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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-2

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on Russian military thought, in which conceptualizing Russia's approaches to modern war has been a frequent focus. However, Western scholars have tended to rely on their own conceptual frameworks while examining Russia's approaches to modern warfare.¹ Nonetheless, understanding Russian theories of war based on Western interpretations of Russian thinkers' ideas on war has received considerable scholarly attention in Western literature.² To that end, this chapter first gives an overview of the Western historiography on Russian military thought and concepts before turning to the Russian historiography.

2.2. A Western historiography of Russian military thought

The existing western literature on Russian military thought is extensive, although it focuses mainly on the 20th century. To begin with, a considerable amount of literature has been published on how the late Imperial Russian military struggled to command mass armies to fight European powers and Japan on different fronts.³ These studies have mostly emphasized the economic, technological, and organizational backwardness of the Tsarist Army. In comparison, only a relatively small body of literature is concerned with the evolution of Russian military thinking.⁴ In different studies, Kerry L.

¹ 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 Analysing Russia's Military Actions in Ukraine?," *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review* 14 (2015-2016).

² Ofer, Fridman, *Russian 'Hybrid Warfare' Resurgence and Politicization* (London: Hurst & Company, 2018); Mark Galeotti, "The Mythical 'Gerasimov Doctrine' and the language of threat," *Critical Studies in Security* 7:2 (2019) ; 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/>.

³ William Fuller, "The Imperial Army," In *The Cambridge History of Russia*, ed. Dominic Lieven (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); P. V. Wahldt, *Military Thought in Imperial Russia*. (Michigan: Indiana University, 1966); F.A. Miller, *Dmitrii Miliutin and the Reform in Russia* (Charlotte: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968).

⁴ Kerry Lee Hines, *Russian Military Thought: Its Evolution through War and Revolution, 1860-1918* (Washington: The George Washington University, 1998); B.W. Menning, *Bayonets Before the Bullets: The Imperial Russian army 1861-1914*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) ; David Alan Rich, *The Tsar's Colonels: Professionalism, Strategy, and Subversion in Late Imperial Russia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Richard. W Harrison, *The development of Russian-Soviet operational art, 1904-1937, and the Imperial Legacy in Soviet Military Thought* (Kings College: London, 1994).

Hines, Bruce W. Menning, and Richard Harrison examine how the Imperial Russian Chief of Staff filled the broad gap between military theory and practice of waging modern war. These studies concentrate predominantly on how G.A. Leer and N.P Mikhnevich endeavoured to generate a unified military doctrine by designing war-winning principles of war. On the other hand, David A. Rich reveals the impact of Clausewitzian military theory on Russian military thinking.

The academic literature on early Soviet military thought pays particular attention to individual military thinkers such as Mikhail V. Frunze, Georgii S. Isserson, and Mikhail N. Tukhachevsky.⁵ These studies reveal the Marxist-Leninist base of new strategic thinking and how it turned into military doctrine with its offensive character under the theory of deep operations. For instance, one study by Walter Darnell Jacobs scrutinized Bolshevik political leader Michael Frunze's ideas on military concepts, based on Marxist thought and his experiences in the Russian Civil War in the 1920s.⁶ Likewise, a detailed examination of General G.S. Isserson's theory of deep operations has been carried out by Steve J. Main.⁷ Next, Lawrence X. Clifford and Sally W. Stoecker have outlined Tuchkachevsky's approach to implementing the theory of deep operations in the 1930s.⁸ Finally, a relatively small body of literature is concerned with the Tsarist Army legacy in the Red Army. In this regard, John Erikson and Jacob W. Kipp have carried out investigations on the ideas of Tsarist Thinkers and how they influenced the evolution of Soviet military thinking.⁹

Much of the Western literature on Soviet military thought during the Cold War emphasizes the Red Army's approach to waging nuclear war.¹⁰ These works focus on Soviet nuclear strategic doctrines and their change over time. With respect to the period

⁵ David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art: In Pursuit of Deep Battle* (Kansas: Frank Cass, 2005); Richard W. Harrison, *Architect of Soviet Victory in World War II: The Life and Theories of G.S. Isserson* (London: McFarland & Company, 1952).

⁶ Walter Darnell Jacobs, *Frunze: The Soviet Clausewitz 1885-1925* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).

⁷ Steven J. Main. "You Cannot Generate Ideas by Orders: The Continuing Importance of Studying Soviet Military History—G. S. Isserson and Russia's Current Geo-Political Stance," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 29:1 (2016)

⁸ Sally W. Stoecker, *Forging Stalin's Army Marshall Tukhachevsky and the Politics of Military Innovation* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998) and Lawrence X. Clifford, *Tukhachevsky and Blitzkrieg* (Boston: UMI, 2004)

⁹ John Erikson, *The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History 1918-1941* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962) and Jacob W Kipp "General-Major A.A. Svechin and Modern Warfare: Military History and Military Theory", In *Strategy*, ed Kent. D. Lee (Minnesota, East View Information Services, 1991)

¹⁰ Lawrence D. Freedman and Jeffrey Michaels, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (London, Palgrave Macmillan: 2019); Robin Higham and Frederick W. Kagan, *The Military History of the Soviet Union* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Colin S. Gray, "Soviet nuclear strategy and new military thinking" in *Soviet Military Thinking and New Nuclear Strategy*, ed. D. Leebaert and T. Dickinson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia makes war: Soviet Military Doctrine* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954).

after the mid-1970s, William E. Odom discovers the shift in Soviet military thinking from nuclear to combined arms in parallel with the impact of Western technological superiority on conventional weapons.¹¹ After the 1990s, considerable literature has grown up around the theme of Russian military reform. Nevertheless, research on the subject has been mostly restricted to cognitive and organizational transformation.¹² Other studies have centred on contextual and socio-political change while scrutinizing Russian military transformation.¹³

Such approaches, however, have failed to address the doctrinal and conceptual transformation of Russian military thought. Therefore, to date, Western research has not determined how political and strategic ruptures during the 20th century have influenced the conceptual evolution of Russian military thinking. Western research is limited, providing only historical snapshots of military concepts rather than engaging with the historical roots and evolution of Russian military thought. As a consequence, little is understood about how the military concepts of Russian strategic culture have affected the military doctrinal transformation.

2. 3. A Western historiography of Russian military concepts

Despite its general limitations, there is clearly substantial Western literature that engages with Russian military concepts. In this regard, a large body of literature focuses on particular military concepts under a strategic framework. Furthermore, much of the literature pays specific attention to the employment of concepts within certain strategies, whereas these studies do not examine their content and semantic use. The main concepts analyzed so far are the initial period of war, combat readiness, correlation, forecasting, and reflexive control.

¹¹ William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹² Anne C. Aldis and Roger N. McDermott, *Russian Military Reform: 1992-2002* (Ebsco Publishing: 2003); Micheal Orr, "Reform and the Russian Ground Forces, 1992–2002", in *Russian Military Reform: 1992-2002*, eds. Anne C. Aldis, Roger N. McDermott, 122-138 (Ebsco Publishing: 2003); Alexei G. Arbatov, "Military Reform: From Crisis to Stagnation" in *The Russian Military Power and Policy* eds. Steven Miller and Dmitri Trenin, 95-119 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Bettina Renz, "Russian Military Reform," *The RUSI Journal* 155:1 (March 2010)

¹³ Pavel K. Baev, "The Trajectory of the Russian Military: Downsizing, Degeneration, and Defeat", in *The Russian Military Power and Policy* eds. Steven Miller and Dmitri Trenin, 43-72 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Steven E. Miller, "Moscow's Military Power: Russia's Search for Security in an Age of Transition" in *The Russian Military: Power and Policy*, eds. Steven Miller and Dmitri Trenin, 1-42 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), Marcel de Haas "Russia's Military Reforms: Victory after 20 years of Failure?," *Clingendael*:5 (November 2011).

Kerry L. Hines focuses on the rise and evolution of *preparatory operations* and *combat readiness* under Leer's strong advocacy for the war of annihilation. Hines emphasizes that the preparatory operations allowed the Imperial Russian Army to ensure superiority at the beginning of war.¹⁴ In another study, Ofer Fridman reveals how applying Leer's *superiority* at the beginning of war principle varies infinitely depending on the constantly changing environment.¹⁵ Jacob W. Kipp has investigated Alexander Svechin's significant contribution to designing the initial period of war in the 1920s.¹⁶ Svechin was a proponent of the attrition strategy and did not believe that decisive operations would take place during the IPW.¹⁷ David Harrison reveals how Isserson's theory of deep operations incorporated the initial period of war and combat readiness. According to Harrison, the IPW offers combat-ready attack echelons to perform manoeuvres along the flanks of a positional front.¹⁸ Likewise, a detailed examination of General G.S. Isserson's ideas on the IPW and combat readiness has been carried out by Steve J. Main.¹⁹ Finally, a qualitative study by Lennart Samuelson analyzes the economic aspect of Tuckhachevsky's approach to combat readiness and mobilization.²⁰

Raymond L. Garthoff's investigations into military concepts neglect conceptual context. His pioneering book examines the place of Stalin's permanently operating factors in Soviet military doctrine. Still, he overlooks older concepts developed by Tsarist officers in the Red Army, such as the IPW and combat readiness.²¹ Moreover, this study does not investigate the military concepts inspired by Lenin's dialectic-materialist approach to waging war. Therefore, Soviet thinkers' obsession with Stalinist dogma, especially after the mid-1930s, prevented Garthoff from examining other thinkers on military concepts. In 1963, Garthoff carried out another investigation on military concepts, focusing on the impact of post-Stalin modernisation in Soviet strategic thinking in the mid-1950s.²² At that time, the Soviet Army's focus shifted to not losing the strategic initiative during the initial period of a nuclear war. As a result, Garthoff points to the rising significance of the initial period of war and combat readiness in winning a nuclear war. However, Garthoff's studies are not connected to each other, especially regarding

¹⁴ Hines, p.106

¹⁵ Ofer Fridman, *Strategiya: The Foundations of the Russian art of Strategy* (London: Hurst&Company, 2021), 54.

¹⁶ Kipp (1991)

¹⁷ Kokoshin, p. 64.

¹⁸ Harrison, p. 67.

¹⁹ Main (2016)

²⁰ Lennart Samuelson, *Plan's for Stalin's War Machine: Tukhachevskii and Military Economic Planning, 1925-1941* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000).

²¹ Garthoff (1954)

²² Sokolovsky (1963)

military concepts. These studies do not establish conceptual linkages between the interwar and Cold War periods.

During the Cold War, John G. Hines has studied how the Soviet General Staff re-periodized its war design as the *initial* and *subsequent* period of war during the late 1950s by prioritizing the former over the latter.²³ As a result, the IPW became the decisive period of a short nuclear war in the 1960s. Furthermore, Lawrence D. Freedman, Jeffrey Michaels and Steven Zaloga have identified the details of Soviet initial nuclear operations. According to these studies, the IPW of Russian strategic design relied on demonstrating resilience and inflicting a counter-attack in case of an enemy surprise nuclear attack.²⁴ After the 1990s, Stephen Covington has examined the IPW in his study about the elements of Russian strategic culture.²⁵ According to Covington, Russian strategic culture is obsessed with winning the initial period of a future war under contemporary war strategies.²⁶ Likewise, Timothy Thomas scrutinizes Russian military thinkers' ideas on the IPW after the 1990s.²⁷ Thomas concludes that the Russian General Staff's focus has shifted to winning the initial period of local or regional wars after the 2000s.²⁸

The literature also pays attention to two interrelated Russian concepts: forecasting and correlation of forms and methods. Jacob W. Kipp first examined the rise, evolution and content of these concepts in an article in 1992. According to Kipp, the knowledge of societal laws was meant to inspire Soviet thinkers to foresee the trends and qualitative leaps in the character of warfare.²⁹ In another study, Timothy Thomas examines correlation in the context of how the Soviet military has constructed strategies by correlating political, economic, scientific, military, ideological, and other factors since the 1970s.³⁰ Thomas reveals that the correlation of forces also holds an important place in contemporary Russian thought, especially in terms of the correlation of direct and

²³ John G. Hines, *Soviet Intentions: Volume II Soviet Post Cold-War Testimonial Evidence* (McLean VA: BDM Federal, 1995), p. 41.

²⁴ Steven J. Zaloga, "Soviet/Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces", 1945-2000, in *The Military History of the Soviet Union*, ed. Robin Higham and Frederick W. Kagan (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 208; Lawrence D. Freedman and Jeffrey Michaels, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (London, Palgrave Macmillan: 2019), 185.

²⁵ Stephen R. Covington, "The Culture of Strategic Thought Behind Russia's Modern Approaches to Warfare," *Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs* (2016): 36-38.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Timothy Thomas, "Thinking Like a Russian Officer," *The Foreign Military Studies Office* (April 2016).

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 15.

²⁹ Jacob Kipp, "The other side of the hill: Soviet military foresight and forecasting", in *Soviet nuclear strategy and new military thinking*, ed. D. Leebaert and T. Dickinson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 251.

³⁰ Thomas, pp. 8-9.

indirect actions.³¹ In another study, Stoecki investigates the role of correlation of forces and combat readiness in the 1970s under the Soviet conventional theory of deep operations.³² Stoecki analyzes how enhanced combat readiness could change the correlation of forces favouring the Soviet military. Furthermore, he emphasizes that a high state of combat readiness was crucial for attaining desired superiority over the enemy.³³ However, Stoecki does not analyze thoroughly how these concepts operated under nuclear war strategies.

One final military concept which has drawn western scholars' attention is reflexive control. Timothy Thomas focuses on this concept in a 2004 study within the context of information superiority.³⁴ According to Thomas, reflexive control helps the Russian military transmit motives and reasons to influence the enemy decisions.³⁵

In another study, Timothy Thomas also scrutinizes Russian military thinkers' ideas on the IPW, correlation, and forecasting from the 1970s onwards, developing a conceptual framework of how a Russian officer evaluates a military and geopolitical situation using these concepts.³⁶ Unfortunately, this approach is unsatisfactory because Thomas does not take account of these concepts' historical origins and evolution before the 1970s, a crucial oversight as most of these concepts emerged between the 1870s and 1930s. In addition to that, Thomas treats these concepts individually and does not investigate the interrelation among them. Therefore, Thomas does not treat military concepts as the integral elements of a broader system of thinking throughout the 20th century.

The historiography of Western resources indicates that the mechanisms that underpin continuity in Russia's conceptualisation of warfare primarily over the twentieth century are not fully understood. Hardly any scholar has systematically researched Russian military thought over extended periods of time, instead focusing on particular, historically-limited issues.³⁷ As a result, 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. Therefore, such approaches have

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Fritz Stoecki, "The correlation of forces and success in overcoming anti-tank defences," *The Journal of Soviet Military Studies* 1:2 (1998).

³³ *Ibid.* p. 260.

³⁴ Timothy, L. Thomas, "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17 (2004).

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 246.

³⁶ Thomas (2016)

³⁷ Thomas (2016); Kokoshin (1998); Thomas (2004).

narrowed down Russian military thought to the snapshots of how military concepts operate separately under specific conditions. Finally, much uncertainty still exists about how conceptual peculiarity influenced military transformation when Russia faced socio-historical and strategic ruptures.

2.4. A Russian historiography of Russian military thought and military concepts

There are relatively few Russian studies on the history of their own military thought. Since the codification and institutionalization of military concepts date back to the 1970s, the generalizability of much published Russian research on this issue before this date is problematic. Before the 1970s, Russian literature on military concepts was restricted to sections of leading Russian military thinkers' books on strategy.³⁸ Thus, these works sought to fulfil the need to generate a unified military doctrine. In doing so, Russian military theorists revised military concepts in order to help bridge the gap between military theory and practice. After the 1970s, the first serious discussions and analyses of Russian military conceptual thinking emerged with the studies of Vasiliy Yefisovich Savkin, who served on the Soviet Frunze Military Academy in the 1970s.

Savkin was the first to demonstrate that Russian military concepts emerged and evolved in compliance with the ideological objectives of political leadership, the economic order of the Soviet Union, and the material means of waging war.³⁹ Only from his work did the Russians make the connection between the socio-historical context and military conceptual change. Savkin further unravels doctrinal development in the face of qualitative leaps in the development of military art. In his study, these strategic leaps were expected to change the relevance and content of military concepts. Nevertheless, Savkin demonstrates that old military concepts sustain their influence on military thinking even after shifts and revolutions in strategy and strategic context. He therefore concludes that military concepts show both resilience and change as their content is constantly upgraded under new socio-historical and strategic contexts.⁴⁰ After Savkin's

³⁸ Genrikh Antonovich Leer, *The Method of Military Science: Strategy, Tactic and Military History* (St. Petersburg, 1894) and Genrikh Antonovich Leer, *Positive Strategy (Part 1)* (Saint Petersburg, 1877); Nikolai Petrovich Mikhnevich, *The Basics of Strategy (Osnoviy Strategii)* (Saint Petersburg, 1913), 24; Andrei A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought 1917-91* (London: MIT Press, 1995), 41-42; Georgii Samoilovich Isserson, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013), 44.

³⁹ 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. 5-6.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

study, Russian military thinkers have tended pragmatically to amend their military concepts' in accordance with changing operational and social environments, while still recognizing their general and continued relevance.

In the 1970s, several Russian strategists carried out a variety of investigations on military concepts in conformity with Savkin's work. In 1974, S.P. Ivanov published a book entitled *The Initial Period of War*.⁴¹ In this book, Ivanov presents the historical evolution of the IPW from the late 19th century until the end of the Second World War, examining how the IPW influenced the Russian military's strategic entry operations by taking note of the peculiarities of war conditions, theoretical evolution of broader military thinking, and enemy approaches to carrying out entry operations. However, he does not pay attention to the evolution of the IPW during the nuclear period. Likewise, Yu. V. Chuyev, and Yu. B. Mikhaylov wrote a book on *Forecasting in Military Affairs: A Soviet View* in 1975.⁴² In this book, a detailed examination of forecasting's conceptual evolution is conducted to identify trends in the evolution of warfare. Chuyev and Mikhaylov present an overview of how Marxist-Leninists teachings on war in the 1920s specified the evolution of forecasting up until the 1970s.⁴³ Furthermore, this study puts forecasting in the centre while discovering the linkages between socio-historical patterns and the evolution of Russian military thinking. Due to its comparative thoroughness, this work has been the basis for subsequent research on forecasting.

A decade later, Andrei A. Kokoshin employed Savkin's presuppositions to Soviet military concepts in a seminal work entitled *Soviet Strategic Thought:1917-91*. Kokoshin demonstrates how several military concepts emerged, evolved, and operated under various Soviet military strategies during the entire Soviet period.⁴⁴ First and foremost, Kokoshin investigates the theoretical evolution of the initial period of war since the 1920s from a historical perspective. Accordingly, Kokoshin demonstrates how Svechin's conceptualisation of the IPW shifted the Soviet General Staff's focus to attaining superiority at the very beginning of war on the ground and in the air.⁴⁵ Afterwards, Kokoshin demonstrates the shift in the IPW's semantic content from the *shaping* into

⁴¹ S.P. Ivanov, *The Initial Period of War*. Translated and published under the auspices of The United States Air Force. (Washington: The U.S. Government Printing Office Moscow 1974).

⁴² Yu. V. Chuyev, and Yu. B. Mikhaylov, *Forecasting in Military Affairs: A Soviet View* (Moscow: Ministry of Defence 1975) published by (Washington: The US Government Printing Office), 24. Translated by the DGIS Multilingual Section Translation Bureau, Ottawa, p. 23.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 22.

⁴⁴ Andrei A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought 1917-91* (London: MIT Press, 1995), 86-87.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 122-124.

decisive period of war after the 1950s.⁴⁶ Despite his extensive examination of the IPW, Kokoshin surprisingly neglects the historical analysis of other key concepts. Instead, he employs combat readiness and correlation of forces while explaining Soviet war strategies. In this regard, Kokoshin shows how the Soviet theory of deep operations was put in place by creating special combat-ready frontline units in the 1930s.⁴⁷ Likewise, Kokoshin points out Soviet leadership's emphasis on nuclear firepower in the 1950s as a means of increasing the Red Army's general combat readiness posture.⁴⁸ Next, Kokoshin analyzes the Soviet leadership's option for combined arms formations between the 1970s and 1980s by correlation.⁴⁹ Therefore, Kokoshin's study does not provide a full account of the theoretical contents and historical evolution of these concepts, particularly of combat readiness and correlation.

After the 1990s, Savkin's ideas on military conceptual resilience have received criticism as Russian military thinkers discussed whether traditional concepts of war had become obsolete. A growing body of Russian military literature has resulted which focuses on reconceptualizing war based on newly emerging trends in warfare.⁵⁰ This body of opinion (the modernists), led by I.N. Vorobyov and V.A. Kiselev, rejects the Russian military's long-standing critical-historical approach, which prioritized time-tested concepts and principles of past wars, in favour of a new theory of warfare based on new technologies and innovation.⁵¹ Unlike the proponents of the historical outlook, these thinkers attach great importance to forecasting future war's new character.⁵² On the other hand, the traditionalist school of thought has continued to use time-tested concepts and means of Russian strategic culture while adapting them to the new operational environment. This body of opinion, led by Makhmud A. Gareyev and S.B. Ivanov, seeks to address modern challenges by employing the conceptual schemes of the previous periods.⁵³ Due to their violent-centric and direct approaches to war, the traditionalists advocate for the continuity of old military concepts.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 118.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 126-139.

⁵⁰ S.N. Konopatov, "Traditional Concept of War is Obsolete," *Military Thought* 10:1 (January 2001): 62.

⁵¹ I.N. Vorobyov and V.A. Kiselev, "On the Innovative Development Concept in the Armed Forces", *Military Thought*, 18:3 (July 2009): 52.

⁵² I.N. Vorobyov, "Military Futurology", *Military Thought* 17:2 (April 2008): 164.

⁵³ M.A. Gareyev, "Certain Typical Features of Future Wars," *Military Thought* 12:2 (March 2003):188; S.B. Ivanov, "The Military Command and Control System Today and Ways of Improving It in Light of New Defence Tasks and Changes in the Character of Future Wars," *Military Thought* 13:4 (April 2004): 191 and A.V. Suprayaga, "Wars of the 21st Century," *Military Thought* 11:4, (July 2002).

Much of the contemporary literature on Russian military thought pays particular attention to methodological approaches to studying war. In the context of that, military intellectual discussions have centred on treating war as a military science or operational art. Since the late 19th century, traditional Russian military theory has investigated military conceptual matters under military science instead of operational art due to the influence of positivism on military matters.⁵⁴ Positivism manifested itself in the form of identifying laws of war, in a manner similar to that used for the laws of other sciences. Therefore, the vast majority of Russian conceptual studies devoted their attention to institutionalizing military principles of war and their attendant concepts under military science rather than to exploring the overall histories of their individual and collective developments.⁵⁵ On the other hand, a relatively small body of Russian military literature after the 1990s is concerned with developing new concepts based on the premises of operational art.⁵⁶ For instance, Ye.V. Vasilyev has questioned the positivist notion that observing the principles of war could determine war's outcome. As a result, Vasilyev concludes, "principles of military art are in no fixed order or priority because the importance of one or another principle can be appreciably changed under different conditions."⁵⁷ Despite this outlook, the advocates of operational art have still relied on military principles and concepts of war while designing military strategies and defence plans. This is mostly because some principles and concepts of war, as the core elements of Russian strategic culture, have long been considered indispensable for theory and practice.

The examination of Russian literature demonstrates that Russian military thought treats military concepts as a socio-historical phenomenon. 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 investigates military concepts by taking future war's changing character as a reference point. These different outlooks have promoted discussions within Russian General Staff on changing and updating concepts' content or integrating new concepts into Russian military doctrine.

⁵⁴ I.N. Vorobyov and V.A. Kiselev. "Military Science at Present Stage," *Military Thought* (English Version) 17:3 (July 2008).; Yu. P. Gladyshev and G.V. Ivanov, "Military Science and Military Systemology," *Military Thought* (English Version) 14:4 (October 2005); Ye.V. Vasilyev, "Principles of Military Art," *Military Thought* (English Version) 14:2 (April 2005):136 and "The main principles of Combat," Editor, *Military Thought* 11:4, (July 2002).

⁵⁵ Danilenko, I.S. "From Applied Military Science to a Basic Science of Warfare: Part 1," *Military Thought* (English Version) 17:4 (October 2008 October 2008); Gladyshev, Yu.P. and G.V. Ivanov, "Military Science and Military Systemology," *Military Thought* (English Version) 14:4 (October 2005); Tyushkevich, S.A. "Military Science and Russia's Security," *Military Thought* (English Version) 10:3 (March 2001).

⁵⁶ Ye.V. Vasilyev, "Principles of Military Art," *Military Thought* (English Version) 14:2 (April 2005):136

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 138.

2.5. A Synthesis of the literature

Russian military theoretical discussions concentrate on whether newly emerging conditions necessitate a complete or content-wise revision of military conceptual studies, revolving around whether the adherence to military theory's ideological and technological basis should be relinquished when war's character changes. In this regard, taking past or 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 the Western way of war.

The Western literature has yet to engage with the actual evolution of Russian military thinking, particularly of its core concepts. Most research has remained narrow in focus, while dealing with a snapshot of how a concept is defined and employed in a particular period. Thus, Western research tends to focus on a specific period demarcated by socio-political and strategic ruptures. Furthermore, there is a large volume of published studies that describes the ideas of individual military thinkers. Inevitably, it limits the study's focus to a particular period. Analyzing one specific period affects how the concepts' relevance is understood. Constraining concepts' meaning and functionality to particular timeframe influences how the concepts are systematized. Furthermore, Western literature has not adequately investigated the conceptual evolution of Russian military thought by taking note of the socio-political and strategic ruptures. Most Western literature on military concepts does not clarify how military concepts change in response to geopolitical and strategic changes. Thus, a systematic understanding of how military concepts' semantic content changes under different strategic contexts is still lacking.⁵⁸ Finally, previously published studies indicate that military concepts are understood more or less individually in the West.⁵⁹ Very little attention is paid to how these concepts fit together into a whole system of Russian military theory.

2.6. Conclusion

⁵⁸ Kokoshin (1998), Stoecker (2004) and Main (2016).

⁵⁹ Kipp (1992); Erikson (1962); Odom (2000) and Thomas (2016).

The overall structure of the study takes the form of eight chapters, including the introduction (chapter 1) and the literature review (chapter 2). Major chapters on fundamental military concepts have been organised chronologically. Thus, the study aims to examine the semantic evolution of military concepts under different socio-historical and strategic contexts. They are the late imperial Russian period, 1856-1917 (chapter 3), the interwar period, 1917-1941 (chapter 4), the Cold War period, 1945-1991 (chapter 5), and the contemporary period, 1990-2010 (chapter 6). These periods have been determined in accordance with conceptual history's underlying propositions. Thus, they are demarcated by two socio-political ruptures, namely the Russian revolution of 1917 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, and four wars: the Crimean War, the First World War, the Second World War, and the modern wars of the 1990s and 2000s. The seventh chapter presents the research findings by carrying out detailed analyses on the causes of conceptual resilience. Finally, chapter 8 discusses the main research findings by making a comparative analysis of Western and Russian military thought.