practical observations on the Russian military. This study argues that an appreciation of the military conceptual history of the late 19th and 20th centuries is necessary to offer a more compelling explanation of contemporary Russian military thought.³¹ The ideas of contemporary Russian military thinkers have been formed by historical military concepts which are essential to the functioning and development of Russian military science. Nevertheless, Western scholarly attempts have paid scant attention to Russian military concepts' historical roots, semantic use, and system of thinking.

Unsupported by Russian military concepts, researchers tend to use Western conceptual frameworks while deciphering Russian military thought. As a result, existing accounts fail to resolve the discrepancies between Western and Russian conceptual approaches to war. First, Russian military concepts reflect the ideological, historical, and cultural peculiarities of Russian society. In Russia, the widespread belief that Western ideas fall short of providing meaningful solutions to the problems of Russian military science dates back to the late 19th century.³² Moreover, this notion has continued to exist up to the present in Russian thinking.³³ Secondly, the Russian military has been sceptical of conceptual developments in Western armies (i.e. hybrid warfare).³⁴ Likewise, Russian

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 33

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ D. Timothy Goering, "Concepts, History and the Game of Giving and Asking for Reasons: A Defense of Conceptual History", *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 7 (2013), 429.

³² A.S. Milovidov and V.G. Kozlov, *The Philosophical Heritage of V.I. Lenin and Problems of Contemporary War* (Moscow, 1972) translated and reproduced by (Washington: The US Government Printing Office, 1972), 97.

³³ I.S. Danilenko, "From Applied Military Science to a Basic Science of Warfare: Part 1," *Military Thought* 17:4 (October 2008): 92.

³⁴ M.A. Gareyev, "Issues of Strategic Deterrence in Current Conditions," *Military Thought* 18:2 (April 2009):8.

military thinkers do not accept new Western ideas without suspicion and careful scrutiny. Instead, new Western ideas are *Russianized* through the lenses of existing fundamental military concepts. As Russian General S.A. Tyushkevich argues, "the history of Russian military science reflects the characteristics of the social system, specifics of the political system of our state, as well as the character and direction of its policy."³⁵

This research argues that the key characteristics of contemporary Russian military thought cannot be fully understood without a proper understanding of fundamental Russian military concepts. Thus, present research sets out to investigate the rise, evolution, relevance, and genealogy of military concepts from a historical standpoint from the late 19th to the early 21st century.

1.2. Historical antecedents of Russian military concepts ³⁶

Russian military thought has its own rationale and forms, which is reflected in its military concepts. Early attempts to create a unified military doctrine went hand in hand with the codification and institutionalization of military concepts. During the 1870s, intellectual interaction with Prussia and France laid the foundations for early military principles and their attendant concepts. During the Soviet era, ideological perceptions of the world predetermined doctrinal objectives and their underlying military concepts.³⁷ After the 1990s, time-tested concepts continued to prevail even during the changing socio-political conditions. For the purpose of this research, the term 'fundamental military concepts' refers to military concepts that maintained historically continuous strategic relevance despite the profound socio-historical and strategic changes during the 20th century. Therefore, the present research defends the argument that these concepts have been and continue to be central to realizing and deciphering the Russian approaches to war.

The antecedents of Russian military concepts date back to the late Imperial Russian period. Military thinkers of the late 19th century applied positivism to military matters and Russian military science. For instance, one of the early inventors of military

³⁵ S.A. Tyushkevich, "Military Science and Russia's Security," *Military Thought* 10:3 (March 2001), 46.

³⁶ This research has primarily benefited from the English translations of the Russian sources in Western literature. The author has also translated the relevant parts of untranslated Russian sources into English.

³⁷ Andrei A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917-1991* (London: The MIT Press, 1998).

concepts, Genrikh Antonovich Leer, entitled his major 1877 work "Positive Strategy"³⁸ The influence of positivism can be attributed to the belated 'Military Enlightenment' effect in the Russian military. Carl von Clausewitz's "Enlightenment Tradition of Writing on War" disseminated across various schools of the Russian military later than expected, even though these ideas were accessible to Russian thinkers.³⁹ Clausewitz was a Prussian general in the late 18th and early 19th century, whose contribution to the theory of war is still valid today.⁴⁰

In the West, the advocates of *Clausewitzian* military theory defended the argument that principles of war cannot be introduced as scientific laws.⁴¹ Clausewitz believed that "it was simply not possible to construct a model for the art of the war that can serve as a scaffolding on which the commander can rely on for support at any time."⁴² Therefore, Clausewitzian military theory privileges the talent and judgement of the commander, the uncertainties of war, and moral and psychological factors over military principles. In late Imperial Russia, military thought relied predominantly on Henry Jomini's fixation on fundamental military principles and their attendant concepts. Jomini was a French-Swiss general who advocated the idea that war had universal principles and concepts. Similar to Clausewitz's short experience in the Russian military between 1813 and 1815, Jomini also served in the Russian Army after 1807. Therefore, Jomini's theory of war inspired leading Russian military thinkers of the time such as Genrikh A. Leer and Nikolai P. Mikhnevich. Subsequently, Leer established a culture in Russian strategic thought that sought to explore war-winning principles of war and their adherent concepts based on historical experience in the late 19th and early 20th century.

The positivist approach to war continued to predominate Russian military thinking after 1917. Generally speaking, Soviet military thinkers positioned military science between social science and natural science. Akin to other natural sciences, Soviet military science aimed to discover war's eternal and unconditional principles and concepts.⁴³ In Soviet thinking, time-tested concepts of war were to be interpreted as rules and regulations

³⁸ Genrikh Antonovich Leer, *Positive Strategy (Part 1)* (Saint Petersburg, 1877)

³⁹ Hew Strachan, "Strategy in theory; strategy in practice," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 42 (2) (2019), 181. For instance, Genrikh Antonovich Leer analysed Clausewitz and underscored the significance of his principles such as the extreme exertion [of force], concentration of force at the decisive time and point, and not to lose time. See: Leer, p. 49.

⁴⁰ Chiara Libiseller and Lukas Milevski, "War and Peace: Reaffirming the Distinction", *Survival*, 63:1 (2021), 101.

⁴¹ Jan Angstrom and J.J. Widen, *Contemporary Military Theory: The Dynamics of War* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 80.

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 87.

⁴³ Kerry Lee Hines, *Russian Military Thought: Its Evolution through war and revolution, 1860-1918* (Ann Arbor, UMI 1998), 100.

that could explain a war's outcome.⁴⁴ While observing these principles would lead to victory, avoiding them would be accompanied by military failure.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the concepts of Soviet military science bore an unmistakable historical and ideological character.⁴⁶ When the material conditions of waging war changed (i.e. weapons, technology), the content of concepts also changed to some degree.⁴⁷

In practice, each war possesses different characteristics and conditions.⁴⁸ Hew Strachan emphasizes that generalized concepts and principles do not apply to every war, according to the war theory proposed by Clausewitz.⁴⁹ Instead, operational art and judgement are crucial to dealing with the complexities of war. On the contrary, the Soviets believed that observing war-winning concepts and principles would bring success because of the superiority of socialism over capitalism.⁵⁰ Subsequently, the Soviets went further to specify the laws of Soviet military science, in a manner similar to that used for the laws of other natural sciences. This suggests that Jomini's teachings on war prevailed in Soviet military thinking in the twentieth century.

In the 1970s, the first law of war in Soviet doctrine was "the unlimited employment of all means of conflicts depends primarily on the correlation of available, strictly military forces of the combatants at the beginning of the war."⁵¹ This law informs two fundamental concepts that have featured prominently in Russian military thinking and have been constants over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: *the initial period of war* (IPW) and *correlation*. While the IPW regulated initial strategic operations, correlation was used to predict a war's outcome. Both concepts endured in Soviet and Russian military thought.

After the 1990s, battle-proven concepts of Russian military thought did not lose their significance, even though socialism's influence on military thought declined. Following a nearly century-long use, these concepts endured as essential elements of Russian strategic culture, and they continue to be vital to decipher how a Russian officer thinks.

⁴⁴ Jan Angstrom and J.J. Widen, *Contemporary Military Theory: The Dynamics of War* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 76.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Vasiliy Yefimovic, Savkin, *The Basic Principles of Operational Art and Tactics (a Soviet View)*. Translated and Published Under the Auspices of The United States Air Force. Washington: The US Air Force, 1972. Moscow, 1972, p. 5, 62.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Strachan, p. 177.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 178

⁵⁰ Danilenko, p. 92.

⁵¹ Savkin, p. 89.

Based on the investigations for this thesis, during the 20th century five specific Russian military concepts have surfaced as possessing demonstrably dominant influence on the evolution of Russian military thinking, privileging continuity over change. These are **the initial period of war** (*nacalnyi period voyni*), which regulates the Russian military's opening phase of war; **combat readiness** (*boevaya gotovnost*), which is defined as the state and capability necessary to ensure the desired security in peacetime and in times of war; **forecasting** (*prognozirovat*), which helps the Russian military estimate the character of a future war; **correlation of forces and methods** (*sootnesheniye sil i sredstv*), which allows the Russian military to anticipate the outcome of a future war; and **reflexive control** (*refleksivnoe upravlenie*), which helps the Russian military influence the enemy decision-making.

Not every military concept can be identified as fundamental. As the socio-political context changes, some concepts become obsolete. For instance, the concepts of attrition (*izmor*) and annihilation (*sokrushenie*) were frequently prescribed for building military strategies, particularly in the 20th century. An annihilation strategy required the Russian army to attain a swift victory, whereas the attrition strategy aimed to wear down the enemy forces as time went on.⁵² Even though these concepts were influential in Russian military thought between the 1860s and 1990, they have become less meaningful under *the strategy of indirect action* during the contemporary period. The indirect strategy emphasizes asymmetry rather than victory by force (annihilation) or by time (attrition). Therefore, these concepts cannot be said to be either permanent or continuously relevant in Russian military thinking.

1.3. Literature Review

This section presents a summary of the current state of the art in the literature. A more detailed analysis follows in chapter two.

The existing western literature on Russian military thought is extensive and focuses mainly on the 20th century. Although there is substantial literature that engages with Russian military concepts, most research has remained narrow in focus while dealing with a snapshot of how a concept is defined and employed within a particular period. Inevitably, these studies narrow down Russian military thought to how military concepts

⁵² Menning, B. W., *Bayonets Before the Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army 1861-1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 248.

separately operate under specific socio-historical and strategic conditions. Consequently, existing accounts treat Russian military concepts more or less individually instead of investigating them as integral pieces of the broader Russian military system of thinking. On the other hand, some other studies employ military concepts under particular strategic frameworks without paying attention to their content, context, and evolution. Therefore, hardly any scholars have systematically researched Russian military thought over extended periods of time, instead focusing on particular, historically-limited issues. Consequently, most Western literature on military concepts does not clarify how these concepts change in response to geopolitical and strategic changes. Finally, much uncertainty still exists about how conceptual peculiarity (the specific characteristics of the concepts) influenced military transformation when Russia faced socio-historical and strategic ruptures.

Since the codification and institutionalization of military concepts in Russia date back to the 1970s, the generalizability of much published Russian research on this issue before this date is problematic. Prior to the 1970s, Russian literature on military concepts was restricted to sections of leading Russian military thinkers' books on strategy. These works intended to fulfil the obvious gap between military theory and practice in Russian military thinking. Broadly speaking, most research on military concepts has been carried out by employing a positivist and historical methodology. On the other hand, a growing body of literature has investigated military concepts by taking a future war's changing character as a reference point. These different outlooks have promoted discussions within the Russian General Staff on changing and updating concepts' content or integrating new concepts into Russian military doctrine.

Russian literature on military concepts focuses on the extent to which newly emerging conditions necessitated a complete or content-wise revision of these concepts. The debate revolved around whether the adherence to military theory's ideological and technological basis should be relinquished when a war's character changes. In this regard, the tendency to take the past or the future as a reference point has dominated the conceptual evolution of Russian military thought. Thus, much of the Russian literature pays particular attention to the relevance and significance of time-tested concepts and principles of Russian strategic culture even during socio-political and strategic transformation. Therefore, these studies highlight the continuity of past ideas in Russia's new approaches to warfare. Nevertheless, a relatively small but growing

body of Russian literature is concerned with the concepts of future warfare, inspired by what is perceived to be the Western way of war.

The historiographical overview of the Russian military sources demonstrates that Russian military thinking has evolved since the late 19th century by building upon and making practical use of the ideas of the former periods. Despite a series of socio-political and strategic ruptures, the military conceptual ideas of the past are remarkably consistent and have informed subsequent new military theoretical thinking. By contrast, the historiography of Western resources indicates that the mechanisms that underpin continuity in Russia's conceptualization of warfare, in particular that of the twentieth century, are not fully understood. Thus, Western research to date tends to focus on specific periods demarcated by socio-political and strategic ruptures. Analyzing one specific period affects how the concepts' relevance is understood. Constraining the concepts' meaning and functionality to a particular timeframe influences how the concepts are systematized.

The historiography of the Russian resources also demonstrates that Russian military thinking treats military concepts as a socio-historical phenomenon. Thus, a large body of Russian military literature emphasizes how historical ruptures have affected the content and relevance of military concepts. Nevertheless, the existing Western literature does not adequately investigate whether shifts in Russian military strategies have decreased or increased the relevance of fundamental military concepts. Furthermore, little is known in the Western literature about how Russian military concepts fit together into a whole system of military theory and analysis.

Much uncertainty still exists about Russian military thought. This ambiguity is predominantly driven by the difficulty of accessing Russian resources on military thinking. In 2013, the U.S. decision to eliminate funding for advanced language and cultural programs in Russia and the former Soviet Union created additional barriers for researchers. The "hidden crisis" is considered as an unfortunate development in strategic studies in general and Russian military studies in particular.⁵³ Before this decision, there was a significant amount of scholarship on Russian studies in and beyond the United States. Thus, this decision has had adverse consequences for the promotion of scientific research about Russian military thought. Nevertheless, this research

⁵³ Charles King. "The Decline of International Studies: Why Flying Blind Is Dangerous?," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2015), 88.

contributes toward addressing this gap by examining the Russian Journal of *Military Thought* (*Voennaya Mysl*), Russian thinkers' books on strategy, and Western literature on Russian military thinking. Therefore, this study intends to make an innovative contribution to research in this field.

1.4. Thesis Statement

This dissertation will demonstrate that there is a significant degree of continuity in Russian military thought over the 20th century due to the resilience of fundamental military concepts. *To be conceptually fundamental* is inextricably linked to historical continuity. The primary objective of this study, then, is to investigate the historical continuity of fundamental military concepts in Russian military thought between 1856 and 2010. In this regard, this dissertation attempts to show that fundamental military concepts ensured continuity rather than change, despite the changing strategic, political, and historical contexts. Ultimately, this research argues that socio-political and strategic ruptures have had a marginal impact on Russian fundamental military concepts. Thus, the present study seeks to provide new insights into 'conceptual continuity' in Russian military thought by using the military history of ideas between the late 19th and early 21st centuries.

Another purpose of this research is to investigate the causes of conceptual resilience in Russian military thinking. The present study defends the argument that conceptual resilience is strongly correlated with concepts' (1) enduring strategic relevance and (2) integration into the system of conceptual thinking. By analyzing these two phenomena, this study seeks to make a significant contribution to research on the roots of historical continuity in Russian military thought.

In this thesis, the view will be presented that strategically essential concepts are prone to continuity in Russian strategic thinking. These concepts do not disappear under war's changing character, although their semantic use is affected. Semantic content is "a cognitive system that gives meaning to sounds".⁵⁴ Therefore, it refers to the capacity and capability of concepts to define reality. In other words, the semantic component of language is related to how the meaning of a word generates activity under a given particular socio-historical context.⁵⁵ Despite semantic alterations, concepts' strategic

⁵⁴ Marcelo Barbieri, "The Semantic Theory of Language," *Biosystems* 190 (April 2020), 1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

relevance may remain intact. Therefore, this study sets out to examine the interrelationship between various Russian war strategies and fundamental military concepts. In this framework, this study explores the ways in which these concepts are positioned or repositioned under different military strategies. Therefore, the present study combines strategic history with the history of ideas. Taken together, researching the continuity of a concept over time can be meaningful as long as a concept has practical strategic significance.

Secondly, it will be argued that the continuity of fundamental military concepts hinges on their interaction with each other. As a result, a certain degree of dependency and hierarchy among fundamental military concepts can promote continuity in Russian conceptual thinking. Nevertheless, fundamental military concepts are understood in the West individually rather than as the integral elements of a Russian system of thinking. Therefore, this study examines how these concepts fit together into a whole system of military theory and analysis.

This study's originality claim is based on an exploration of conceptual resilience in Russian military thinking, by examining in depth the history of ideas, enduring relevance, and the system of concepts. More importantly, this dissertation is original since it places Russian thinkers' seminal works at its center to identify how military concepts have emerged and evolved over time. In that regard, the research offers additional insights into the Western literature by researching conceptual resilience and the underlying reasons behind the continuity under varying different socio-historical and strategic contexts. This is an invitation to the Western scholarship to reconsider some of their main arguments regarding Russian military thought, as has been outlined in the introduction.

1.5. The methodology

1.5.1. Conceptual History

The methodology required for this research is conceptual history developed by Reinhart Koselleck.⁵⁶ Koselleck characterized conceptual history as:

⁵⁶ Reinhart Koselleck, "Social History and Conceptual History," *International Journal of Politics Culture and Society* 2:3 (1989)

"a part of historical research that does not understand language as an epiphenomenon of so-called reality [. . .] but rather as a methodologically irreducible guiding authority, without which experiences could not be had, and without which neither the natural nor social sciences could exist. For Conceptual History, language is on the one hand an indicator of encountered "reality" and on the other hand a factor in the process of finding reality."⁵⁷

The key premise of conceptual history is that "language and historical reality cannot be examined separately".⁵⁸ Reconstructing the past would mean remodelling language.⁵⁹ In this regard, this theory emphasizes the importance of concepts in rendering past experiences intelligible. Therefore, the state of knowledge cannot be limited to empirical observations or epistemological studies. Instead, concepts offer a more compelling explanation to reality if we view them historically.⁶⁰ For Koselleck, "the concept is connected to a word, but it is at the same time more than a word [...] Concepts are the concentrate of several substantial meanings."⁶¹ Thus, concepts are essential to the functioning and development of social science.⁶² Instead of investigating concepts from an epistemological perspective, Koselleck was enthusiastic about revealing the genealogy of concepts from a historic position.⁶³

One of the fundamental assumptions of conceptual history is that conceptual transformation is the result of social practice.⁶⁴ Thus, only by appreciating the socio-political context can a historian adequately comprehend a concept in a given time. In the same degree, conceptual history aims to counter two prevalent tendencies in historical research: the history of ideas that overlooks socio-political context and the history of events that disregard underlying structures.⁶⁵

Inspired by the scientific redefinition of the world at the turn of the 18th century, Koselleck argues that the transformation of knowledge does not create new words but

⁵⁷ Reinhart Koselleck, Stichwort: Begriffsgeschichte', in R. Koselleck (ed.), *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache* (Frankfurt, 2010), p. 99.

⁵⁸ John Gerring, "What makes a concept good? A critical framework for understanding concept formation in social science," *Polity* 31:3 (1999), p. 428.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 429.

⁶¹ Koselleck (2010), p. 85.

⁶² Gerring, p. 359.

⁶³ D. Timothy Goering, "Concepts, History and the Game of Giving and Asking for Reasons: A Defense of Conceptual History," *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 7 (2013), 435.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 430.

⁶⁵ Kai Vogelsang, "Conceptual History: A Short Introduction," *Oriens Extremus* 51 (2012), 9.

instead semantically alters existing words.⁶⁶ When the context changes, a concept needs to gain new semantic content to explain the new reality. Thus, one of the critical theses of conceptual history is that "language changes more slowly than the chain of events that it helps to set in motion and that it seeks to comprehend."⁶⁷ Thus, existing concepts obtain new semantic content to continue interpreting the world. Even though the socio-political context transforms, concepts do not disappear. Instead, their capacity of meaning undergoes a transformation. Times of socio-political transformations tend to be attended by semantic shifts because concepts are used to justify various assertions and give varying accounts of experiences.⁶⁸ Therefore, historians need to replace or supplement a concept's previous explanation (instead of replacing the concepts themselves) with a new one under the pressure of a changing socio-political context.⁶⁹ Taken together, conceptual history focuses on the history of concepts and considers how socio-political practices change concepts' semantic content.⁷⁰

According to conceptual history, concepts are not ahistorical and static but are instead products of their historical contexts.⁷¹ Koselleck posits that "concepts have different internal temporal structure than events."⁷² In this regard, concepts have growth rings similar to trees.⁷³ Each ring represents the content of a concept that applies to a particular period in history. Tracing the shift between two rings is comprehensible, provided that a researcher takes note of the structural change. Examining these shifts helps historians to validate different claims in history.⁷⁴ In doing so, conceptual history seeks to "retrace the history and the semantic shifts of concepts."⁷⁵ According to Koselleck, "each concept establishes a particular horizon for potential experience and conceivable theory, and in this way sets a limit."⁷⁶ In this regard, conceptual change results from shifts which occur in a structural framework. And so, while a word might remain the same, it can happen that a concept adopts a new functional role.⁷⁷ Overall, contextual change is inextricably linked with historical processes. Understanding the

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Reinhart Koselleck, "Linguistic Change and the History of Events," *The Journal of Modern History* 61:4 (December 1989), 660.

⁶⁸ Goering, p. 431.

⁶⁹ Koselleck, p. 664.

⁷⁰ Goering, p. 434

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 439.

⁷² *Ibid.* p. 433.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Reinhart Koselleck, 'Begriffsgeschichte and Social History', in R. Koselleck, ed., *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York, 2004), p. 86.

⁷⁷ Goering, 452.

history of a concept allows a historian to test and validate his hypotheses without resorting to empirical observations.

1.5.2. Why is conceptual history adopted for this research?

1.5.2.1. The advantages of conceptual history

Koselleck's methodological prescriptions are well suited for this study. First of all, this methodology allows the discovery of conceptual continuity and change in Russian military thought between the late 19th and early 21st centuries. The benefit of this methodology is that it pays attention to conceptual and semantic evolution by observing a significant number of ruptures in political history and their effects on Russian concepts. For this reason, historical research has been undertaken to trace the evolution of fundamental military concepts over time. Therefore, this methodology can be helpful in identifying changes in military concepts, their semantic use, and their interpretations produced in different strategic contexts.

Another advantage of conceptual history is that its premises form the groundwork to identify which concepts are fundamental and which are not. According to this methodology, fundamental concepts have assumed a more significant role in political and cultural discussions than other concepts.⁷⁸ According to Goering, the difference between fundamental concepts and a merely common concept hinges on "the historical record and the judgement of the historian."⁷⁹ The historical record is associated with a concept's ability to resist linguistic change throughout different historical periods. Therefore, it is related to *historical continuity*. On the other hand, the judgement of the historian will help determine how relevant and essential the concept is within the broader field of study in a particular period. The present research manifests itself in a concept's *capacity of meaning* to explain and shape existing strategic reality. In addition, a concept's capacity to influence the functionality of other concepts in a networked system of thinking makes this concept more critical than the others. Therefore, being conceptually fundamental is also linked with *enduring relevance* and *fitting in the genealogy of concepts*.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 434.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 435.

The premise of conceptual history is also applicable to Russian military thought especially in terms of classifying concepts. The present research demonstrates that some concepts have secured their place in Russian military publications throughout the twentieth century, and have played significant roles in realizing the key assumptions of war strategies. In Russian thinking, the employment of a strategy relies on the achievement of a particular concept's underlying propositions. For instance, the Russian *strategy of annihilation* relied excessively on attaining the suppositions of two concepts. These are *combat readiness* and *the initial period of war*. Ensuring a high state of combat readiness to win the war during its initial period was key to attaining the objectives of the strategy of annihilation.⁸⁰ At the same time, some concepts lose strategic relevance and diminish when the strategic context changes. Therefore, the study uses conceptual history in order to gain insights into conceptual continuity and change in Russian strategic thought.

Conceptual history is selected for its emphasis on the interrelation between historical and linguistic change. This methodology suggests that concepts' linguistic reflections feel the pressure of change when social and political structures break up.⁸¹ Political history comprises many ruptures, whereas linguistic history shows continuous and gradual adaptations.⁸² Therefore, contextual and linguistic continuities differ from one another. On the one hand, the contextual level refers to political history in which a significant number of ruptures can be observed. On the other hand, gradual and continuous transformations can occur at the linguistic level.⁸³ According to Koselleck, "the most challenging task is to establish an adequate relationship between all these various forms and levels of rupture."⁸⁴ The latest stage of Russian political history is an appropriate example of this. During the last century, Russian history witnessed two main socio-political ruptures: the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Much like the Russian revolution, the political transition from the Soviet Union into the Russian Federation in 1991 happened very suddenly. At the political level, it was a fast process. However, integration and transitioning from Soviet to Russian military thought required more time. Likewise, the present research attempts to show that the evidence for this changeover is inconclusive as the teachings of Soviet military science have endured even during the contemporary period. The concepts that

⁸⁰ Georgii Samoilovich Isserson, *The Evolution of Operational Art* (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013), 42

⁸¹ Koselleck (1989), p. 308

⁸² Koselleck (2006), p. 100.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

originated and evolved during the Soviet period have continued to affect Russian military theory.

This study will start, however, in the mid-nineteenth century to investigate the Russian military's conceptualization of warfare. The context is quite poignant; firstly, Imperial Russia's Crimean failure (1853-1856) unearthed a broad gap in the military theory of fighting a European war on different fronts. Subsequently, the Imperial Russian Army concentrated on exerting superior force at war's beginning to catch the enemy unprepared. The First World War, with its static-trench warfare characteristics, significantly changed Soviet views on operational art. During the interwar period, the focus of the Soviet military was to prepare and conduct front scale strategic offensive operations in-depth.⁸⁵ After the Second World War, the Soviet General Staff relied on strategic and theater nuclear weapons; however, it did not rule out the possibility of waging conventional war.⁸⁶ The wars of the 1990s and early 2000s (i.e. in Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Afghanistan) shifted the Russian General Staff's view on unleashing modern wars. According to the Russian military thinkers, these wars increased the likelihood of local and regional wars and the use of modern conventional weapon systems.⁸⁷ Therefore, this study systematically and chronologically analyzes the studies of prominent Russian military thinkers, such as Genrikh Antonovich Leer, Nicolai Petrovich Mikhnevich, Alexander Svechin, Georgii S. Isserson, Mikhail N. Tukhachevsky, Vasili D. Sokolovsky, Vasiliy Yefimovic Savkin, Gareyev, Makhmud Akhmedovich, and S.A. Bogdanov in order to identify continuity in military conceptual thinking.

These ruptures, namely the Russian revolution of 1917 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, and four wars, namely the Crimean War (1853-1856), the First World War, the Second World War, and modern (Western) wars of the 1990s and 2000s, can be distinguished from each other by their peculiar ideological, political, and strategic consequences. In particular, Imperial Russian, Marxist-Leninist, and contemporary Russian theory on war developed their own concepts or revisited the existing ones. The military thinkers of each period conceptualized warfare to attain the ideological and political objectives of political decision-makers. For instance, the political aim of spreading socialist ideology in the 1920s and 1930s brought an offensive strategy and its associated military concepts to the forefront. Moreover, changing strategic context

⁸⁵ V.K. Kopytko, "Evolution of Operational Art," *Military Thought* 17:1 (January 2008):208-209.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*

⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

from trench to manoeuvre warfare, from nuclear to modern conventional war, influenced the evolution of both military concepts and semantic contents over time. As the strategic context changed, some concepts became relevant, while others lost their significance.

Shifting socio-political and strategic contexts influenced the evolution of military concepts. However, some military concepts have remained linguistically intact. Despite this permanence, the functionality of military concepts has evolved at different speeds in different historical and strategic contexts. Although the meaning of military concepts has not changed, "the capacity of meaning and possibilities of semantic and syntactical use has been in constant transformation."⁸⁸ Thus, one of the major benefits of conceptual history is that it helps explore the sequential evolution of military concepts by taking note of their content, relevance, and interrelation.

Another advantage of using conceptual history is that it suffices to explain the Russian military's theory of war. Similar to the premises of conceptual history, Russian war theory described the war as a socio-historical phenomenon. Accordingly, the Soviet's military scientific effort was directed towards finding the "correlation between the content of a war and its historical era."⁸⁹ In addition to that, the material basis of war (i.e. weapons, economic order and production) had an influence on developing the concepts of war.⁹⁰ For instance, the invention of tanks during the 1920s brought the theory of *deep operations* to the forefront.⁹¹ Finally, Soviet military science took note of the shifts in war's socio-political conditions while examining transformations in Russian military concepts. Soviet thinkers believed that the changing socio-political conditions demanded careful consideration of qualitative changes in military theory.⁹² Therefore, conceptual history's key assumptions, i.e., regarding socio-political context and underlying structures, applies to Russian military thought.⁹³

Similar to the premises of conceptual history, Russian military thought pays attention to concepts' contextual and semantic change. In Russian military thinking, shifting conditions did not immediately give rise to a complete replacement of military

⁸⁸ Koselleck (2006), p. 106.

⁸⁹ Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 9.

⁹⁰ Savkin, pp. 5-6.

⁹¹ Isserson, p. 49.

⁹² Ibid, p. 97.

⁹³ Vogelsang, p. 9.

concepts.⁹⁴ Under new conditions old military concepts could drastically change their contents, and could sometimes disappear.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the preceding course of the historical process retained its influence for a specific time. According to a prominent Soviet thinker, Vasiliy Yefimovic Savkin, "[a]s new conditions develop, there is a preparation, and then completion of a leap in the development of military art, and the transition of quantity into quality."⁹⁶ In this regard, old concepts changed their content, whereas the form of expression remained stable. According to Savkin, military principles and concepts showed an unchangeable and eternal tendency in terms of the form of their expression (historical continuity); however, their content (semantic use and functionality) constantly changed under the shifting conditions of war.⁹⁷ Savkin's thesis resembles conceptual history's key premise: "while a word might remain the same, it can happen that a concept adopts a new functional role."⁹⁸ By drawing on Savkin's statement, this study argues that conceptual history is particularly useful in researching military conceptual change in Russian military thought.

1.5.2.2. The shortcomings of conceptual history

A shortcoming of conceptual history is that its premises do not offer any compelling explanation for the reasons for conceptual resilience. Conceptual resilience occurs when a concept does not change even though socio-historical context transforms. The fundamental assumption of conceptual history is that concepts undergo transformation under the pressure of socio-political changes.⁹⁹ This transformation is expected to occur in three ways. Firstly, concepts might be retired from use, while others can be introduced.¹⁰⁰ Secondly, a concept may endure, but it could still lose relevance for explaining the new reality. These are called merely common concepts.¹⁰¹ Thirdly, a concept could ensure both linguistic continuity and strategic relevance by gaining a new semantic content. Nevertheless, conceptual history has not provided insights into the causes of conceptual resilience. Conceptual history does not offer a model which specifies why some concepts survive and are adapted and others do not.

⁹⁴ Savkin, p.5.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 6

⁹⁸ Goering, p. 452.

⁹⁹ Koselleck (1989), p. 308

¹⁰⁰ Goering, p. 432.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 435.

This research has sought to address this shortcoming by conducting additional analyses on the roots of change and continuity. The first analysis aims to build a causal relationship between concepts' strategic relevance and continuity. It seeks to test the argument that the enduring relevance of concepts manifests itself in the form of the continuity of a strategic idea in Russian military thought over time. The second analysis aims to comprehend to what extent the interrelation among concepts promotes the continuity of a strategic view in Russian military thought. The research tries to discover to what degree varying combinations of concepts lead to the emergence of a system of thinking that fosters conceptual resilience.

1.5.3. The application of conceptual history into the study

Using the presuppositions proposed by conceptual history (*historical continuity, enduring relevance, and being part of the genealogy of concepts*), this study begins by identifying Russian fundamental military concepts. These concepts are the *initial period of war, combat readiness, forecasting, correlation of forces and methods, and reflexive control*. These concepts remain strategically relevant and have even assumed increasingly essential functions in strategic debates among Russian military thinkers compared to other concepts. Shifting conditions and the character of war have not cast a veil over them. Therefore, this study argues that these concepts fall into the category of fundamental military concepts due to their historical continuity, enduring relevance, and interrelation.

The second step in this process is specifying the socio-historical periods of investigation. This study aims to investigate the historical and content-wise evolution of fundamental military concepts in four different historical periods. They are the late imperial Russian period (1856-1917), the interwar period (1917-1941), the Cold War period (1945-1990), and the contemporary period (1990-2010). These periods, which are defined by ruptures or other episodes of major historical strategic change, have been determined by conceptual history's key underlying proposition, the history of ideas that regards socio-political context and the history of events that take note of underlying structures.¹⁰² As the context changes, it is expected to monitor conceptual or semantic change in fundamental military concepts.

¹⁰² Goering, 435.

Thirdly, the present research seeks to uncover how military concepts have emerged and evolved in Russian strategic thought by dedicating single chapters to each of the four socio-historical periods. Towards that end, this study aims to trace conceptual and semantic shifts in fundamental military concepts by taking note of the characteristics of each period. The advantage of organizing research in this manner is that it allows for an examination of the interrelation among military concepts during each socio-historical period.

Fourthly, the study discovers concepts' rise, content, and evolution throughout the four periods, based on theoretical observations. At this stage, the research aims to specify when a concept emerged, how it was initially defined and how it underwent transformation. In doing so, the study seeks to reveal the formal definitions of military concepts by drawing on Russian resources such as the *Russian Dictionary of Basic Military Terms* or military thinkers' major books on strategy. Thus, this research pays sufficient attention to the necessity of an agreement on the meaning attached to these concepts. Therefore, the purpose of this inquiry is to comprehend whether the Russian General Staff arrived at a consensus on the primary content of these concepts. Thereby, this research tries to understand whether concepts' definitions went through changes in the course of four different historical periods.

Fifthly, this study seeks to understand the causes of continuity. For this purpose, this part of the study aims to build a causal relationship between concepts' enduring relevance and continuity. This step seeks to understand to what degree strategic relevance promotes conceptual continuity in Russian strategic thinking. In this regard, this work explores the semantic content of concepts in different strategic contexts by relying on the history of ideas over the twentieth century. This investigation aims to increase understanding about whether a concept's strategic relevance has changed over time in shifting socio-political and strategic contexts.

By drawing on the teachings of conceptual history, three categories have been designed while classifying concepts' strategic relevance. These are: essentially contested, merely common or strategically essential. An essentially contested concept "involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users", even though there is an inexplicit agreement about the idea attached to this concept.¹⁰³ Therefore, these concepts are rife with disagreements in their application to a strategy. Merely common

¹⁰³ David Hillel Ruben, "W.B. Gallie and Essentially Contested Concepts," *Philosophical Papers* 39:2 (2010), 257.

concepts involve a widespread agreement about their content; however, they are strategically irrelevant. Therefore, military strategies do not predominantly rely on the application of these concepts. Finally, strategically essential concepts are crucial to building and implementing strategies. In addition, there is a widespread consensus about their meaning.

Sixthly, this study intends to comprehend to what extent the interrelation among concepts promotes the continuity of a strategic idea in Russian military thought. This step scrutinizes the origins of continuity by building a theoretical framework of the system of concepts. This investigation aims to comprehend to what extent the interrelation among concepts promotes conceptual resilience in Russian strategic thinking. The study reveals the genealogy of concepts in every period. Genealogy refers to the degree to which the concepts have historically formed the basis for a particular system of thinking strategically and also applies to relationships, family ties, and familiarity. Here, the interactions and interdependencies among fundamental military concepts will be outlined. Observing vertical and horizontal relations indicates the concept's increasing capacity and strength to affect other concepts. Deriving historical systems of concepts accedes to the underlying proposition of conceptual history: investigating concept-context relationship. In this regard, a concept is also part of the context for other military concepts.

Consequently, the observation of historical continuity, enduring relevance, and system of thinking indicates a certain degree of continuity in Russia's conceptualization of modern war. By drawing on the findings of the previous sections, this study seeks to examine why and how concepts can be resilient under the impact of socio-political and strategic ruptures in Russian strategic thought.

The primary sources of this research are, but are not limited to, the seminal works of Russian thinkers on strategy, war, and military concepts such as G.A. Leer's *Positive Strategy*, N. P. Mikhnevich's *The Basics of Strategy*, A. Svechin's *Strategy*, G.S. Isserson's *The Evolution of Operational Art*, and V.D. Sokolovsky's *Soviet Military Strategy*. In addition, this research undertakes a systematic analysis of the Russian Journal of Military Thought's (*Voennaya Mysl*) published editions after 1992. Next to that, the study has made use of secondary (Western) resources on Russian military thinking. These resources are largely based on qualitative analyses of Russian military resources. Secondary resources will fill the gap that emerged due to the incapacity to access or translate original Russian resources.

Military Thought is "the military-theoretical journal of the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence."¹⁰⁴ The antecedents of the Journal date back to the 1910s. After the Russian Revolution, the Soviet General Staff issued an order to publish a weekly military scientific journal under the name of 'Trade of War' (*Voennaie delo*).¹⁰⁵ Over the course of decades, the Journal's name changed and turned into *Military Thought*. The journal remained classified until 1989, and, thus, it is nearly impossible to find these editions.¹⁰⁶ It is only after the end of the Cold War that the Journal's post-1992 editions have become accessible to Western scholars and practitioners.¹⁰⁷ The original Russian version of this journal is sold in Moscow. The US based East View Information Services provides translated version of this journal by use of subscription-based pricing model.

Generally speaking, this quarterly journal involves the studies of Russian military personnel on war, strategy, and military science. The Journal aims to develop Russian military science and advise the Russian supreme bodies on war theory and practice problems.¹⁰⁸ In particular, previously published articles of the Russian Journal of Military Thought (*Voennaya Mysl*) between 1990 and 2010 have revealed the evolution of military concepts. Nevertheless, the investigation of the Journal's post-2010 editions cannot be carried out.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, the study is limited to the period between 1853 and 2010. Nevertheless, this restraint does not endanger the aim of the present research. Firstly, the sole purpose of this research is to employ conceptual history as a methodology to investigate whether Russian military concepts have undergone linguistic and semantic (content-wise) transformation.¹¹⁰ Towards that end, the period between 1856 and 2010 has provided sufficient insights into scrutinizing the conceptual evolution of Russian military thinking. Considering the timeframe incorporating late Imperial Russian, Soviet and contemporary Russian periods, putting post-2010 out of the scope does not hinder researching conceptual evolution of Russian military thinking. Secondly, research findings have brought sufficient insights

¹⁰⁴ "The 90th Anniversary of the Voennaia Mysl Journal," *Military Thought* 17:2, (April 2008): 1.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ East View Information Services webpage on Russian Journal of Military Thought, <https://www.eastview.com/resources/journals/voennaia-mysl/> (accessed 10 February 2022)

¹⁰⁷ East View Press's webpage on Russian Journal of Military Thought, <https://www.eastviewpress.com/resources/journals/military-thought/> (accessed 29 September 2021)

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ This research has gained access to this Journal's archive between 2000 and 2010 in coordination with the Leiden and Utrecht University Libraries. In mid-2019, an official request was made to the Leiden University Library to purchase the Journal's post-2010 editions. Due to the financial limitations, Leiden University could not afford to buy the issues between 2010 and 2020. The study has attempted to get access to the post-2010 editions through other universities; however, it has been noticed that European Universities are not subscribed to Military Thought.

¹¹⁰ Reinhart Koselleck, "Social History and Conceptual History," *International Journal of Politics Culture and Society* 2:3 (1989)

into understanding Russia's approaches to waging modern war. Especially, chapter-6 focuses on the doctrinal and conceptual makeover of Russian military thought between 1990 and 2010. Taken together, the period between 1853 and 2010 provides a sufficient timeframe to understand the historical evolution and continuity of Russian military conceptual thinking.

The Russian Journal of Military Thought is particularly important, as there are relatively few major resources about Russian military thought after the 1990s compared to previous historical periods. Thereby, a large volume of published studies has revealed the emergence of several contrasting opinions on military concepts. These editions shed light on how military concepts underwent another round of transformation after the 1990s.

The recent editions of the Journal have filled the niche of understanding how the legacy of Imperial Russian and Soviet military thought prevailed in the contemporary period. For the purpose of this study, 340 articles of this Journal have been investigated out of 40 quarterly issues. These articles have been selected based on their relevance to strategy and military concepts. The authors of these articles are medium to high-ranked military personnel, ranging from captain to general, at the Russian Federation Academy of Military Sciences. Out of 340, 43 had content that was directly relevant because they were about or used fundamental military concepts while discussing military doctrine and strategy. The remainder of articles has also been investigated. However, their content is outside of the scope of this research. To that end, this study uses the Russian Journal of Military Thought to investigate how the Russian Chief of General Staff thinks about concepts' historical continuity, enduring relevance and interrelation.

In summary, this study aims to offer some important insights into Russian military thought by investigating the extent to which fundamental military concepts privileged continuity over change, predominantly throughout the twentieth century. Furthermore, this research seeks to make a major contribution to the causes of historical (dis)continuity in Russian approaches to modern warfare. For this purpose, the overall structure of the dissertation takes the form of eight chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. The next chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the literature review. Subsequently, each socio-historical period will be examined in-depth to understand how military concepts emerged and evolved. The findings of each period will be discussed and debated extensively in a chapter dedicated to analysis. Finally,

the research will present research findings within the broader context of Russian and Western military thought in the concluding chapter.