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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-4

The Rise and Evolution of Soviet Military Concepts During the Interwar Period: 1917-1941

This chapter aims to explore the rise and evolution of fundamental military concepts in Soviet military thought between 1917 and 1941. The research will examine the ideas of the leaders of the socialist revolution, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Mikhail Vasilyevich Frunze, an influential Soviet military strategist Georgii Samoilovich Isserson, the leading Tsarist officers in the Red Army, Alexander Andreyevich Svechin and Mikhail Nikolayevich Tukhachevsky. This study also investigates the interrelationship between fundamental military concepts and various Soviet war strategies. In this regard, the strategy of deep operations and Soviet war planning before the Second World War will be scrutinized as part of the larger historical narrative. Overall, the research will identify that Soviet military science developed forecasting and correlation to predict a war's character and outcome. The prevailing forecasts of the 1920s and early 1930s advocated for unleashing a war of destruction. On the eve of the Second World War, forecasts shifted to waging a war of attrition. Next to that, the continuity of Tsarist military heritage promoted the evolution of the initial period of war (IPW) and combat readiness in Soviet military science. The research concludes that the concept of forecasting determined to a significant degree the functionality of the IPW, combat readiness, and correlation under various Soviet strategies.

4.1. Introduction

The Civil War of 1917 created a socio-political rupture in Russian history. It also affected Soviet military thought. In conformity with the influence of Marxist-Leninist currents, the tendency to replace the *Russianness* of military thought with *Sovietness* came to the fore. This transition was predominantly influenced by various attempts to form a Soviet military science. In this regard, the Soviet General Staff commenced a complete re-examination of military matters. One of the purposes of this process was to redefine or replace the military principles and concepts of Imperial Russian military thought. Although Imperial Russian Army officers in the Red Army ensured the permanence of Tsarist military heritage, these ideas nevertheless came into effect in a different socio-historical context, overshadowed by the ideas of socialist thinkers on warfare. Thus, early Soviet military science merged late Imperial military thought with Bolshevik

leaders' opinions on warfare. In this regard, the concepts of the late Imperial Russian period underwent a transformation in the 1920s and 1930s under the Soviet approaches to waging war.

One of the most well-known former-Tsarist officers of the Red Army, Alexander Andreyevich Svechin, devised *the initial period of war (IPW)* by revising the Imperial Army *preparatory operations*.[1] The IPW, which lasted from the declaration of war to the beginning of significant operations, became one of the most discussed concepts of Soviet war planning.[2] Next to that, Soviet military science made use of Tsarist ideas on *combat readiness*. In the 1930s, military and political discussions revolved around Soviet interpretations of this concept. Apart from these, Soviet military thought generated its own particular concepts in the framework of Lenin's ideas on war. Most importantly, Soviet military science designed *forecasting* and *correlation of forms and methods* to predict a war's character and outcome respectively.

This study has been designed to investigate the evolution of fundamental military concepts in Soviet military thought between 1917 and 1941. This chapter begins by examining the transformation of military thought under different socio-historical and strategic contexts. It will then proceed to offer some important insights into the development of the initial period of war, combat readiness, forecasting, and correlation of forms and methods. Secondly, the functionality of these concepts within the strategy of deep operations and the Soviet war planning before the Second World War are scrutinized as part of the larger historical narrative. Finally, this chapter discovers the interrelation among fundamental military concepts.

4.2. The development of Soviet military science

After the Bolsheviks seized power, military thought was predominantly restructured by the military and political leaders of the socialist revolution. In this regard, the ideas and experiences of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and Mikhail Vasilyevich Frunze played significant roles in the formation of Soviet military thought. Lenin treated war as a socio-historical phenomenon under Marx's dialectic materialist interpretation of history. This

[1] Ronald Sprang, "Russian Operational Art, A New Type of War and Reflexive Control" Small Wars Journal. https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/russian-operational-art-new-type-warfare-and-reflexive-control#_edn2

[2] Alexander A. Svechin, *Strategy* (Moscow: Voennyi Vestnik, 1927) translated and published by (Minnesota: East View Information Services, 1991), pp. 201-203.

phenomenon saw a "correlation between the content of a war and its historical era".[3] In this regard, armed struggle was seen as an instrument of achieving the victory of international working classes against capitalism's ruling elite.[4] Based on this theory, Lenin's analysis of war incorporated political, socio-economic, and sociological interactions among classes, nations, and states.[5] In this regard, Lenin defined the First World War as "an imperialistic-bourgeois war, a war of highly developed capitalism".[6] Furthermore, the Russian Civil war was introduced as the first phase of unleashing a civil war against the imperialist world.[7] Therefore, socialist thinkers emphasized societies' social and economic conditions while delineating the main drivers of war. Furthermore, Soviet thinkers contended that the new socio-political conditions demanded careful consideration of qualitative changes in military theory.[8] Likewise, the utilization of Western military thought was deemed insufficient to "guarantee solutions to the military problems of the socialist state".[9] As a result, the new Soviet elite concluded that there was a need to develop a Soviet approach to waging war.

Like Clausewitz, Lenin defined war as "a continuation of politics of classes and states by other (namely: forcible) means."[10] Lenin also agreed with Clausewitz's trinity, which consisted of violence, probability, and instrumentality.[11] Lenin differed from Clausewitz in that he thought that "all politics is a vast battlefield of class struggle and revolution."[12] Therefore, he established a connection between war and politics by focusing on the struggle among the economic interests of classes instead of states.[13] According to Lenin:

> "War is a continuation of policy by other means. All wars are inseparable from the political systems that engender them. The policy which a given state, a given class within that state, pursued for a long time before the war, is inevitably continued by that same class during the war, the form of action alone being changed."[14]

[3] 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), 9.
[4] William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000), 5.
[5] Ibid. p. 24.
[6] Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 12.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 97.
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] Ibid. p. 263.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] Odom, p. 8
[13] Ibid. p. 41.
[14] *Marxism-Leninism On War and Army* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972) Translated by Donald Dodemanis, p. 19.

Thus, a class approach to politics served as a key to revealing warfare's essence and character.[15] Finally, the association of Clausewitz's ideas with bourgeois military theory led to profound divergences in Soviet military thinking, because the ideological objective of the Marxist-Leninist war was to undermine the rule of bourgeois regimes. Therefore, Soviet military thought endeavoured to create its own military concepts based on socialism.

On the one hand, Frunze defended the formation of a "unified military doctrine based on a Marxist base."[16] This endeavour aimed to re-examine the concepts and principles of the Imperial Russian military thought.[17] Subsequently, the Russian Civil War's war-winning military principles would be able to fill the conceptual gap in the newly emerging Soviet military doctrine. Therefore, socialist thinkers tended to introduce the war-winning concepts and principles of the Russian Civil War as the key elements of the *proletarian military doctrine.*[18] On the other hand, a few communist party leaders disagreed with forming a Soviet military science based on socialist ideology. For instance, Leon Trotsky argued that "there is no peculiar proletarian method of warfare." [19] For Trotsky, the Bolshevik Army used the principles and concepts of the Imperial Russian military heritage during the Civil War.[20]

A great majority of socialist thinkers thought that the Red Army should prepare for a future war by observing the war-winning principles of the Russian Civil War instead of relying on the principles of the First World War. For them, the defence of socialism in the interest of the proletariat took precedence over the defence of the motherland.[21] In this regard, the principles of the Civil War helped the Soviet military to command a mixed army which consisted of territorial militia and regular units. The ambition to carry out a *proletarian war* with territorial militia required the Soviet High Command to mobilize the working class of the Soviet Union and the workers of bourgeois states.[22] In this type of war, the Soviet High Command should function as the "General Staff of the Proletariat", which aimed to spread the revolution and provide military assistance

[15] *Ibid.*
[16] Walter Darnell Jacobs, *Frunze: The Soviet Clausewitz 1885-1925* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), 32
[17] *Ibid.*
[18] Ibid. p. 47.
[19] Ibid. p.51.
[20] *Ibid.*
[21] Andrei A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought 1917-91* (London: MIT Press, 1995), 65
[22] Jacobs, p. 44, 111 and 155-56.

to revolutions abroad.[23] Therefore, Soviet thinkers struggled to redesign the Red Army military doctrine to win a proletarian war against the Bourgeois World.

The conceptualization of warfare was influenced by positivism in the early 1920s. During the late Imperial Russian period, the debate revolved around treating war as a *science* through the use of law-like military principles or *operational art* that integrated judgment and non-linearity into war planning. During the late 19th century, Jomini's positivist approach to war dominated Imperial military thought, thanks to the studies of G. A. Leer. In the early 20th century, Leer's approach was subjected to several criticisms, predominantly by a group of Russian officers who called themselves *the Young Turks*. The Young Turks sought to apply judgement and reasoning to the study of warfare by paying sufficient attention to the conditions and peculiarities of war.[24] In this regard, late Imperial Russian military thought gradually evolved from winning wars by law-like principles to the creative utilization of operational art. During the Soviet period, the Soviet High Command attached priority to military science. In this regard, Soviet thinkers defined military science as "a system of knowledge concerning the nature and laws of war."[25] Thus, Soviet military science prioritized the employment of positivist methods over operational art. In Soviet thinking, operational art was "the theory and practice of preparing and conducting military operations."[26] Therefore, operational art was associated with the execution of military operations instead of military planning. Subsequently, the Soviet General Staff attached greater importance to law-like military principles and their attendant concepts when designing military strategies.

In this context, both Lenin and Frunze treated military thought as a *science* by investigating law-like military principles.[27] Nevertheless, Lenin made creative use of the ideas of Tsarist military specialists even though they were affiliated with bourgeois military ideology.[28] In this context, Lenin echoed the military principles of Tsarist General N.P. Mikhnevich, who was the Chief of the Main Staff before the Russian Civil

[23] Ibid. p.20.
[24] Kerry Lee Hines, *Russian Military Thought: Its Evolution through War and Revolution, 1860-1918* (Washington: The George Washington University, 1998), 384.
[25] V. Y. Savkin, *The Basic Principles of Operational Art and Tactics: A Soviet View,* (Moscow, 1972) Translated and published by (Washington: The United States Air Force, 1972), 99-112.
[26] David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art: In Pursuit of Deep Battle* (Kansas: Frank Cass, 2005), 6-8.
[27] S.N. Kozlov and M.V. Smirnov, *Soviet Military Science* (Moscow: Ministry of Defence, 1964), translated and published by (Springfield: Clearinghouse Federal Scientific and Technical Information, 1964), 46 and Frunze, quoted in Jacobs, p. 32.
[28] Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 81 and Kozlov and Smirnov, p. 30.

War. These were: *the superiority at the decisive place and decisive time, surprise, and moral superiority.*[29] According to Lenin,

> "It is imperative to dispose of overwhelmingly superior forces at the decisive moment and decisive place. This law of military science is also the law of political success, particularly in this fierce, boiling class war which is called revolution".[30]

Indeed, the attainment of superiority over the enemy fitted into Lenin's vision of achieving deterrence through military parity.[31] Next to that, it would be indispensable to ensure moral and economic superiority over the enemy during a long war of attrition.[32]

The *sovietisation* of some selected principles of Imperial Russian military heritage represented a practical solution for transformation of Soviet military science. As a result, Tsarist military principles were re-positioned to waging a proletarian war against the bourgeois world. However, this process did not take much longer. After Lenin died in 1924, the principle of *the superiority of force* became marginalized, because the Soviet military failed to achieve both economic and military superiority over its adversary. Furthermore, there were different perceptions concerning the purpose of military supremacy. While some thinkers utilized this principle to ensure deterrence, others saw it as the core principle of carrying out a political offence.

Unlike Lenin, Frunze rejected the principles of the Imperial Russian Army and called for a "thorough re-examination of the concepts of military doctrine."[33] For Frunze, the principles of the Civil War took precedence over the principles of the First World War.[34] Furthermore, he rejected the Imperial Army's emphasis on an initial defensive posture, even though he expected a capitalist invasion of the Soviet Union.[35] After the Russian Civil War, Frunze emphasized that the Red Army could win a future proletarian war by observing the principles of *the supremacy of offence, manoeuvre,* and *action.*[36] Indeed, Frunze's emphasis on *offence* reflected the Soviet political ambition to spread the

[29] Lenin quoted in Kozlov and Smirnov, p.47 and Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 103 and 164.
[30] Kozlov and Smirnov, p. 47.
[31] Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 261.
[32] Kozlov and Smirnov, p. 45.
[33] Jacobs, p. 32.
[34] Kokoshin, p. 65.
[35] John Erikson, *The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History 1918-1941* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962), 133.
[36] Frunze quoted in Jacobs, p. 44, 112, 120 and 154.

socialist revolution abroad.[37] From a military perspective, the principles of *attack* and *offensive*, other things being equal, were deemed more remunerative than defence.[38] Next, the Soviet Army would rely on a "manoeuvre adjunct to the offensive" to overcome its technological inferiority.[39] By observing this principle, the Red Army could withdraw and manoeuvre over considerable distances against an advancing enemy due to the physical character of the Soviet theater of war.[40] Overall, the *principles of proletarian war* gained recognition at the end of the 1920s. For Soviet military thinkers, the proletarian war with its offensive character had been the first phase of a new era of war between two mutually exclusive class contradictions.[41] In this regard, the ideas of Frunze drew on the strategic framework of realizing Soviet political ambitions. This framework determined to a considerable degree the content and functionality of fundamental military concepts.

Frunze's ideas impacted the discussions in the General Staff about whether the Red Army should pursue a strategy of attrition or destruction. In the late 1800s, Genrikh A. Leer had designed *the extreme exertion of force at the beginning of war as* a fundamental principle of winning a short war of annihilation.[42] In the early 1900s, Nicolai P. Mikhnevich advocated for the strategy of attrition.[43] For Mikhnevich, resilience at the beginning of a war would create favorable conditions for effective maneuver.[44] On the one hand, proponents of the annihilation strategy called for a lightning offensive with decisive blows at the beginning of a war. On the other hand, the defenders of the attrition strategy advocated for an initial defensive posture at the beginning of a war to create favorable conditions for maneuver at the end. Following Frunze's ideas on war, the Soviet General Staff leaned towards the first course of action, *the strategy of annihilation*. In this regard, fundamental military concepts underwent a transformation under an offensive strategy.

4.3. Fundamental military concepts in Soviet military thought between 1917-1941

[37] Jacobs, p. 111.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] Ibid. p. 112.
[40] Ibid. p. 44.
[41] Richard W. Harrison, *Architect of Soviet Victory in World War II: The Life and Theories of G.S. Isserson* (London: McFarland & Company, 1952), 41. and Kozlov and Smirnov, p. 385.
[42] Genrikh Antonovich Leer, *The Method of Military Science: Strategy, Tactic and Military History* (St. Petersburg, 1894), 53-54.
[43] Nikolai Petrovich Mikhnevich, *The Basics of Strategy* (Osnoviy Strategii), (Saint Petersburg, 1913), 17, 22, 33.
[44] *Ibid.*

4.3.1. The initial period of war (IPW)

After the First World War, Soviet military thinkers were sceptical of basing their war planning on Leer's principle of *the extreme exertion of force at the beginning of war*.[45] For instance, Frunze anticipated a "protracted and stubborn war" against imperialist states.[46] Frunze's thesis rested on the idea that a single blow could not decide wars between class opponents.[47] Akin to the previous war, the future war would be characterized by the mobilization of the entire population for a long war of attrition. In the same vein, Lenin was also a critic of the strategy of annihilation, believing that Soviet strategy should "be transformed from a small-scale and partial offensive into a mass, massive offensive, leading to a final victory".[48] Next to that, Lenin's military theory envisaged an incremental build-up of force. He argued that "it is necessary to win the first success and proceed from success to success without ceasing advances on the enemy." [49] In this context, both Lenin and Frunze objected to the idea of winning wars at *the beginning of war*.

A former Imperial Army officer, Alexander Andreyevich Svechin, revised Leer's strategic design in the mid-1920s. Svechin revisited Leer's idea of gaining victory at the beginning of war with his ideas on *operational art*. Indeed, Svechin designed the term *operational art (operativnoe iskusstvo)* in the 1920s.[50] According to Svechin, operational art referred to a category of military art between strategy and tactics.[51] In his book Strategy, Svechin suggests that,

> "In turn, tactical creativity is governed by operational art. Tactics and administration are the material of operational art, and the success of the development of an operation depends on both the successful solution of individual tactical problems by the forces and the provision of all the material they need to conduct an operation without interruption until the ultimate goal is achieved. On the basis of the goal of an operation, operational art sets forth a whole series of tactical missions and a number of logistical requirements... Operational art also dictates the basic line of conduct of an operation, depending on the material available, the time which may be allotted to the handling of different tactical

[45] Jacobs, p. 104.
[46] Frunze, quoted in Jacobs, p. 105.
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] Lenin, quoted in Milovidov and Kozlov, p.108.
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] Wilson C. Blythe, "A History of Operational Art", *Military Review*, Nov-Dec 2018.
[51] 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)

missions, the forces which may be deployed for battle on a certain front, and finally on the nature of the operation itself." [52]

In this context, Svechin argued that Imperial Russian military thinkers "shifted the centre of gravity of their treaties to the so-called *preparatory operations* and had only very superficially analysed the issue of waging war itself."[53] Thereby, the Imperial Army war plan prepared forces for the beginning of war, without offering a viable strategy for the following phases. This problem stemmed from the Imperial Army's overreliance on a war plan designed by strict law-like military principles. Thus, while war planning fell into the category of *military science*, the execution of military operations was regulated under *operational art*.[54] In the face of this distinction, Svechin gave weight to operational art.[55] For Svechin, "strategy is the art of combining preparations for war and the grouping of operations for achieving the goal set by the war for the armed forces."[56] Therefore, Svechin refused the tendency to get bogged down in the details of preparatory operations.[57] Towards that end, he re-examined Leer's preparatory operations and repositioned them within Soviet war strategy by using his ideas on operational art. [58]

According to Svechin, Soviet thinkers had to avoid separating operations into primary and preparatory.[59] In this context, it would be inconvenient to apply operational terminology to Leer's *preparatory operations,* which predominantly included the mobilization and concentration of the army.[60] Instead, Svechin looked back on this phase as *the pre-mobilization period,* which started before the declaration of war and general mobilization.[61] Following this, he designed *the initial period of war (IPW)* as "a special period of war lasting from the declaration of war to the beginning of major operations."[62] Contrary to Leer's design, the IPW was not characterized by decisive military operations, because Svechin prioritized the strategy of attrition over annihilation. For Svechin, the attrition strategy could achieve "the most decisive

[52] Svechin, pp. 88-89.
[53] Ibid. p. 202.
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] *Ibid.*
[56] Ibid. p. 89.
[57] *Ibid.*
[58] Kokoshin, p. 86-87.
[59] Svechin, p.325.
[60] *Ibid.*
[61]Ibid. p.201-203.
[62] *Ibid.*

ultimate goals."[63] The Imperial Army's overreliance on the beginning period of war could only produce limited objectives.[64] Accordingly, Svechin did not predict that the decisive phase of war should be within the IPW.[65] Instead, the IPW should operate within the "art of military operations that cannot be divided by any clear boundaries."[66] By these means, Svechin wanted to draw the military planner's attention to the more expanded character of future warfare in which IPW functioned as a prologue. On the whole, Svechin abstained from defining the IPW as the decisive phase of Soviet war design.[67] Instead, the IPW had to regulate the opening phase of war. The results of this phase, alongside the operational decisions and judgements of the Soviet High Command, would give shape to the character of the following phases of war. [68]

Even though Svechin was a proponent of the strategy of attrition, his operational design received broad acceptance among the Soviet General Staff. Georgii Samoilovich Isserson and Mikhail Nikolayevich Tukhachevsky embraced Svechin's IPW in their *deep operations* design. This strategy required the Soviet Army to carry out a series of deep and consecutive frontal offensive penetrations against the enemy.[69] According to Marshall Tukhachevsky, who was the Chief of Staff of the Red Army between 1925 and 1928, the preoccupation with winning the beginning phase of the First World War was a mistake, since it overlooked the conditions of the war.[70] Although Tukhachevsky was a strong proponent of the strategy of annihilation, he did not believe the Red Army could win a future war during the IPW. Instead, Tukhachevsky attached decisive importance to *the subsequent period of war*.[71] In his major work entitled *The Evolution of Operation Art*, the Red Army military thinker Isserson degrades the importance Leer ascribed to the IPW. For Isserson, initial operations could ensure a positional advantage over the adversary, but could not promise victory.[72] Should the Red Army succeed in exploiting initial operations forward, then this positional advantage could be translated into strategic success.

[63] Ibid. p. 121.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Kokoshin, p. 87.
[66] Svechin, p. 86 and Kokoshin, p. 87.
[67] Svechin, p. 91.
[68] Ibid. p. 89.
[69] Georgii Samoilovich Isserson, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013), 39-49.
[70] Sally W. Stoecker, *Forging Stalin's Army Marshall Tukhachevsky and the Politics of Military Innovation* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), 148.
[71] P. Savushkin, 1985 quoted in Stoecker, p. 155.
[72] Isserson, p. 44.

In the late 1920s, the Soviet General Staff reached a *de facto* agreement which stated that the Red Army could only be victorious in a war by achieving superiority over the enemy during the IPW. Thereby, the General Staff did not attach decisive importance to the initial operations. Accordingly, the functionality of the IPW shifted from a 'decisive' into a 'shaping' period. In the new operational design, initial operations were characterized by a "struggle for concentration." [73] On the one hand, winning initial battles could enable the Red Army to unleash deep, paralysing maneuvers forward. On the other side, losing them would mean that the Red Army would reposition to make defensive operations. Therefore, the outcome of this phase determined the further development and character of a war to a significant degree.[74]

In the 1930s, the IPW's relevance increased to some extent, following Isserson and Tukhachevsky's analyses on deep operations. In their eyes, the timing of the Red Army mobilization and concentration should shift from the IPW to the pre-mobilization period.[75] Only then could the Soviet Army launch initial intensive operations during the IPW by involving significant ground and aviation forces.[76] In this scheme, the IPW took a position between the shaping and decisive periods. Thus, the distinction between these two periods would be obliterated.[77] As a result, the duration of the IPW shortened. [78]

In Soviet military science, the Tsarist idea of attaining total victory at the beginning of a war underwent a transformation. Thus, the Soviet General Staff aimed to build its ultimate war strategy in accordance with the result of initial operations. Two factors influenced this transformation. First, the Soviet General Staff acknowledged that the strict application of law-like concepts could only regulate initial operations. Instead, peacetime planning fell short of building a strategy for the entire war. Secondly, Svechin's thoughts on operational art influenced the evolution of the IPW. Soviet planners realized that only a series of operational successes could achieve ultimate strategic goals.[79] Therefore, the evidence suggests that the IPW functioned as the *prologue* of the Soviet Army's major operations in the 1930s. Even more, the outcome

[73] Varmoleev, 1933 quoted in Harrison, p. 130.
[74] *Ibid.*
[75] S.P. Ivanov, *The Initial Period of War* (Moscow:1974) Translated and published by (Washington: The United States Air Force, 1974), 70.
[76] Ivanov, p. 70 and Kokoshin, p.108.
[77] Ivanov, p. 71.
[78] Ibid. p. 70.
[79] Svechin, p. 89.

of this phase determined the subsequent development and character of major operations.

4.3.2. Combat readiness

Soviet thinkers continued to study *combat readiness* in the 1920s after Leer's pioneering ideas on this concept. Indeed, Leer's narrow vision of combat readiness had relied on forming a standing, combat-ready army. By this means, the Imperial Russian military sought to ensure superiority at the beginning of a war against an otherwise numerically stronger but unprepared enemy.[80] After the Bolshevik revolution, the idea of waging a class war in the form of nation-in-arms altered the Soviet perception of combat readiness. Leer's combat readiness was unable to address the question of how the Soviet military should prepare for a war of attrition. Therefore, the Soviet military and political elite broadened the semantic content of this concept under the new socio-political context. In a similar vein, the Soviets re-defined combat readiness under the strategy of attrition. Subsequently, new combat readiness was inextricably linked with the militarization of the State organs in peacetime and in times of war. Within the framework of "front and rear in war of the future", Soviet combat readiness was geared towards achieving the perpetual mobilization of industry and the economy in general.[81] This period witnessed several attempts to integrate the New Economic Policy (NEP), the Soviet Industry, the Commissariat of Health, and the Soviet Reserve Officer Training Centre into the war planning. [82]

Having glorified socialism's effective utilization of the defence industry, Lenin argued that "without the most serious economic preparation, it is impossible to conduct a modern war against advanced imperialism."[83] Nevertheless, Soviet war preparation dictated a well-designed balance between maximum effectiveness and maximum force. On the one hand, it was economically unfeasible to put troops in a constant state of combat readiness during peacetime. But, on the other hand, the Soviets aimed to strike a decisive blow against the enemy as quickly and advantageously as possible. This intention was associated with the Soviet's attempt to compensate for its technological and positional inferiority over the enemy.[84] In this regard, Communist Party Congresses

[80] Leer, p. 53.
[81] Frunze, quoted in Jacobs, p. 123-125.
[82] *Ibid.*
[83] Lenin quoted in Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 139.
[84] Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 108-109.

(CPSU) widely discussed the proper combat readiness level of the Soviet military. The discussions revolved around achieving a "short-run" defence growth and peacetime combat readiness versus a "long-run" defence growth and gradual mobilization of the country after the beginning of a war.[85]

Frunze was a strong advocate of peacetime combat readiness and industrial mobilization. Frunze's idea was based on the notion that the mass character of modern war made it more difficult for the Red Army to commence mobilization in times of war. Therefore, Frunze advocated for a perpetual approach to ensuring combat readiness which began in peacetime and continued during the war. Frunze referred to this approach as "perpetual mobilization readiness of industry and of the economy."[86] In addition to this, Frunze intended to guarantee the assistance of Soviet state organs for the Red Army's combat readiness footprint. This idea could have led to the militarization of Soviet State organs.[87] Nevertheless, Frunze's ideas incited a general tension between the military and financial authorities of the Soviet Union.

Frunze's idea of perpetual mobilization readiness was subjected to criticism. For instance, Svechin opposed the idea of pursuing a short-run defence growth policy even though he admitted that *peacetime combat readiness* was an inevitable law for the Red Army. In this context, Svechin suggested that "the overenergetic distortion of the natural form of [peacetime] economic development has quite a negative effect and hinders the overall economic success of the country."[88] Instead, Svechin called for the "permanence of mobilization over the entire course of the war."[89] Svechin's argument rested on the idea that peacetime combat readiness "strived to meet the requirements of war since its nature will be unknown."[90] The idea of attaining peacetime combat readiness overlooked the specific conditions of warfare. In this regard, Svechin's combat readiness should go hand in hand with the shifting necessities of war and the operational judgements of the Soviet High Command.

In the early 1930s, Tukhachevsky and Isserson persuaded Stalin of the necessity of carrying out perpetual combat readiness. For Isserson, it was not realistic to "limit the

[85] Stoecker, p. 36.
[86] Jacobs, p.125.
[87] Ibid. p.119.
[88] Svechin, p. 108.
[89] Svechin, p. 239.
[90] Ibid.

mobilization capacity to the first echelon of a mobilized cadre-based regular army."[91] Instead, Isserson advocated for "sequential permanent mobilization", which included the peacetime mobilization of the second and third line of troops to carry out operations in depth.[92] Likewise, Tukhachevsky was a proponent of the "complete militarization of the national economy" and the "mechanization of the Soviet Army".[93] Tukhachevsky's idea rested on the notion that peacetime economic competition alone would not suffice to win a future war.[94] Furthermore, Tukhachevsky envisaged that a maximum mobilization preparedness in peacetime could split the enemy coalition forces at the beginning of war.[95] Otherwise, the Red Army could not withstand carrying out a protracted war due to the backwardness of the Soviet industry. In this vein, Tukhachevsky proposed the production of a larger number of tanks and aircrafts than the capacity of the Soviet economy in 1930 allowed. Nevertheless, Stalin turned down this proposal and called it *fantastica*.[96] Nevertheless, Tukhachevsky managed to convince Stalin in 1932. In this regard, the Red Army began procuring a massive amount of combat equipment in peacetime in the expectation of winning deep battles. Furthermore, Tukhachevsky aimed to launch deep operations with combat-ready mechanized troops during the IPW.[97] Following this, the Soviet Army's share of capital investment grew more than twice between 1929 and 1933.[98]

Frunze, Tukhachevsky, and Isserson's thoughts on war influenced the General Staff to opt for perpetual combat readiness under the annihilation strategy. This approach had two primary objectives. The first was to break the enemy front during the IPW and to be prepared for the follow-up operations. The Chief of Staff of the Soviet Army in 1937, Boris Shaposhnikov suggested that "the mobilization carried out before the war would enforce the first echelon and prevent failure in the initial operations." [99] The second objective of perpetual mobilization was to maintain operational tempo after the initial operations. The sequential mobilization was crucial for unleashing deep operations.[100]

[91] Issersin, p. 59.
[92] *Ibid.*
[93] Lawrence X. Clifford, *Tukhachevsky and Blitskrieg* (Boston: UMI, 2004), 491, 533 and Kipp, p. 59.
[94] Tukhachevsky quoted in Stoecker, 40.
[95] Lennart Samuelson, *Plan's for Stalin's War Machine: Tukhachevskii and Military Economic Planning, 1925-1941* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000), 22
[96] Steocker, p. 42,
[97] Ibid. p. 44.
[98] Ibid. p. 39.
[99] B. Shaposhnikov quoted in Kokoshin, p. 87.
[100] *Ibid.*

To conclude, the Soviet High Command discussed combat readiness until the early 1930s in relation to the changing character of war. However, in the meantime, Soviet forecasts of a future war influenced the ideas of the Soviet General Staff. Firstly, Soviet thinkers predicted that a major war with the capitalist states was inevitable.[101] Secondly, that the strategy of annihilation, with its offensive character, could promise a victory for the Soviet Union. Thus, these prevailing views emboldened the Soviet General Staff to adopt a perpetual combat readiness. Therefore, the functionality of combat readiness shifted from a peacetime combat readiness necessary to win a short war of annihilation to a perpetual combat readiness which aimed to win the initial battles during the IPW and deep operations afterwards.

4.3.3. Forecasting

The concept of *forecasting* emerged in Soviet military thought following the Russian Civil War. The methodological base of forecasting was formed by Lenin's thoughts on the Marxist theory of cognition. This theory posited that the knowledge of the future could also be comprehended.[102] Early Soviet thinkers attempted to examine reality in compliance with the evolutionary patterns of society.[103] In this regard, Lenin argued that "only a knowledge of the objective laws of the evolution of nature and society turns the objective possibility of scientific forecasting into an actual possibility."[104] Regarding military forecasting, the comprehension of society's objective laws did not guarantee success in a war when military personnel had to deal with uncertainties, difficulties, and false information.[105] Since it was not possible to eliminate all of these, the purpose of military forecasting was "to minimize the effect of uncertainties on the results of the decision being taken at the present time."[106] Therefore, the laws of socio-historical evolutions could be used to predict qualitative leaps in military affairs.

The concept of military forecasting comprised the historical analysis of the past wars and the knowledge of the changing character of war. While the historical research fell within the category of the *subjective forecast*, the knowledge on future war became a

[101] Samuelson, p. 10.
[102] 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.
[103] Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 254-255.
[104] Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 23.
[105] Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 265 and Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 25.
[106] Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 6.

subject of the *objective forecast*.[107] On the one hand, subjective forecast alone was not sufficient since inconsistencies may occur in military affairs between the latest methods of waging war and the forms and methods of carrying out current military operations.[108] On the other hand, the laws of armed conflict formed the basis for the objective forecast. These laws made it possible to foresee the course and outcome of military conflicts.[109] In this regard, the most significant law was the objective analysis of each battle and the correct analysis of the enemy.[110] For instance, Lenin argued that "it is impossible to understand anything in our struggle if we do not analyze the concrete situation of each battle."[111] Thus, anticipating the enemy was key to comprehending a war's character.[112] Another law was the impact of technological change on the character of war.[113] This law could help the General Staff explore how a new weapon system could transform the operational environment.

Soviet thinkers made several attempts at forecasting in the 1920s and 1930s in conformity with the analyses of the past conflicts and the objective laws of war. Above all, Lenin predicted that the possible war between the proletarian and capitalist worlds would be a protracted one. Thus, a long war of attrition would marginalize the prominence of initial operations. Nevertheless, each state would be intent on changing military balance in its favor by aiming for superiority in the long run. In this struggle, a shift in the balance of power would encourage capitalist states to resolve conflicts using force.[114] In the 1920s, Lenin anticipated that as long as capitalism "is much stronger than us, it will be able at any time to send its forces against us, to wage a war against us again. It is, therefore, necessary to make ourselves stronger."[115] Therefore, Lenin emphasized the necessity of gaining military superiority (or at least parity) to prevent the West from waging war against the Soviet Union.[116]

Frunze's forecast relied on an analysis of the Russian Civil War. Unlike Lenin, Frunze thought that a future war would be characterized by annihilation and offence. In this regard, Frunze suggested that "the working class will be forced to go over to the

[107] Ibid. p.7.
[108] Ibid. p. 24.
[109] Ibid. p. 23.
[110] Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 266
[111] Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 23.
[112] Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 261.
[113] *Ibid.*
[114] *Ibid.*
[115] Lenin, quoted in Milovidov and Kozlov, p. 262.
[116] *Ibid.*

offensive against capital whenever conditions are favorable."[117] While Isserson and Tukhachevsky embraced Frunze's forecast, Svechin disagreed with it. Svechin believed that it was too dangerous and erroneous to devise an offensive strategy against capitalist adversaries only by taking the Russian civil war as an example.[118] Instead, Svechin argued that a large enemy not characterized by noteworthy class conflicts could barely be defeated by a destructive offensive.[119] Alternatively, ensuring military balance could deter the opposing sides from unleashing destructive war against each other.[120] After analyzing the adversaries' political, economic, and military-technological resources, Svechin predicted that a future war would be protracted.[121] In this type of war, the Soviet military should adopt a defensive strategy during the IPW.[122]

Frunze's offensive forecasts held sway over Soviet strategic thinking leading up to Second World War. First of all, this forecast could achieve the primary objective of Soviet political elites, namely spreading communism abroad.[123] Second, from a military perspective, the annihilation strategy with deep and consecutive offensive blows at the beginning of a war was considered more suitable to overcome a technologically and economically superior enemy coalition. In this vein, the Red Army focused on waging an offensive war under the strategy of annihilation.

4.3.4. Correlation of forces

The concept of correlation of forces appeared in Soviet military publications in the 1930s. This concept reflected the dialectic-materialist approach to Soviet military science. Generally speaking, the concept of correlation was used to compare the quantitative and qualitative differences of opposing forces.[124] Often, this concept was utilized to compare the favorableness of various war strategies. Therefore, the Soviet thinkers put this concept into practice to predict the war's outcome.

Isserson primarily used this concept to calculate "the relative correlation of offensive and defensive means" in the 1930s. [125] During this time, the character of war underwent

[117] Frunze, quoted in Jacob, p. 43.
[118] Kokoshin, p. 70.
[119] Svechin, p. 122.
[120] *Ibid.*
[121] Kokoshin, p. 71.
[122] Svechin, p. 239.
[123] Kokoshin, p. 147.
[124] Isserson, pp. 49-53
[125] Isserson, p. 49.

a severe transformation when mobility and firepower were integrated as a whole. This notion had an impact on Soviet war strategies. According to Isserson, quantitative superiority in firepower means would make the defensive strategy a more realistic option for the Soviet military.[126] Nevertheless, new technical means, such as a machine gun mounted on a tank, brought a qualitative solution to the problem of Western armies' quantitative firepower superiority.[127] In this regard, the latter possibility makes 'the strategy of offence' a more viable option for the Soviet Military. Therefore, Isserson concluded that "the present tendency favoring the superiority of offensive over defensive means is growing more palpable."[128] By this means, Isserson pointed out that the Soviet military could win a short war of destruction provided that it could achieve qualitative superiority in mobility and firepower (mechanization).

4.4. The theory of deep operations and the operationalization of fundamental military concepts

The theory of deep operations was officially legitimized for the first time in Soviet Army Provisional Field Regulations in 1936.[129] The founders of this theory were V. Triandafillov and G.S. Isserson. The commander of the Leningrad Military District, Marshall Tukhachevsky, experimented with this theory between 1928 and 1930 by conducting deep manoeuvres with medium and light tank divisions.[130] Subsequently, this theory was put into practice in all military districts of the Soviet Union between 1932 and 1933.[131] The results of these field exercises showed that tank divisions would not be combined with infantry while carrying out deep offensive operations. Instead, they would operate independently along with the support of the infantry divisions during deep and consecutive strikes.[132] Conceptually, the theory of deep operations relied on relentless pursuit. Thus, an offensive on the main axis could eliminate the enemy forces when persistently followed up by pursuit operations.[133] The purpose of this theory was to "swiftly and powerfully penetrate the enemy's defensive lines or an enemy offensive at a vulnerable point."[134] Next to that, this theory aimed at obliterating the enemy by

[126] *Ibid.*
[127] *Ibid.*
[128] Ibid. p. 53.
[129] Biriuzov 1936, quoted in Stoecker, p. 155 and Svechin, p. 63
[130] William J. Granahan, "The Fall and Rise of Marshall Tukhachevsky," Parameters,7:4 (1978), 63 and Clifford, pp. 446-447.
[131] Clifford, pp. 446-447.
[132] *Ibid.*
[133] The Red Army (RKKA) Provisional Field Regulations, 1936, quoted in Kipp, p. 63.
[134] Clifford, p. 428.

preventing it from grouping its forces. Overall, it is plausible to argue that the originators of this theory sought to avoid the conflict acquiring a protracted character through subsequent deep strikes.[135] The research, so far, has examined the theory of deep operations in general terms. The remaining part of the section will investigate how fundamental military concepts gained new semantic contents under the theory of deep operations.

4.4.1. Forecasting

The forecasts of Soviet thinkers laid the basis for the theory of deep operations. Soviet thinkers' class-based analysis promoted the idea that a war with the capitalist states was inevitable.[136] Likewise, Frunze's emphasis on offensive maneuver in the 1920s prevailed in Soviet strategic thought. In this regard, the Russian civil war with its deep offensive blows was considered the beginning of revolutionary class-wars between the proletarian and capitalist worlds.[137] By way of illustration, Lenin said that "we have completed the first period of these wars [civil war], and we have to prepare for the second [a future war]."[138] Isserson also argued that revolutionary civil wars would be characterized by "active crushing blows with decisive aims."[139] Furthermore, Isserson predicted that modern, speedy, and highly efficient technological means would specify the character of future operations.[140] These forecasts indicated that the Red Army should prepare for a future war by adopting an annihilation strategy. In this strategy, deep crushing blows with armoured and mechanized units played vital roles. These forecasts helped Red Army thinkers design the theory of deep operations.

In particular, Isserson's forecasts of a future war influenced the development of the theory of deep operations to a considerable degree. According to Isserson, "the historical character of operations has evolved along two main lines: lateral extension across a front and distribution in-depth." [141] The lateral extension had peaked during the First World War in the form of a long-protracted war along a single line. Nevertheless, additional troop mobilizations increased the operational densities of warring sides. In contrast, the modern front consisted of echeloned fortified zones.

[135] Stoecker, p. 154.
[136] Samuelson, p. 10.
[137] Isserson, p. 40.
[138] *Ibid.*
[139] Ibid. p.41.
[140] *Ibid.*
[141] Isserson, p. 43.

Thus, breaking these sequential lines demanded the implementation of a deep strategy.[142] Therefore, Isserson predicted that "in a future war, the nature of the operation will evolve in accordance with this very feature of depth."[143] Having defined the characteristics of the new epoch in the military art, Frunze concluded that the Soviet Army had to "shift from a linear strategy to a deep strategy."[144] By this means, the focus of Soviet operational planning changed from enveloping linear maneuvers to deep frontal penetrations.[145]

Tukhachevsky's forecasts of a future war closely resembled Isserson's deep operations theory. Tukhachevsky anticipated that a future war would be a coalition war against the states of capitalist encirclement.[146] In response, Tukhachevsky avoided carrying out a war of attrition across a front, stating that the Red Army should instead be prepared to implement the annihilation strategy in depth using combat-ready units.[147] In this context, standing mechanized formations of the Soviet Army could penetrate the static enemy defences and encircle the most significant enemy positions to the rear.[148] If a surprise attack caught the Soviet Union unprepared, Soviet mechanized formations would penetrate the enemy line under a counter-offensive scheme. When the Red Army border defences slowed down the enemy attack, mechanized units would perform encircling maneuvers behind the enemy positions.[149] In this way, Tukhachevsky sought to penetrate the static enemy defences, prevent enemy reinforcements, and force the enemy to surrender.[150] Therefore, the forecasts of Frunze, Isserson, and Tukhachevsky formed the basis for the theory of deep operations.

4.4.2. The Initial Period of War (IPW)

The Soviet General Staff revisited the IPW in light of the theory of deep operations. Theoretically, deep operations consisted of three consequential phases: *the initial*, *pursuit,* and *decisive*.[151] Soviet military thinkers agreed that the initial operations would most likely occur during the IPW in the form of meeting battles. During this phase,

[142] Harrison, p. 102.
[143] Isserson, p. 46.
[144] Ibid. p. 48.
[145] Ibid. p. 45 and 55.
[146] Stoecker, p. 149.
[147] The Red Army (RKKA) Archieves in Stoecker, pp.152-153.
[148] Clifford, p. 428.
[149] *Ibid.*
[150] Ibid. p. 429.
[151] P. Savushkin, quoted in Stoecker, p. 155

warring sides would pursue offensive aims by concentrating their forces forward.[152] For this reason, Isserson posited that the IPW was more suitable for the Red Army to carry out "enveloping maneuvers along exterior lines."[153] During the IPW, combat-ready *attack echelons* performed maneuvers along the flanks of a positional front.[154] (See figure-1) An attack echelon entailed mechanized, cavalry, motorised units, short-range combat aviation, and airborne detachments. By this means, Isserson sought to win the meeting battles and breach the front in tactical depth.[155] Subsequently, the Soviet military intended on moving forward with *breakthrough echelons* designed to inflict "a depth-to-depth blow to tear enemy resistance through the entire operational depth."[156] Breakthrough echelons would perform pursuit and decisive operations.

During the IPW, the main objective of the Soviet General Staff was to destroy the enemy's covering forces and disrupt enemy mobilization along the frontier.[157] If successful, these actions would push the enemy backwards. By this means, the Red Army would gain an immense advantage over the enemy in terms of mobilization and concentration.[158] In this regard, the Soviet General Staff's use of the IPW showed similarities with how Svechin had conceptualised this idea. Svechin had argued that the IPW would play an essential role "from the declaration of war to the beginning of major operations."[159] In this regard, the Soviet High Command sought to exploit the tactical breaches of the initial operations by relentlessly deploying the breakthrough echelon forward. Thereby, the outcome of the meeting battles during the IPW determined to a considerable degree the further development and character of major, decisive operations.

The Chief of Staff of the Red Army, Marshall Tukhachevsky, prepared the Soviet Defense Plan in 1927 in conformity with the theory of deep operations. Thus, the initial operations would occur between the 6th and 15th days of Tukhachevsky's war design. In case of an enemy offensive, a combination of light motorized infantry, mechanized and air forces were tasked with preventing the invading force from breaking Soviet defence lines for about six days. Afterwards, the Red Army aimed to carry out a deep

[152] Harrison, p. 67.
[153] Isserson, p. 44.
[154] Harrison, p. 67.
[155] Isserson, p. 66.
[156] *Ibid.*
[157] Yegorov quoted in Harrison, p. 165.
[158] *Ibid.*
[159] Svechin, p.201-203.

penetration offensive up to 200 kilometres forward on the night of the sixth day.[160] At the same time, the Soviet air forces would attack enemy reinforcements located up to 150-200 kilometres behind the frontline.[161] After the meeting battles, breakthrough echelons would exploit the gains of the initial operations. In this regard, these echelons would commence their advances deep into the enemy territory on the *fifteenth* day of war. [162]

The first objective of the General staff was to win the initial operations between the 6th and 15th day of war. Subsequently, Soviet military planning focused on exploiting the tactical breaches of the initial operations. In conclusion, exploiting the successes of the initial operations would help the Red Army translate the tactical achievements into a strategic victory.[163] Following this, the General Staff put more emphasis on the advance of *breakthrough echelons* during the subsequent period of war. Therefore, the IPW determined to a considerable degree the further development and character of deep operations.[164] Thus, even though the IPW lost its decisiveness, it continued to influence Soviet strategy during the interwar period.

4.4.3. Combat readiness

The theory of deep operations necessitated perpetual combat readiness, which commenced in peacetime and continued during the war. The objective of peacetime combat readiness was to win the meeting battles during the IPW. In 1926, Marshall Tukhachevsky scrutinized the level of combat readiness necessary to win the initial operations. As a result, Tukhachevsky admitted that the Red Army material stocks were scarcely sufficient for attaining superiority during the initial period of war."[165] Furthermore, Tukhachevsky proposed an additional mobilization effort in the early 1930s to improve the Red Army offensive capability.[166] According to Tukhachevsky, the Red Army needed 8.000 to 10.000 tanks to break the enemy defence in the Western front during the initial operations. Furthermore, the Soviet military had to procure 197.000 tanks, 122.500 aircraft and 350.000 automobiles to win the subsequent operations.[167] As to the manpower, it was anticipated that the Soviet Union would

[160] Ibid. pp. 437-460.
[161] Ibid. p. 437.
[162] Ibid. p.445
[163] Isserson, pp. 65-66.
[164] Varmoleev, 1933, quoted in Harrison, p. 130.
[165] Tukhachevsky, quoted in Clifford, p.543.
[166] Stoecker, pp. 42-43.
[167] Ibid. p. 42-44 and Samuelson, p. 95.

require a six million-man army in 1937 to execute deep operations.[168] As a result, the Soviet Defense Industry accelerated its tank and armament production between 1932 and 1937 to achieve the objectives of perpetual combat readiness. By this means, the Soviet military aimed at gaining an advantage over the enemy forces by waging war with combat-ready armoured and mechanized troops from the beginning.

Deep penetrations with combat-ready troops were intended to prevent the enemy mobilization and annihilate the ill-prepared enemy formations in depth. According to Isserson, special high readiness formations would carry out these tasks. Deep attack echelons would win the meeting battles in the first line and breach the front in tactical depth.[169] (See figure-1) The attack echelons were subordinated to each *front*, responsible for covering 300 to 400 km front-line.[170] These echelons were held in a state of *semi-permanent readiness.* The attack echelons would move forward during the third or fourth day of war and breach the front 200 km in depth. These independent maneuvers sought to defeat forward enemy units or to control key territory. The meeting battles would persist until the front's *breakthrough echelons* advance in the 15th to 16th day of war.[171] (See figure-1) These echelons consisted of motorised units, mechanized formations and long-range combat aviation.[172]

The deployment of deep breakthrough echelons right after the attack echelons required the Soviet Army to finish total mobilization and concentration within two weeks after the beginning of a war. Thus, deeply echeloned forces would maintain the operational tempo of Soviet deep operations.[173] The relentless execution of meeting and breakthrough battles was enabled by ensuring perpetual combat readiness.[174] Therefore, peacetime combat readiness was key to winning the meeting battles during the IPW. Next to that, sequential mobilization was vital for winning subsequent breakthrough operations. Therefore, peacetime combat readiness to win the initial battles and subsequent mobilisation to win the war became the operational objectives of Soviet combat readiness.

[168] Clifford, p. 449.
[169] Harrison p. 131.
[170] *Ibid.*
[171] Ibid. pp. 131-132.
[172] Isserson, pp. 67-68
[173] Ibid. p. 59.
[174] Ibid. p. 59 and 64.

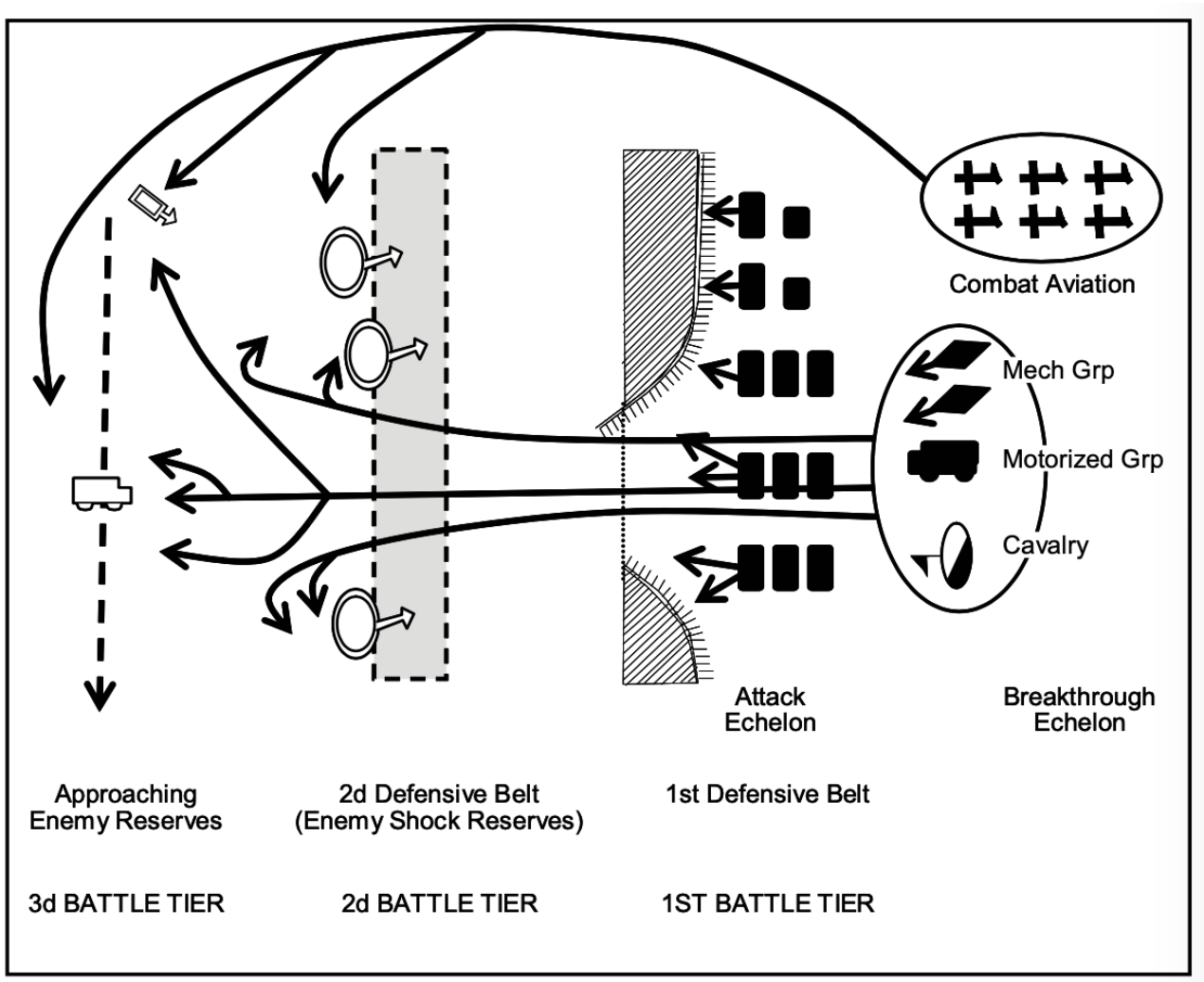

Figure-1: The Deep Operation for Penetrating and Crushing a Front (Resource: Isserson, p. 67)

4.4.4. The correlation of forces

In accordance with the studies of Isserson, the Soviet military applied correlation to the theory of deep operations. In this regard, the Soviets aimed to estimate the number of troops necessary to carry out initial and subsequent operations. For example, Isserson argued that "[a]ll available forces should be engaged during initial operations in accordance with the correlation of belligerent forces."[175] Availability implied the use of standing forces, which were kept in a constant state of semi-permanent readiness. Therefore, standing forces should be numerically and qualitatively capable of delivering blows to the adversary during the initial operations.

Another purpose of the correlation was to organize the deep echelonment of primary

[175] Isserson. p. 57.

and follow-on forces. According to Isserson, "[a]t the decisive moment of the operation, the object is that additional forces and means arrive in the appropriate groupings to facilitate final attainment of victory."[176] Changing the correlation of forces favouring the Soviet Army hinged on the timely deployment of breakthrough echelons and reserves.[177] This objective required the Soviet military to organize the deep echelonment of additional efforts (breakthrough echelons and reserves). All in all, ensuring superiority (quantitative and qualitative) at the decisive moment of operation was key to achieving war objectives. The correlation of the opposing sides included forces along the linear dimension of a front and in depth.[178]

4.5. How fundamental concepts functioned before the Second World War

Between the late 1920s and 1930s, Stalin's purges had an adverse impact on Soviet military thought and its pre-war strategy-making process since they deprived the Soviet military of talented strategists.[179] To begin with, Stalin degraded several Tsarist officers in the Soviet Army.[180] Seven hundred sixty generals were purged, and five hundred and twenty-nine generals were executed or imprisoned between 1937 and 1938.[181] Consequently, almost the entire command staff, including the designers of the deep strategy, were dismissed from the Soviet General Staff. Next, the new Soviet General Staff did not have sufficient intellectual capacity to develop a new war strategy on the eve of the Second World War.[182] Moreover, Imperial Russian strategic culture was gradually lost. After all, fundamental military concepts were exposed to another round of re-examination under Stalin’s forecasts.

Before 1937, war planning assumed that future warfare necessitated a shift from linear to a deep strategy.[183] The new Soviet General Staff rapidly changed its mind after Stalin fully controlled Soviet strategy. First and foremost, Stalin did not consider war as an immediate possibility.[184] The Soviet-German Nonaggression Pact decreased Stalin's expectation about a German offensive between September 1939 and March 1941.[185]

[176] *Ibid.*
[177] Ibid. p. 31.
[178] Ibid. p. 58.
[179] Kokoshin, p. 43
[180] Ibid, p. 41-42.
[181] Ibid, p. 43.
[182] Ibid. p. 42.
[183] Isserson, p. 48.
[184] Erikson, p. 567.
[185] Kokoshin, pp. 98-99.

When the German offensive began, Stalin anticipated that Hitler would seek to invade the Ukraine-Donetsk-Caucasus basin and use the region's economic resources to pursue a war of attrition.[186] Stalin's forecast rested on the notion that the German Army would carry out a limited war to gain some advantages for Germany.[187] In Stalin's opinion, these ambitions could be peacefully settled.[188] Accordingly, Stalin refrained from deploying combat-ready *attack echelons* close to the Soviet border during peacetime so as not to provoke Hitler. For these reasons, Stalin and his General Staff put aside the strategy of deep operations. Following this, Soviet military planners devised a new defence plan by turning a blind eye to the previous forecasts of a future war. Even more importantly, the Germany Army's deep offensive operations did not change the Soviet military planning.[189] Consequently, the Soviet military was caught unprepared when the German Army struck the Soviet Union in June 1941. [190]

The Soviet General Staff altered its strategic disposition in June 1941. In the new plan, the Soviet Army would carry out active defensive operations in depth along the Stalin Line, which stretched from the Karelian Isthmus near Finland to the shores of the Black Sea. The objective of the defensive operations was to repel the enemy attack and secure the deployment of all forces for a counter-offensive.[191] In addition, the Soviets aimed to prevent the enemy advance to the Moscow-Kharkov communication line.[192] In this context, all former combat-ready attack echelons moved behind their front armies' second echelon.[193] Under this scheme, the mission of the first-echelon was to make defensive operations. The second echelon's mechanized divisions would lead a massive counter-offensive to repel the enemy back on its territory.[194] Therefore, the Red Army unleashed initial operations to buy time for mobilization and concentration under the strategy of attrition. Thus, during the IPW, Soviet Army's focus shifted from deep offensive maneuvers to positional defence.

The new strategy paid scant attention to the combat readiness level of the Red Army. As a result, Soviet Army's combat readiness level was lowered, and tank and

[186] Ivanov, p.172.
[187] Kokoshin, p. 109.
[188] *Ibid.*
[189] Kokoshin, pp. 107-110.
[190] Cynthia A Roberts, "Planning for War: The Red Army and Catastrophe of 1941," *Europe-Asia Studies* 47:8 (1995), 1293.
[191] Ivanov, p. 175.
[192] Erikson, p. 576.
[193] Harrison, p. 275.
[194] *Ibid*.

mechanized divisions were disbanded.[195] In 1939, the Chief of General Staff Shaposhnikov estimated that the total mobilisation and concentration of the Soviet Army would require 8-20 days to take the brunt of the enemy attack.[196] Furthermore, the Soviet General Staff disregarded the idea of winning meeting battles during the IPW.[197] Despite the warnings of a German offensive, the first echelon armies were not fully prepared to carry out defensive operations.[198] Thus, the Red Army entered the Second World War without completing its operational deployments on the Western Front.[199] That continued until late 1942. Following this, the Red Army was able to establish a balance in terms of modern equipment.[200] Subsequently, Soviet Army succeeded in slowing down German offence.

4.6. Conclusion

The chapter has aimed to investigate the continuity and discontinuity of fundamental military concepts between 1917 and 1941. Contrary to expectations, the Russian Revolution in 1917 did not automatically promise a fundamental change in Soviet military thought. Instead, Tsarist officers in the Red Army ensured the continuity of Imperial Russian military heritage. First and foremost, A.A. Svechin took the lead in designing the *initial period of war* according to his ideas on operational art. Furthermore, G.A. Leer's conceptualization of combat readiness was embraced by many Soviet thinkers. For instance, Isserson and Tukhachevsky used this concept while designing the theory of deep operations. Nevertheless, Socialist leaders' ideas on military matters gained the upper hand. In this regard, the Soviet High Command attempted to generate a unified military doctrine by using the Russian Civil war experience and Marxist-Leninist ideology. Therefore, this chapter examines the emergence of new concepts in Soviet military thought. In this regard, Lenin's ideas on war promoted the emergence of *forecasting* and *correlation of forms and methods* to anticipate the character and outcome of a future war, respectively.

In the late 1920s and 1930s, the forecasts of a future war indicated that the Soviets leaned towards carrying out the strategy of deep operations against Germany.

[195] Harrison, p. 276 and Erikson, p. 567
[196] Erikson, p. 569.
[197] Erikson, p. 567 and Kokoshin, p. 100.
[198] Kokoshin, p. 110.
[199] Ivanov, p. 186.
[200] Ibid. p. 172.

Compared to the Imperial Russian period, the functionality of the IPW shifted from a *decisive* into a *shaping* phase of war. Nevertheless, the initial operations would determine the further development and character of a war. In addition to that, the functionality of *combat readiness* shifted from a peacetime readiness necessary to win a short war of annihilation to a perpetual combat readiness which aimed to win deep operations, both initial and breakthrough. As to correlation, the Red Army employed this concept to estimate the forces necessary to attain superiority over the enemy during the initial and subsequent breakthrough operations. In conformity with this concept, the Soviet political elite ramped up its defence spending in the first half of the 1930s. Correlation analysis indicated that the combination of firepower with maneuver in a tank made the offence strategy a more viable option for the Soviet military.

Between 1937 and 1941, fundamental military concepts underwent a transformation under Stalin's forecast. First and foremost, Stalin's forecast advocated for an attrition strategy. It overlooked the predictions of a deep strategy and the German Army's deep operations in 1939-40. The Soviet Army prepared for a wrong battle, since Stalin expected Germany to carry out a war of attrition. Secondly, the focus of the new Soviet High Command shifted from offence to defence during the IPW. This strategy was intended to buy time for the Red Army for the mobilization and concentration of the main forces. In this new operational scheme, the initial operations were characterized by the defence in depth. The success of the initial operations continued to shape the course and character of follow-up Red Army counter-offensives. In connection with this, the General Staff aimed to mobilize its main troops gradually in parallel with its initial defensive operations. The new mobilization plan diverged from the early combat readiness scheme of deep operations: *attaining peacetime combat readiness to win the initial (meeting battles) and relentless and quick permanence of wartime mobilization to pursue breakthrough operations*. On the eve of the Second World War, the Red Army gradually increased its combat readiness footprint.

The Soviet eagerness to acquire the knowledge of the future based on society's evolutionary patterns made forecasting and correlation the essential concepts of strategic thought. In this regard, forecasting was vital for revealing war's future character. In addition to that, correlation was used to determine the number of forces required to carry out offensive or defensive strategies. Consequently, the Soviet General Staff's forecasts altered the semantic content (functionality) of fundamental military concepts.

The forecasts of a deep strategy generated an operational design where the IPW regulated the prologue of sequential deep strikes. In this design, the achievement of perpetual combat readiness made deep echelons ready for consecutive deep strikes. Therefore, the fate of the initial operations predominantly hinged on the combat readiness posture of the Red Army. Hence, the forecasts of a war of attrition after 1937 created an operational scheme where the IPW commanded initial defensive operations. In this scheme, the Red Army sought to achieve combat readiness gradually while the initial operations continued. In reality, the mobilization of the Red Army predominantly depended on the duration and success of the initial operations. The results of this investigation reveal that the semantic content of the IPW and combat readiness shows differences under the deep operations and Stalin's attrition war strategy. Even though the contents of IPW and combat readiness altered under different strategies, these concepts' enduring relevance did not change. Therefore, this study concludes that IPW and combat readiness are, for the most part, essential to building Soviet war strategies.

This investigation has shown that a combination of Soviet military ideology and Tsarist military heritage promoted the evolution of fundamental military concepts. Imperial Russian thinkers' opinions on the IPW and combat readiness continued to influence Soviet strategic thinking, despite the changing socio-political and strategic context. Compared to the Tsarist period, the IPW's semantic use shifted from a decisive to a shaping phase of war. Next, the semantic capacity of combat readiness turned from peacetime mobilization to perpetual mobilization, which prevailed in peacetime and exponentially increased in times of war. In terms of functionality, *forecasting* determined to a significant degree the semantic content of the *IPW*, *combat readiness, and correlation* in Soviet military thought between 1917 and 1941. A natural progression of this work is to analyse the continuity and discontinuity of these concepts between 1945-1990. In this regard, the next chapter will further investigate the evolution of fundamental military concepts during the Cold War.