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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-5

The Evolution of Fundamental Military Concepts During the Cold War: 1945-1990

When the U.S. detonated the World's first atomic bomb over Japan in 1945, the nuclear age began, and the character of war changed. Afterwards, the Soviet Union and the U.S. became engaged in a competition for supremacy in nuclear weapons and the methods of waging a nuclear war. Therefore, this investigation aims to explore the impact of fundamental military concepts on Soviet military thought between 1945 and 1990. The study has found that the Soviet military used forecasting, the initial period of war (IPW), combat readiness, and correlation of forms and methods (COFM) to design new strategies responsive to the changes in military technology. Among others, forecasting was the key to building Soviet strategy for a future war. Despite the emerging discontinuities in military affairs, the IPW remains the 'decisive' period of a short war of annihilation and the 'shaping' period of a war of attrition. Finally, the results of this study support the idea that qualitative superiority takes precedence over quantitative superiority in the Soviet approaches to warfare. The chapter concludes that time-tested concepts of the Soviet military shaped to a considerable extent Soviet strategic thinking between 1945 and 1990.

5.1. Introduction

The use of nuclear weapons by the end of the Second World War did not promote a sudden transformation in the Soviet military.¹ The Red Army did not attempt to replace the war-winning concepts and structures of the foregone war. After the mid-1950s, the Soviet *nuclear euphoria* began. Even during this period, the time-tested concepts of Soviet strategic culture moulded Soviet strategic thinking. Therefore, the central thesis of this chapter is that the fundamental military concepts that emerged in the 1920s and 1930s, were crucial in developing new Soviet Cold War strategies. In this regard, this chapter aims to investigate the continuity and discontinuity of *the IPW, combat readiness, forecasting, and correlation of forms and methods* in Soviet military thought between 1945 and 1990. To that end, this study has examined Soviet military doctrine,

¹ John G. Hines, *Soviet Intentions: Volume II Soviet Post Cold-War Testimonial Evidence* (McLean VA: BDM Federal, 1995), 54.

the works of Soviet military thinkers, testimonial shreds of evidence, and Western military publications on Soviet strategy.

This chapter provides an overview of the conceptual transformation of Soviet military thought during the Cold War. First and foremost, this study examines the interrelationship between the concept of forecasting and various Soviet military strategies. In this chapter, it is argued that the shifts in Soviet strategies hinged on the Soviet military thinkers' forecasts of a future war. Then, the study investigates the functionality of other fundamental military concepts (the IPW, combat readiness, and correlation of forms and methods) within each *forecasted* period. Finally, the chapter scrutinizes the interactions among fundamental military concepts and how these interactions evolved over time. In the framework of that, the Soviet theory of deep operations, anti-nuclear maneuvers, the pre-emptive strike, retaliatory strike, and limited nuclear strategies have been analyzed as part of the larger historical narrative. The selection of these cases has been made on a holistic basis as they constituted major Soviet Cold War strategies.

Previous studies of Soviet military thought have not adequately dealt with fundamental military concepts during the Cold War period.² The prominence of these concepts in Soviet military planning receive only limited attention and little is known about how these concepts gained new semantic contents during the Cold War. Soviet military generated new strategies responsive to the changing character of war between 1945 and 1990. Therefore, one of the central theses of this chapter is that fundamental military concepts remained intact during the Cold War, as Soviet thinkers made no attempt to replace these concepts. However, the semantic and functional use of these concepts underwent a transformation under changing strategic contexts. Therefore, this chapter sets out to investigate the historical and functional continuity of fundamental military concepts by establishing links with the early Soviet and later Imperial Russian military thought.

5.2. The general characteristics of Soviet military strategy between 1945 and 1990

² Derek Leebaert and Timothy Dickinson, *Soviet Military Thinking* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992) and Robin Higham and Frederick W. Kagan, *The Military History of the Soviet Union* (New York: Palgrave, 2002)

When the U.S. detonated the World's first atomic bomb in August 1945, the nuclear age began. The key characteristics of this age were the devastating impact of thermonuclear bombs, their decisiveness, and the indefensibility of borders.³ Subsequently, the U.S. concentrated on developing nuclear weapons and a doctrine for their employment.⁴ The Soviet Union, on the contrary, initially overlooked nuclear weapon's decisive role in a future war.⁵ Instead, the Soviet military continued to prepare for *a war of attrition* in strict conformity with Stalin's *permanently operating factors* (POF). In 1942, Stalin believed that observing the POFs would bring a victory to the Soviet Union.⁶ These factors were "the stability of rear, the morale of the army, quantity and quality of divisions, the army's weapons, and the organising ability of the commanding officers."⁷ Soviets were highly confident that the military was superior to the other nations in the POFs because of the advantages of socialism over capitalism.⁸ By way of illustration, Soviet leadership asserted that the morale of soldiers, the intellectual capacity of Soviet officers, and the system of the Soviet state were superior to those of capitalist nations thanks to the supremacy of the Marxist-Leninist communist ideology.⁹

Having relied too much on Stalin's dogma, Soviet thinkers could not admit that the advent of nuclear weapons might shorten the impacts of years-long attrition to a few days.¹⁰ Since POFs rested on moral and ideological factors, the Soviet High Command overlooked the impacts of technological developments on the changing character of war.¹¹ Nevertheless, Soviet military thought gradually appreciated the possibility of a short war of annihilation and the employment of nuclear weapons after Stalin's death in 1953. This is evidenced by Marshal Rotmistrov's article in the Journal of *Military Thought (Voennaya Mysl)* "[o]n the role of surprise in contemporary war" in 1955.¹² Rotmistrov designates *surprise* as "one of the decisive conditions for the attainment of success" during the initial period of a thermo-nuclear or conventional war.¹³

³ Lawrence D. Freedman and Jeffrey Michaels, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (London, Palgrave Macmillan: 2019), vii.

⁴ Herbert S. Dinerstein, "The Revolution in Soviet Strategic Thinking", *Foreign Affairs* 36: 2 (January 1958): 241-252.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 242-243.

⁸ *Ibid.* p.242.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 243.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Quoted in Freedman and Michaels, p. 180.

¹³ Dinerstein, pp. 245-246.

Accordingly, Soviet strategy in the mid-1950s assumed that "the Soviet Union must be ready for a nuclear war even though the likelihood of such a war was small."¹⁴

In the second half of the 1950s, the influence of Marxist-Stalinist teachings on Soviet military science diminished. Subsequently, the focus of Soviet thinkers shifted to deterring "the U.S. from making war because of Soviet strength" in nuclear weapons.¹⁵ In this regard, the Soviet Union took part in a competition for supremacy in nuclear weapons and the methods of waging a nuclear war in the second half of the 1950s. In 1957, the Soviet Union launched the World's first intercontinental ballistic missile (R-7). The destructiveness and broad range of nuclear weapons influenced Soviet military thought afterwards.¹⁶

The Soviet nuclear strategy relied on "reducing the destructiveness of the enemy nuclear attack" by a sudden blow of its own.¹⁷ The Red Army was confident that the enormous territory of the Soviet Union would provide resilience to unleash a counter nuclear attack. In 1957, the leader of the Soviet Union, Nikita S. Khrushchev, announced that "[w]e too, of course, will suffer great losses. But look at the vast spaces on our map and look at Germany, France and Britain."¹⁸ In the Soviet General Staff, discussions revolved around whether strategic nuclear forces alone could play a decisive role in a future war.¹⁹ Did Alexander Svechin's operational art, which translated tactical achievements into strategic victories, entirely lose its significance?²⁰

This study has categorised Russian military thinkers into two groupings: the modernists and traditionalists. On the one hand, the traditionalists aimed to address modern challenges by employing the strategic and conceptual schemes of the previous periods. The proponents of this view were mainly senior in rank and had a positional advantage over the modernists in the Russian High Command. Traditionalists managed to maintain relative dominance over promotions, professional military education, appointments to the military schools, and military curriculum, all of which resulted in a comparatively dominant body of military opinion among Russian military officers. On the other hand,

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 246.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Robin Higham and Frederick W. Kagan, *The Military History of the Soviet Union* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 202-203.

¹⁷ Freedman and Michaels, p. 185.

¹⁸ Khrushchev, 1957 quoted in Freedman and Michaels, p. 185.

¹⁹ Thomas W. Wolfe, *Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads* (Santa Monica: Rand Cooperation, 1964): 12-17.

²⁰ Alexander A. Svechin, *Strategy* (Moscow: Voennyi Vestnik, 1927) translated and published by (Minnesota: East View Information Services, 1991), 88-89.

the modernists emphasized the influence of technological development on military doctrine.

The modernist body of opinion²¹, led by N. Khrushchev, Marshall Vasili D. Sokolovsky and Marshall Rodion Y. Malinovsky, suggested that the advent of nuclear weapons "elevated the importance of strategy" and "diminished the importance of operational art."²² The members of this group argued that the missile age "cancelled out all previous concepts of the character of war."²³ They hold that radical innovation based on scientific forecasting should take precedence over the generalised experience of past wars. Furthermore, this body of opinion suggested a need to devise new concepts and methods of resorting to nuclear weapons.²⁴ However, modernists were ill-suited to propose new concepts which could be a substitute for the old ones, because theirs was a minority outlook that was more sympathetic toward Khrushchev than the majority point of view shared by traditionalists.²⁵ In addition, modernists were less senior in rank.²⁶ Despite their critical attitude, the modernists could not develop an alternate military theory while building a strategic nuclear war design. The modernists' thinking showed similarities with G.A. Leer's war design (in the 1870s), which aimed to exert an extreme amount of force at the beginning of war. Therefore, the IPW and combat readiness were the essential concepts of modernists' nuclear war strategy. Their strategic war design was also subject to criticism from the Soviet High Command in the late 1960s. The traditionalists argued that no single weapon (i.e. nuclear weapons) or mode of warfare alone could decide the outcome of a war.²⁷ Afterwards, the modernists gradually lost their influence.

On the other hand, the traditionalists, led by Marshall Andrey A. Grechko, strove to preserve time-tested concepts of Soviet military thought in the early 1970s. Nevertheless, this body of opinion did not entirely deny the powerful impact of nuclear weapons.²⁸ According to this group, a historical approach to devising a theory of war

²¹ This categorisation (modernist/traditionalist) belongs to the author.

²² David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art: In Pursuit of Deep Battle* (Oxon: Frank Cass, 1991), 179.

²³ Herbert S. Dinerstein, Leon Goure and Thomas Wolfe, "U.S. Editor's Analytical Introduction" In *Soviet Military Strategy* (Santa Monica: Rand Cooperation, 1963), 21.

²⁴ P. Sidorov, "To Tirelessly Strengthen the Country's Defense Stability", *Communist of the Armed Forces*: 12 (June 1961): 63-65.

²⁵ Dinerstein, Goure and Wolfe, p.22.

²⁶ Ibid. pp. 22-23

²⁷ Freedman and Michaels, p. 188.

²⁸ Dinerstein, Goure and Wolfe, pp. 21-23.

was more favorable.²⁹ In this regard, fundamental military concepts should be harmonized with the careful study of past wars. After the 1970s, the traditionalists used the military theory and concepts of the 1920s and 1930s while designing non-nuclear war strategies. Taken as a whole, their historical outlook on building strategic thought ensured the continuity of fundamental military concepts.

The discussion between the *modernists* and *traditionalists* influenced the evolution of Soviet military strategy throughout this period. Despite an initial tendency to discard old military doctrine, the concepts that originated before the Second World War shaped the ideas of the Soviet High Command after 1945. Soviets continued to utilise age-old military concepts while designing new strategies responsive to the changes in military technology. First and foremost, Soviet thinkers put an existing concept, *forecasting*, in practice to foresee the character of a future war. Contrary to a historical-driven outlook, radical innovation laid the foundations for new attempts at forecasting.³⁰ When the Soviet Union abandoned the objective of an ultimate victory in a nuclear war after the mid-1970s, battle-proven concepts of winning a conventional war were resurrected. Secondly, Soviet strategists continued to discuss new strategies of a future war by strictly adhering to Lenin's dichotomy of war of *annihilation* versus *war of attrition*. The modernists advocated for a war of annihilation by relying on nuclear weapons. For them, attaining the technological capacity of winning a short nuclear war could only deter the U.S. from starting a war.³¹ On the other hand, the traditionalists championed the idea that the Soviet military should prepare for a long war of attrition rather than relying on strategic reserves. The selection of any of these strategies allowed concepts to emerge and function because fundamental military concepts gained varying semantic contents under each strategic option (annihilation/attrition).

There seems to be some evidence to indicate that the *traditional school of thought* won the intellectual debate even though the modernist currents prevailed over strategic thinking in the mid-1950s and 1960s. The traditionalists continued to prioritize past experience, inspired by the teachings of Lenin about technological development. Even during this period, G.A. Leer's design of *winning a short war of annihilation at the beginning of war* was put into practice in examining the theory of a quick and decisive nuclear war. As a result, the traditional schemes of waging different wars

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

(annihilation/attrition) dominated military thought and helped fundamental military concepts to survive.

Soviet military planning after 1945 was based on a strict commitment to taking the offensive from the very initial moments of a war.³² This offensive character of military strategy prevailed until the early 1980s.³³ An active-offensive strategy resulted from Mikhail Frunze's formulation of military doctrine after the early 1920s.³⁴ Furthermore, the offensive military strategy was associated with the "offensive foreign policy of Soviet Union."³⁵ Since then, the works of G.S. Isserson and M. Tukhachevsky contained presuppositions that emphasized the advantages of the offence under the *theory of deep battle*. According to these thinkers, mobility, mechanisation, and firepower increased the offensive capabilities of weapon systems.³⁶ After the Second World War, Soviet military theory prioritised offence over defence. According to V.D. Sokolovsky, "strategic defence followed by a counteroffensive cannot assure the decisive goals of war."³⁷ During the nuclear euphoria, anti-missile defence systems were regarded as more technologically and economically demanding options than offensive systems. The US-Soviet treaty on Anti-Ballistic Missiles in 1972 also imposed severe restrictions on the defensive-nuclear strategy.³⁸ When the U.S. increased the number of warheads in strategic offensive forces in the 1970s, the offence remained a viable option. In the 1970s and 1980s, the theory of *deep battle* and its underlying offensive character were revived. In the early 1980s, the Soviets acknowledged that there would be no winner in a nuclear war.³⁹ Afterwards, the Soviets adopted a defensive doctrine under the no-first-use policy.⁴⁰ Generally, the offensive character of Soviet military thought influenced the evolution of military concepts.

5.3. The concept of forecasting and the character of a future war

The introduction of new weapon systems encouraged Soviet military thinkers to base their forecasts on radical innovation. It was thought that there was a greater need for

³² William E. Odom, *The Collapse of the Soviet Military* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000), 13.

³³ Andrei. A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought 1917-91* (London: MIT Press, 1995), 146.

³⁴ Walter Darnell Jacobs, *Frunze: The Soviet Clausewitz 1885-1925* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), 44, 112 and 120.

³⁵ Kokoshin, p. 146.

³⁶ Georgii Samoilovich Isserson, *The Evolution of Operational Art* (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013), 39-49.

³⁷ Kokoshin, p. 172.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.* 180.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

scientific forecasting to remove uncertainties of waging a future war.⁴¹ In 1973, General of the Army, V.G. Kulikov pointed out that:

"Under present-day conditions, the danger of miscalculations and errors in decisions have increased. There is now a need for more profound foresight, more scientific forecasting of the possible course of combat operations, and more accurate calculations of the anticipated results."⁴²

Therefore, Soviet thinkers put great effort into reducing the duration of decision making by eliminating uncertainties about the character of strategic nuclear war.

Indeed, Lenin had laid the theoretical foundation of the concept of forecasting in the 1920s. Even though this concept influenced Soviet strategic thinking after the 1920s, systematic conceptualisation took place in the 1970s, because the Soviet military constructed a systematic approach to military thinking only after the mid-1950s.⁴³ Nevertheless, leading interwar thinkers such as M. Frunze, A. Svechin, G. Isserson, and M. Tukhachevsky had made individual attempts at forecasting to foresee the changing character of war. In 1975, Yu. V. Chuyev, and Yu. B. Mikhaylov systematically analyzed the concept of forecasting in their primary work *Forecasting in Military Affairs: A Soviet View* in 1975. In this book, the authors argued that:

"The basic task of scientific forecasting is to recognise the trend, the logic of the evolution of the process being forecast, thus, in the end, making it possible to minimise the influence of uncertainty of a future situation on the results of decisions adopted."⁴⁴

Therefore, the primary purpose of scientific forecasting was to provide the Soviet General Staff with accurate and timely information about what might happen in the future and under what conditions.⁴⁵ According to an official resource, the *Voroshilov Lectures of the Soviet General Staff Academy*, forecasting was geared towards foreseeing "possible changes in political-military and military situations and determine

⁴¹ 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), 1. Translated by the DGIS Multilingual Section Translation Bureau, Ottawa.

⁴² V.G. Kulikov, 1973, quoted in Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p.1

⁴³ Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 47.

⁴⁴ Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid. pp. 2-3.

accordingly the most appropriate course of action for the Armed Forces."⁴⁶ In this regard, forecasting the character of future wars was the ultimate objective of Soviet military science during the Cold War.⁴⁷

Forecasting was conducive to anticipating emerging discontinuities in military affairs under the influence of technological development. In this regard, the basis of forecasting was the appreciation of war's objective laws and the dialectical-materialist examination of events occurring in a given concrete historical context.⁴⁸ Therefore, the specific laws of dialectic materialism formed the theoretical basis of forecasting.⁴⁹ According to dialectic materialism, events in military affairs did not move forward in "direct causal sequence, but by means of a prolonged struggle between the conflicting trends, which finally collided at a critical stage."⁵⁰ When thesis and anti-thesis undid each other in the collision course, history leapt to a new level where this dialectic process played itself out.⁵¹ A leap demonstrated the discontinuity of an old military regime and the beginning of a new one. Therefore, the Soviet General Staff aimed to foresee these qualitative leaps by use of military-strategic forecasting.⁵² In this regard, the essential tasks of forecasting are:

"envisioning the direction of military-technological progress and the appearance of qualitatively new types of armaments; determining their impact on the emerging nature of future war; seeking methods to adjust the concept of operations, the structure of the armed forces, and weapons development to the new military regime."⁵³

Lenin had designated "the existence of laws in the nature and evolution of society as the objective basis for scientific forecasting".⁵⁴ In this regard, societal laws inspired Soviet military thinkers to anticipate discontinuities in the character of war. According to Chuyev and Mikhaylov, these laws laid the basis for military forecasting. In this context, the first law of the dialectic, "the law of unity and struggle of opposites", helped

⁴⁶ Ghulam Dastagir Wardak, *The Voroshilov Lectures: Materials from the Soviet General Staff Academy, Volume-2* (Washington: The National Defense University Press, 1989), 29.

⁴⁷ Adamsky, p. 47.

⁴⁸ *The Dictionary of Military Terms (Voennyi entsiklopedicheskii slovar)* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1983), 585.

⁴⁹ 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.

⁵⁰ Adamsky, p. 47.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *The Dictionary of Military Terms*, p. 587.

⁵⁴ Odom, p. 5 and Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 23.

the Soviet military decide between dichotomies such as *the war of annihilation* and *attrition*, or *defence* and *offence*, or *nuclear* and *conventional* war.⁵⁵ The second law of the dialectic was "quantitative and qualitative change."⁵⁶ This law sought to discover how a series of quantitative changes led to a sudden and qualitative leap or breakthrough (revolution) in military affairs.⁵⁷ This law helped Soviet analysts to forecast discontinuities at which "sufficient quantity will bring about qualitative shift."⁵⁸ The third law of dialectic was the "negation of the negation". This law revealed that one trend (thesis) could be negated by a counter-trend (anti-thesis) and, in turn lead to a new trend (synthesis). Soviet analysts employed this law to forecast effective counter-strategies to undo the enemy strategy and weapon systems.⁵⁹

Taken as a whole, the concept of forecasting foresaw trends, shifts, and breakthroughs in the character of a future war. Next to that, forecasting aimed to forewarn the Soviet military on the changing character of war. Therefore, this concept was central to the development of new war strategies. In light of this, three subsequent forecasts emerged in the Soviet High Command between 1945 and 1990: *a major and protracted conventional war* between 1945 and the mid-1950s, *a decisive and spontaneous full-scale nuclear war* between the mid-1950s and 1960s and *a protracted conventional war under the constant threat of the use of nuclear weapons* between the 1970s and 1980s.

These forecasts laid the groundwork for the development of various Soviet strategies and defence and arms production plans during the Cold War. Military-strategic forecasting also set the stage for political decisions, since General Staff Officers were tasked with advising Soviet political leadership based on their forecasts.⁶⁰ According to Chuyev and Mikhaylov, "a qualitative forecast about the nature of a possible armed conflict can also be made based on a forecast of the political situation."⁶¹ Therefore, military-strategic forecasting analysis helped create the conditions necessary to ensure the functioning of political bodies.

⁵⁵ Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 68 and Kipp, p. 251.

⁵⁶ Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 129 and Kipp, p. 252.

⁵⁷ Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 70 and Kipp, p. 252.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Kipp, p. 253.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 249.

⁶¹ Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 9.

The Relation Between Forecasting and Soviet Cold War Strategies

	Forecasts of a future war						
	1945	1950	1955	1960	1970	1980	1990
	A major and protracted conventional war		A decisive and spontaneous full-scale nuclear war		A protracted conventional war under the constant threat of the use of nuclear weapons		
Soviet Cold War Strategies	Deep operations				Deep operations (Anti-nuclear manoeuvres)		Deep operations (defensive)
			Pre-emptive strike				Retaliatory Strike
							Limited Nuclear Warfare

Figure-2 The Relation between forecasting and Soviet Cold War strategies between 1945 and 1990.

Figure two shows an overview of the relations between Soviet forecasts of a future war and Soviet Cold War strategies. Closer inspection of the figure indicates that the forecasts of a major and protracted conventional war between 1945 and 1953 promoted the idea of putting the strategy of deep operations into practice. Deep operations were intended to strike consecutive blows against layered enemy defences by imitating the 1944-1945 offensive scheme. During *nuclear euphoria* (from 1953 to the late 1960s), the Soviet High Command adopted the pre-emptive strike strategy to thwart a possible U.S. surprise nuclear attack.⁶² When the forecasts of a future war shifted from *nuclear war* to a *protracted conventional war in a nuclear-scared posture* between the 1970s and 1990, the Soviet High Command began formulating different strategies. As a result, preventing the enemy from waging a nuclear attack by carrying out deep (anti-nuclear) operational manoeuvres gradually became a new Soviet strategy until the mid-1980s. In return, the U.S. designed precision-guided munitions (Pershing) as an effective means of neutralizing Soviet deep strike attacks before they engaged with US/NATO forces. Against this backdrop, the Soviets leant towards the strategy of limited nuclear warfare between 1980 and 1985. This strategy saw nuclear war as a viable option, provided that nuclear strikes were directed against military targets outside of the Soviet (and the U.S.) territory.⁶³ After 1985, the Soviet Union adopted a "non-offensive

⁶² Kokoshin, p. 123.

⁶³ Andrian A. Danilevich, quoted in Hines, p. 55.

defensive" posture and embraced the strategy of retaliatory strike.⁶⁴ This strategy authorized a nuclear strike only when the Soviet territory was attacked. Likewise, the objective of Soviet deep operations was limited to retaking lost Soviet territory instead of occupying NATO countries.⁶⁵ While the concept of forecasting was instrumental in the occurrence of these shifts, other concepts (the IPW, combat readiness, and COFM) functioned as the key components of the implementation. Therefore, the findings of this chapter offer additional insights into the Western literature by establishing the links between fundamental military concepts and Soviet Cold War strategies.⁶⁶

5.3.1. A major and protracted conventional war between 1945 and the mid-1950s

The idea of a future war performed by mass, mechanized forces held sway over the minds of Soviet thinkers between 1945 and the mid-1950s. Stalin publicly denied the significance of nuclear weapons and their impact on the character of a war.⁶⁷ The advent of nuclear weapons initiated by the U.S. challenged Stalin's incontestable premise that socialist countries could attain military superiority simply by being socialist. Instead, the Soviet military relied too much on Stalin's war-winning (at least in the last part of the Second World War) *permanently operating factors*. The acknowledgement of the importance of nuclear weapons would mean that Stalin's dogma was ineffective and futile.⁶⁸ For instance, Stalin underestimated the role of surprise in war and turned a deaf ear to Major General Talenskii's insistence on the prominence of this phenomenon in the case of a nuclear war.⁶⁹ Therefore, the Soviet military waited in vain until the death of Stalin in 1953 to formulate a nuclear strategy. Accordingly, new Soviet forecasts rested on evaluating past experience instead of technological development. Therefore, the emphasis on past experience promoted the continuity of fundamental military concepts. Stalin's indifference towards nuclear war strategies helped the military theory of the 1930s and 1940s (thesis) to survive.⁷⁰ As a result, Soviet military

⁶⁴ Freedman and Michaels, p.536.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 538.

⁶⁶ 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), 29-57 and Freedman and Michaels, pp.526-543 and 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).

⁶⁷ Glantz, p. 160.

⁶⁸ Freedman and Michaels, p. 179.

⁶⁹ Dinerstein, pp.243-245.

⁷⁰ Dinerstein, pp. 241-252.

theory made no progress and waited until Stalin's death to come up against an anti-thesis: waging a nuclear war.

In light of *the law of unity and struggle of opposites*, the Soviets discussed whether a future war would be protracted or short-lived. As a result, the Soviet High Command concluded that a future world war would be a protracted coalition war - similar to the Second World War - with each side fielding million-man armies and mobilizing economic capabilities.⁷¹ The anticipation of a major and protracted conventional war encouraged the Soviet military to use time-tested concepts of military thought. For instance, the concepts and principles of 1944-45 Soviet *deep operations* promised to win a victory. Therefore, Soviet Armed Forces prepared for "a series of strategic offensive operations" in one or two strategic directions in the Western front.⁷²

5.3.2. A decisive and spontaneous full-scale nuclear war between the mid-1950s and 1960s

After the death of Stalin, radical innovation influenced Soviet forecasting analyses. Soviet thinkers suggested that nuclear weapons and modern delivery systems negated (negation of the negation) the time-tested concepts of past wars. For instance, Major General S. Kozlov argued that;

"As a result, it has been able to give a coherent, scientifically-based concept of the character of modern war, which is, as opposed to what happened in the past, based not so much on the experience of past wars, as on scientific foresight and a forecast of a possible future".⁷³

In the meantime, the advent of nuclear missiles stimulated a leap in Soviet military thought. The Soviets acknowledged that nuclear strikes had the power to reduce the impact of years' long attrition to a few days. Indeed, the devastating effect of nuclear strikes during the initial period of war fit into the definition of *the strategy of annihilation* in Soviet traditional thinking. Since the 1870s, this strategy required the Soviet military to strike lightning and decisive blows and attain war objectives at the beginning of a

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 167.

⁷² Ibid. p. 168.

⁷³ S. Kozlov, quoted in Kipp, p. 254.

war.⁷⁴ Consequently, the strategy of a short war of annihilation took precedence over the strategy of attrition in Soviet thinking. The forecasts of a decisive and full-scale strategic nuclear war outweighed a protracted conventional war.⁷⁵ Nikita Khrushchev's assertions on the decisiveness of nuclear weapons enabled this shift.⁷⁶

In his major book, *Military Strategy*, Marshall V.D. Sokolovsky also forecasts the character of a future nuclear war. According to Sokolovsky, "the enormous destructive powers of new weapons, the unlimited spatial scope of war and the inevitable involvement of the majority of the earth's population in the sphere of destruction" constituted the character of a future nuclear war.⁷⁷ This forecast emphasized the significance of attaining a victory in the shortest possible time by employing strategic nuclear weapons.⁷⁸ According to Sokolovsky, "mass nuclear-rocket strikes will be of decisive importance for the attainment of goals in a future world war."⁷⁹ Consequently, the Soviet military gradually increased its reliance on strategic nuclear weapons at the expense of its ground and air forces between the mid-1950s and late 1960s. During this period, the pre-eminence of a missile and nuclear war increased the importance of strategy and lessened the significance of Soviet operational art.⁸⁰

5.3.3. A protracted conventional war under the constant threat of the use of nuclear weapons between the 1970s and 1980s.

The resignation of Khrushchev and the shift in U.S. military doctrine from *massive retaliation* to *flexible response* in the second half of the 1960s profoundly influenced Soviet military thought. In 1968, the Marshal of the Soviet Union, I. Yakubovsky, underlined that NATO was adopting "practical measures to increase the fighting capabilities of its forces to wage a protracted war in Europe without using nuclear weapons".⁸¹ In the early 1970s, the Soviet political and military elite acknowledged the devastating consequences of a full-scale nuclear war.⁸² The growth of the nuclear arsenal on both sides brought about a situation where full-scale nuclear exchange could

⁷⁴ Genrikh Antonovich Leer, *The Method of Military Science: Strategy, Tactic and Military History* (St. Petersburg, 1894), 53-54.

⁷⁵ Glantz, p. 177.

⁷⁶ Hines, p. 55.

⁷⁷ V.D. Sokolovsky, *Soviet Military Strategy* (Santa Monica: The Rand Cooperation, 1963), 515.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 431.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 209.

⁸⁰ Glantz, p. 179.

⁸¹ I. Yakubovsky, "50 years of the USSR armed forces", *Military Thought* 2 (1968): 29.

⁸² Hines, p. 55.

wipe out almost the entire Soviet Armed Forces.⁸³ Only then did the Soviet High Command question the usefulness of nuclear weapons. Consequently, the forecasts of a future war saw a gradual transformation from a *major nuclear war* to a *protracted conventional war under the constant threat of the use of nuclear weapons*. This shift raised the profile of conventional forces in future warfare, without reducing the importance of strategic nuclear forces.

The acknowledgement of the destructiveness of nuclear weapons and the achievement of nuclear parity offered the *traditionalists* more ground for influencing Soviet strategy. The nuclear parity increased the Soviet military's deterrence posture and allowed it to use these weapons in a combined arms formation.⁸⁴ For instance, one of the leading proponents of this body of opinion, the Soviet Minister of Defence General A.A. Grechko, did not consider nuclear weapons absolute.⁸⁵ In the meantime, the Soviets learned that armed protection reduced the major impacts of nuclear weapons.⁸⁶ Accordingly, the Soviet High Command's view of nuclear employment shifted towards the first use of tactical nuclear weapons during the initial period of a war.⁸⁷ Then, tactical nuclear forces could create large caps in enemy defences. Afterwards, mechanized forces could move rapidly through these breaches and deliver blows to the enemy's rear.⁸⁸ By using the scheme of *deep operations of the 1940s*, the Soviets aimed to achieve dispersal and mass at once.⁸⁹ Therefore, Soviet planning for deep operations underwent another round of change in the 1970s in response to the soberness of the U.S. on waging a strategic nuclear war.

Therefore, the conditions of the 1970s encouraged Grechko and his disciples to revitalize time-tested concepts and principles of Soviet military thought. As a result, new thinking emerged in the Soviet military on the importance of all armed forces systems (including conventional) to achieve a victory.⁹⁰ Accordingly, the forecasts of a future war shifted the Soviet's focus from a short nuclear war to a protracted

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Odom, p. 67.

⁸⁵ Kokoshin, p. 128.

⁸⁶ Odom, p. 72.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Hines, p.55.

conventional war.⁹¹ In the second half of the 1970s, keeping war conventional from beginning to end was considered a real possibility.⁹²

According to the traditionalists, the concepts of the 1930s and 1940s would offer viable solutions to the strategic problems of the 1970s. For instance, the Chief of General Staff, M.V. Zakharov, indicated that the theory of deep operations could be an effective method of waging a future conventional war in 1975.⁹³ Consequently, Soviet thinkers put effort into revisiting the theory of *deep operations* (designed in the 1930s) to "pre-empt, preclude or inhibit enemy resort to nuclear warfare."⁹⁴ In return, the U.S. and NATO developed counter-strategies (Air and Land Battle and Follow-on Forces Attack doctrines, respectively) to undo Soviet's deep operations using new smart conventional weapons in the mid-1970s.⁹⁵ These doctrines aimed to neutralize Soviet deep strike forces before they engaged with US/NATO forces predominantly using newly-designed precision-guided munitions.⁹⁶ It rested on the belief that Soviet follow-on echelons had to be stopped before they reinforced the front.⁹⁷ In this regard, the U.S. armed its troops in Europe with precision-guided munitions and modern armoured platforms (M-1 tanks and Bradley Infantry fighting vehicles) in the mid-1970s.⁹⁸

Between the mid-1970s and 1980s. Soviets saw modern conventional weapon systems (i.e. precision-guided munitions) as more threatening than nuclear weapons.⁹⁹ In the 1980s, Deputy Soviet Defence Minister V.M. Shabanov revealed that "the qualitative leap in the development of conventional weapons entailed changes in preparations for and the conduct of military operations".¹⁰⁰ After M. Gorbachev came into power in 1985, nuclear stability (instead of superiority) gained utmost importance. In the second half of the 1980s, the Soviet military adopted a defensive doctrine and focused on deterrence, war prevention, and limited nuclear warfare if a war had to be fought.¹⁰¹ In the 1980s, the Soviet General Staff discussed the possibility of waging a limited nuclear war. However, it was understood that containing a nuclear war would be barely

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Hines, p. 57.

⁹³ M.V. Zakharov, 1975, quoted in Glantz, p. 210.

⁹⁴ Glantz, p. 208.

⁹⁵ Adamsky, p. 25.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Odom, p. 75.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Kipp, p. 254.

¹⁰⁰ V.M. Shabanov, quoted in Kokoshin, p. 139.

¹⁰¹ Hines, p. 57.

possible.¹⁰² In conformity with the second law of forecasting (qualitative and quantitative change), the Soviet military pioneered the idea that the new range of technological innovations in conventional weapons constituted a fundamental rupture in military affairs (from nuclear to conventional).¹⁰³

According to the new forecast, the essential characteristics of a future war between the 1970s and 1980s involved the presence of strategic and tactical nuclear balance on both sides, "the unprecedented emergence of qualitatively new technologies" in conventional weapons and the possibility of conducting "anti-nuclear maneuvers" (deep operations).¹⁰⁴ In this period, the use of conventional weapons retained its importance.¹⁰⁵ In relationship to Soviet forecasting, a shift to a conventional war option should be comprehended as a true "negation of the negation."¹⁰⁶ In Soviet thinking, the U.S. superiority in modern conventional weapons in the mid-1970s should be negated by more destructive conventional weapon systems. On the other hand, the Soviet High Command continued to keep nuclear forces at increased levels of combat readiness.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, the forecasts of a future war gradually shifted from a decisive and instantaneous, full-scale nuclear war to a protracted conventional war in a nuclear-scared posture in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁰⁸

5.4. The examination of fundamental Soviet military concepts in light of forecasting

5.4.1. Fundamental military concepts in a major and protracted conventional war between 1945 and 1953

Until he died in 1953, Stalin presented himself as the mastermind of wartime military victories and the principal military theoretician of the Soviet Army.¹⁰⁹ As a consequence, Stalin's POFs monopolized Soviet military thinking during that period.¹¹⁰ Since these factors relied too much on the supremacy of the socialist ideology, the Soviet Military paid scant attention to changing semantic and functional use of fundamental military

¹⁰² Kokoshin, pp. 132-134 and Hines, p. 57.

¹⁰³ Adamsky, p. 24.

¹⁰⁴ F.Sverdlov and V. Savkin, 1972, quoted in Glantz, p. 208 and Adamsky, p. 27.

¹⁰⁵ V.G. Kulikov, 1979 in Glantz, p. 208.

¹⁰⁶ Kipp, p. 254.

¹⁰⁷ Kokoshin, pp. 139-140

¹⁰⁸ Glantz, p. 215.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 160.

¹¹⁰ Raymond L. Garthoff, *How Russia makes war: Soviet Military Doctrine* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954)

concepts in a nuclear war. For instance, POFs inhibited the Soviet High Command from scrutinizing the impacts of technological change on the initial period of a nuclear war.¹¹¹ In addition, Stalin's insistence on the validity of these factors prevented Soviet thinkers from acknowledging the hazards of surprise and the importance of combat readiness.¹¹²

At the start of the nuclear realm, this period saw a Soviet atomic device production in 1949 and a thermonuclear bomb in 1953.¹¹³ Nevertheless, it was hardly possible to trace the reflections of these innovations on military thought before the death of Stalin in 1953. Instead, military experience gained during the 1944-1945 offensive operations overshadowed Soviet military doctrine. Likewise, Stalin's post-war modernization program aimed to ensure the total mechanization of the Soviet Armed Forces.¹¹⁴ Taken together, the Soviet military relied on waging a major-protracted conventional war against the enemy.

Between 1945 and 1953, Soviet military planning was predicated on carrying out a series of deep offensive operations. These operations gained a strategic and decisive character in Soviet war planning.¹¹⁵ Strategic offensive operations sought to "capture vitally important territory and finally smash the enemy resistance and ensure victory."¹¹⁶ In this context, the Soviet military intended to unleash deep offensive operations from two directions, each having a 400-1200 km width. For this purpose, the Red Army was restructured as follows: the first echelon, the second echelon, and the reserve.¹¹⁷ The first echelon would advance up to 50 km into the enemy territory to defeat the enemy's forward units or control a territory behind the enemy's tactical depth. Following this, second echelon forces would conduct exploitation operations to destroy the enemy's operational groupings and strategic reserves to a depth of 200 km.¹¹⁸ Strategic reserves were put into action with some of the second echelon's forces whose frontal penetration offered more exploitation opportunities.¹¹⁹

5.4.1.1. The Initial Period of War

¹¹¹ Glantz, p. 161.

¹¹² Dinerstein, pp. 245-246.

¹¹³ Glantz, p. 162.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 167.

¹¹⁶ M. Chrednichenko, 1976, quoted in Glantz, pp. 167-168.

¹¹⁷ Glantz, p. 168.

¹¹⁸ M. Chrednichenko, 1976, quoted in Glantz, pp. 168-170.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

The initial period of strategic offensive operations showed similarities with how G.S. Isserson and M.N. Tukhachevsky had designed them in the 1930s. The IPW continued to determine the further development and character of a future war.¹²⁰ In this regard, the first echelon of the Red Army was tasked with performing initial operations, which would allow the Red Army to penetrate enemy defences. Initial operations sought to pave the way for further decisive breakthrough and envelopment operations.¹²¹ Subsequently, the second echelon of the Soviet Army would carry out decisive operations and annihilate enemy operational and strategic reserves in-depth by exploiting the gains of initial operations.¹²² In this regard, the IPW functioned as the 'shaping period' of the Soviet theory of deep operations. Therefore, the functionality of the IPW until the mid-1950s resembled the employment of these concepts in the 1930s.

5.4.1.2. Combat readiness

Soviet strategic offensive operations necessitated the sequential employment of mechanised and tank formations in strict conformity with the 1944-45 operational scheme.¹²³ This scheme involved "a series of army operations executed either simultaneously or successively".¹²⁴ In this regard, the steady strengthening of forward momentum would be the precondition for unleashing deep strategic operations. The Red Army could only achieve this objective by ensuring the *perpetual combat readiness* of deep echelons. Therefore, the Soviet military designed its combat readiness system in conformity with the ideas of Isserson and Tukhachevsky. Both thinkers had advocated for peacetime combat readiness to win initial battles and sequential mobilisation to carry out follow-up breakthrough operations in the 1930s.¹²⁵

5.4.2. Fundamental military concepts in a decisive and spontaneous full-scale nuclear war between the mid-1950s and 1960s

In this period, Soviet strategy saw a marked shift from a protracted conventional war to a full-scale strategic nuclear war following the Soviet General Staff's new forecast. The new design primarily rested on the decisiveness of strategic nuclear weapons. In

¹²⁰ Georgii Samoilovich Isserson, *The Evolution of Operational Art* (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 1936), 66.

¹²¹ Glantz, pp. 169-171.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.* p. 173.

¹²⁴ Z. Slobbin, 1945, quoted in Glantz, p. 169.

¹²⁵ Sally W. Stoecker, *Forging Stalin's Army Marshall Tukhachevsky and the Politics of Military Innovation* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), 40 and Isserson, p. 59.

this context, the new Soviet military strategy sought to annihilate the opponent's armed forces, destruct targets in-depth, and disorganise the enemy's political and economic capacity, predominantly through the use of strategic nuclear weapons.¹²⁶ Concordantly, Soviet thinkers revised the functionality of the initial period of war and combat readiness in nuclear warfare. Next to that, Soviet thinkers carried out systematic studies on the *correlation of forms and methods in the 1970s*, even though the concept's origins dated back to the 1930s. Before the Second World War, the concept was used to estimate the war's outcome by comparing the quantitative and qualitative distinctions of opposing forces.¹²⁷ In the 1970s, the Soviets offered a similar methodological approach to defining this concept. According to the Soviet dictionary of military terms, correlation of forms and methods (COFM) is "the aggregate of indices permitting evaluation of the relatively friendly and hostile troops, by comparative analysis of the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of troop organisation, performance, data on armament and combat material."¹²⁸ This concept was predominantly used to determine the war's outcome by focusing on the superiority of one force over the other.

5.4.2.1 The initial period of war

In the late 1950s, the Soviet military concentrated on examining the initial period of a nuclear war.¹²⁹ During the nuclear euphoria, the initial operations did not rely on the early deployment of tactical and operational forces. These operations were not limited anymore by the ranges of conventional weapon systems.¹³⁰ Instead, the first massed nuclear strikes during the IPW could predetermine a nuclear war's subsequent development and outcome.¹³¹ For instance, Marshall Sokolovsky suggested that the Red Army should "achieve the most decisive results in the shortest time...literally during the very first hours and minutes."¹³² Accordingly, the Soviet High Command re-periodized its war design as follows: *the initial period* and *subsequent period of war*.¹³³ In the new design, a massive nuclear exchange would take place during the IPW. The strategic forces and political-economic centres of the enemy would be the main targets of nuclear

¹²⁶ Sokolovsky, p. 305.

¹²⁷ Isserson, pp.49-53

¹²⁸ Oleksij Ivanovyc Radzievskyj, *Dictionary of Basic Military Terms: A Soviet View* (Moscow: The Ministry of Defence of the Soviet Union, 1965) Published by (Washington: The US Government Printing Office, 1965), 204. Translated by the DGIS Multilingual Section Translation Bureau Secretary of State Department.

¹²⁹ Kokoshin, p. 122.

¹³⁰ Sokolovsky, pp. 94-95.

¹³¹ Kokoshin, p. 123.

¹³² Sokolovsky, p. 308.

¹³³ Hines, p. 41.

strikes.¹³⁴ In the subsequent period of war, the Soviet military would carry out follow-on conventional operations to exploit the gains of nuclear strikes.¹³⁵ According to Sokolovsky:

"The initial period of the modern missile war will obviously be the main and decisive period and will predetermine the development and outcome of the entire war...Since modern weapons permit exceptionally important strategic results to be achieved in the briefest time, both the initial period of the war and the methods of breaking up the opponent's aggressive plans by dealing him in good time a crushing blow will be of decisive significance for the outcome of the entire war." ¹³⁶

The Soviet's perception of the enemy strategy increased the relative value of the IPW in the late 1950s and early 1960s.¹³⁷ Soviet thinkers assumed that the U.S. was preparing for a surprise nuclear attack against the Soviet Union by taking advantage of its superiority in the long-range strategic bombers.¹³⁸ The Soviet Union, on the other hand, prioritized intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) over long-range bombers.¹³⁹ The Soviet concerns about a U.S. surprise attack had arisen when U.S. Air Force generals emphasized 'U.S. first strike capability' in the late 1950s. In 1959, the Commander of the American Strategic Air Command, General Thomas Sarsfield Power, stated that "[w]e must never find ourselves in a situation where we cannot begin a war ourselves. We must have the capability to deliver the first strike."¹⁴⁰ In return, Soviet military and political leadership believed that the U.S. strategy of massive retaliation served to hide the general aggressive character of American strategy.¹⁴¹ Therefore, the U.S. surprise nuclear possibility attested to the "extraordinary increase in the importance of the initial period of the war".¹⁴²

During the Tsarist period, Genrikh A. Leer had developed the principle of *the extreme exertion of force at the beginning of war* to attain a swift victory over the enemy.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, this principle was repeatedly subjected to questioning by Leer's successor, Nicolai P. Mikhnevich, and by the young Turks. Mikhnevich thought that the

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 308-314.

¹³⁷ Sokolovsky, 515.

¹³⁸ Sokolovsky, pp. 152-153.

¹³⁹ Freedman and Michaels, p. 172.

¹⁴⁰ Sokolovsky, p.153.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 152.

¹⁴² Sokolovsky, p. 308.

¹⁴³ Leer, pp. 53-54

Imperial Russian Army should show resilience at the beginning of war to create conditions for an effective operational maneuver.¹⁴⁴ During the interwar period (1917-1939), Georgii S. Isserson and Mikhail N. Tukhachevsky envisaged that tactical achievements of the IPW could be translated into strategic victory through a series of deep strikes.¹⁴⁵ In this regard, the IPW had functioned as the *prologue* and determined the subsequent development and character of the Soviet Army major operations. After the mid-1950s, the Soviet High Command presumed that the IPW would be the leading and decisive period of war. In addition, it would determine the course and outcome of the entire operation.¹⁴⁶ For instance, Soviet General N.A. Lomov argued that the IPW became a central concept in Soviet Military Doctrine in 1963.¹⁴⁷

In the 1960s, Soviet strategy sought to "assure the attainment of victory in the shortest possible time."¹⁴⁸ In this context, three basic options came to the forefront for the initial period of a nuclear war. The options included "pre-emption, launch-on-warning [a retaliatory strike is launched upon warning of a U.S. nuclear attack] and launch-on-attack" [a retaliatory strike is launched upon warning that the U.S. nuclear weapons are on their way].¹⁴⁹ Indeed, these options were the by-product of the strategy of annihilation, which put Leer's principle of *the extreme exertion of force at the beginning of war* at its center. The Soviet High Command evaluated the course of action. Firstly, the Soviet Army did not deploy an adequate network of ballistic missile early warning radars in the 1960s to implement the launch-on-warning strategy. Secondly, most Soviet nuclear forces would be eradicated before launching a retaliatory attack due to the US superiority in nuclear weapons.¹⁵⁰ Thus, the launch-on-attack was not a viable option. Accordingly, the Soviet General Staff leaned toward pre-emption, "a surprise attack on enemy's strategic forces" in the mid-1950s and through much of the 1960s.¹⁵¹

Actually, the pre-emption strike strategy aimed to thwart a possible U.S. surprise nuclear attack. For instance, General N.A. Lomov suggested that "frustrating a nuclear surprise attack by the enemy and taking the strategic lead at the very beginning of war" became the most important principle of Soviet military thought.¹⁵² Nevertheless, this

¹⁴⁴ Nicolai Petrovich Mikhnevich, *The Basics of Strategy* (Saint Petersburg, 1913), 33.

¹⁴⁵ Isserson, p. 65-66.

¹⁴⁶ Sokolovsky, p. 308.

¹⁴⁷ Kokoshin, p. 123.

¹⁴⁸ Sokolovsky, p. 431.

¹⁴⁹ Zaloga, p. 208.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² N. Lomov, 1963, quoted in Kokoshin, p. 123.

strategy was not without its severe flaws. Soviet nuclear forces did not have a high likelihood of destroying the U.S. nuclear strategic missiles without prompting a devastating counter strike.¹⁵³ For this reason, the pre-emptive strike strategy could have catastrophic results for the Red Army, given the shortcomings in the reliability of Soviet strategic forces (in particular the bomber and submarine forces).¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, 'pre-emption' remained the Soviet Union's official discourse. In reality, Soviet strategy intended on demonstrating resilience against U.S. surprise nuclear attack. Afterwards, Soviet strategy rested on inflicting a counter-attack during the initial period of war.¹⁵⁵ According to Marshall P. Romistrov;

"The duty of the Soviet Union is not to allow a surprise attack against our country, and, in case of such an attempt, not only repel the attack but to inflict a counterattack or even a pre-emptive attack of terrible destructive power." ¹⁵⁶

5.4.2.2 Combat readiness

The character of a future nuclear war altered the Soviet High Command's vision of the concept of *combat readiness*. Leer proposed forming a standing and combat-ready army during the Tsarist era to compensate for the Imperial Russian Army's backwardness in mobilization.¹⁵⁷ During the interwar period, G.S.Isserson and M. Tukhachevsky advocated for the peacetime mobilization of deep echelons to attain a strategic victory.¹⁵⁸ However, both endeavours (Leer and Isserson/Tukhachevsky) failed to meet all the mobilization requirements of long and protracted wars. In the two World Wars, the Soviet Army carried out mobilization predominantly during the war, rather than before.¹⁵⁹ In the 1960s, Soviet thinkers believed that combat readiness and preparation of armed forces had changed considerably compared to past wars. During the Cold War, "there is little likelihood of general mobilization starting prior to the opening of military operations" because it could not proceed without the enemy taking notice.¹⁶⁰ Accordingly, the old prerequisites of combat readiness became obsolete in a nuclear

¹⁵³ Zaloga, p. 208.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Freedman and Michaels, p. 185.

¹⁵⁶ Rotmistrov, 1955, quoted in Kokoshin, p. 123.

¹⁵⁷ Genrikh Antonovich Leer, *Positive Strategy - Part 1* (Saint Petersburg, 1877), 6.

¹⁵⁸ Isserson, p. 59 and Stoecker, p. 40.

¹⁵⁹ Sokolovsky, p. 434.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

war. The screening, mobilizing, concentrating, and deploying of armed forces in the theater of operations in the threatening period or during the IPW were no longer valid.¹⁶¹

Therefore, the Soviet High Command sought to keep armed forces in a state of constant combat readiness in peacetime and wartime.¹⁶² According to Sokolovsky, "[t]he possibility that the enemy will attack by surprise and with massive use of nuclear weapons immeasurably increases the need for the Armed Forces to be in constant combat readiness."¹⁶³ Even more importantly, the time required to bring troops to combat readiness during a nuclear war diminished from days to minutes, according to the forecasts of the Soviet High Command.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, Soviet thinkers scrutinized how to ensure a high degree of combat readiness to repel the enemy's first massive nuclear attacks. Therefore, constant combat readiness was one of the essential concepts of the Soviet strategic culture in the late 1950s and 1960s.

In the early 1960s, it was desirable to achieve the main objectives of the IPW without the need for additional mobilization.¹⁶⁵ However, this objective was not within the economic capability of the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, the Soviet High Command addressed this difficulty by prioritizing the combat readiness levels of troops. In this regard, the Soviets prioritized those forces whose mission it was to repel a nuclear attack.¹⁶⁷ The Red Army kept these troops in a state of constant combat readiness. This applied, first and foremost, to the missile forces, air defence forces, border troops, and "some portions of the other branches of the armed forces."¹⁶⁸ Unlike in past wars, combat-ready parts of the ground forces merged with the main operational forces.¹⁶⁹ Overall, the Soviet military sought to maintain the capability to seize the strategic initiative during the initial period of war.

In the 1960s, the Red Army did not entirely overlook the combat readiness of the 'subsequent period of war' forces, because these forces had important roles to play in achieving final war aims. In Soviet thinking, nuclear strikes could destroy enemy strategic weapons, military potentials, and main formations; however, these

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* pp. 93-94.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* p. 435.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* pp. 307-308.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p.433.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 340, 433.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 308.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 433.

achievements would not necessarily bring a victory in the absence of subsequent ground operations.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, these units would bring up prescribed strength during the mobilization period through the territorial build-up of troops.¹⁷¹ According to war planning, the mobilization would partially occur during the threatening period of war and would continue on a full scale during the active phase of military operations.¹⁷² All in all, attaining constant combat readiness to win the initial period of a war and ensuring mobilization readiness to win the subsequent period of war were key to attaining Soviet strategic goals between the late 1950s and early 1960s.

5.4.2.3. Correlation of forms and methods

Soviet forecasts heightened the need to achieve military superiority during a major nuclear war. This requirement promoted the continuity of one of the most critical concepts of Soviet military thought, the correlation of forms and methods (COFM). Before the Second World War, this concept was used to estimate the war's outcome by comparing the quantitative and qualitative distinctions of opposing forces by use of the parity factor. In his major book, *The Basic Principles of Operational Art and Tactics*, V.Y Savkin suggests that

"The first law of war is that the course and outcome of war waged with unlimited employment of all means of conflict are determined by the correlation of strictly military forces available to combatants at the beginning of the war, especially in nuclear weapons and means for delivery."¹⁷³

This law arose out of the Soviet eagerness to predetermine the outcome of a future war by maintaining superiority in nuclear weapons and the technique of their employment.¹⁷⁴ In particular, the Soviet strategy focused on maintaining nuclear supremacy over the enemy during the IPW.¹⁷⁵

V.Y. Savkin argues that the correlation of forces "must be characterized not only by quantitative but also by qualitative indicators."¹⁷⁶ Even though both indicators were

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* 435.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* p. 339.

¹⁷³ Vasilii Yefisovich Savkin, *The Basic Principles of Operational Art and Tactics* (Moscow: The Ministry of Defence of the Soviet Union, 1972) Published by (Washington: United States Air Force, 1972), 65 and 89.

¹⁷⁴ Sokolovsky, p. 335.

¹⁷⁵ Glantz, p. 194.

¹⁷⁶ Savkin. p. 90.

instrumental in calculating correlation, Soviet thinkers emphasized that significant shortcomings in the quality of troops could not be made up for by a simple quantitative increase in numbers. Generally speaking, Savkin defined the quality of armed forces as "the capability to accomplish practically missions of defeating the enemy."¹⁷⁷ The combat readiness level of forces predominantly determined the qualitative characteristics of the military.¹⁷⁸ In Soviet thinking, the achievement of surprise multiplies the correlation in Soviet Union's favour.¹⁷⁹ Gen. Andrian A. Danilevich also mentioned that "[b]ecause of qualitative deficiencies, one side could have a tenfold quantitative advantage and still be behind."¹⁸⁰ According to Savkin, "the superiority in nuclear weapons, their quality and technique for their employment are more important than their numbers."¹⁸¹

Even though the Soviet High Command concentrated on waging a major nuclear war, it did not entirely overlook the relative correlation of conventional forces. The Soviet strategy sought to "assure the attainment of victory in the shortest possible time."¹⁸² If need be, it also ensured the capability to wage war over a protracted period in the 1960s.¹⁸³ In connection with this, the Soviet High Command anticipated that the Third World War would be a missile and nuclear war in which missiles carrying nuclear warheads would be the main instruments of attaining war objectives. In the mid-1960s, the idea that final victory would be reached by a combination of all branches of the armed forces gradually gained recognition.¹⁸⁴ This strategy entailed "a single strategic offensive along the entire front, with the use of pre-emptive nuclear strikes, followed by decisive, uninterrupted land advance."¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, waging a protracted war with all kinds of weapon systems would be the contingency plan of the Soviet strategy.¹⁸⁶ This contingency required the Soviet Army to achieve superiority in the most maneuverable ground forces.¹⁸⁷ Soviet planners acknowledged that ground forces had to surpass the enemy in firepower to attain a victory. Therefore, the Soviet High Command increased the correlation of ground forces by equipping them with operational

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 91.

¹⁷⁹ Glantz, p. 224.

¹⁸⁰ Hines, p. 22.

¹⁸¹ Sokolovsky, p. 335.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* 431.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Sokolovsky, p. 313.

¹⁸⁵ Andrian A. Danilevich, quoted in Hines, p. 55.

¹⁸⁶ Savkin, pp. 90-91.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 194 and 314.

and tactical nuclear missiles especially after the mid-1960s. By this means, these weapons would "destroy any target, whatever the depth of the operational zone, regardless of weather, visibility, and enemy countermeasures."¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, missile troops would replace artillery and aviation in bombarding the front.

5.4.3. Fundamental military concepts in a protracted conventional war under the constant threat of the use of nuclear weapons in the 1970s and 1980s

The shift in U.S. military doctrine from *massive retaliation* to *flexible response* and the increased efficacy of conventional weapon systems contributed to a change in Soviet forecasts of a future war. In the 1950s and 1960s, Soviet leadership, first and foremost N. Khrushchev, publicly denied Soviet scientists' warning about nuclear winter if any side would launch an atomic or hydrogen bomb attack.¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the Red Army acknowledged the dangers of a nuclear war in the 1970s after Leonid Brezhnev came into power. As a result of this, a Soviet nuclear exercise in 1972 indicated that a major nuclear war would annihilate the entire Soviet military and radiate the European side of the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, the US/NATO ambition to use high precision weapon systems in response to Soviet deep strikes increased the significance of modern conventional weapons. The Soviet High Command still considered nuclear war a possibility; however, mutual nuclear deterrence raised the possibility that war would remain conventional.¹⁹¹ Accordingly, Soviet military thinkers anticipated that a future war would be an "active and decisive warfare involving all types of armed forces acting in concert in terms of their mission, time, and place".¹⁹² When the Soviets attained strategic nuclear parity, their focus shifted to using theater nuclear capabilities to support conventional operations. Therefore, Soviet forecasting analysis saw a marked change from *a major nuclear war* to *a protracted conventional war under the constant threat of nuclear weapons* between the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁹³

In the late 1960s, the Soviet High Command still considered a short nuclear war as more likely, although a conventional war, from beginning to end, was not ruled out.¹⁹⁴ The forecast of the early 1970s assumed that the existence of nuclear parity might

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 341.

¹⁸⁹ Freedman and Michaels, p. 183.

¹⁹⁰ Hines, p. 55.

¹⁹¹ Glantz, p. 215.

¹⁹² Grechko, quoted in Kokoshin, p. 129.

¹⁹³ Kokoshin, p. 133.

¹⁹⁴ M. Povaly, 1967, quoted in Kokoshin, p.124.

result in a disinclination to resort to nuclear weapons. In 1974, the Soviet Minister of Defence Andrei Grechko stated that "Soviet military science, despite the enormous power of the nuclear weapon, does not consider it absolute."¹⁹⁵ In the second half of the 1970s, there was a growing tendency toward a future conventional war from beginning to end.¹⁹⁶ Despite the emphasis on combined arms (including nuclear and conventional weapons), the Soviet High Command concluded that a future war would most likely be conventional.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, the operational art retained its importance in the form of deep Soviet "anti-nuclear maneuvers" (*protivoiadernyi manevr*).¹⁹⁸ These maneuvers aimed to prevent the enemy from resorting to nuclear weapons by using lightning and deep conventional strikes.¹⁹⁹ Consequently, the Soviet High Command re-periodized war design as follows: "a period of non-nuclear options [IPW], the period of limited nuclear actions, the period of nuclear options, and a concluding period" between the mid-1970s and 1980s.²⁰⁰ In the 1980s, the Soviet High Command forecasted that a victory would only be possible through joint efforts by all forces and means, including limited use of nuclear weapons. In the latter half of the 1980s, Soviet thinkers focused on waging war with more destructive forms of conventional warfare.²⁰¹

5.4.3.1. The Initial Period of War

In the 1970s and 1980s, Soviet thinkers revised the content and functional use of the IPW based on the forecasts of a future war. According to the Voroshilov Lectures of the Soviet General Staff Academy, "seizing the strategic initiative under any circumstances at the outbreak of the war is one of the most important principles of military strategy."²⁰² In the 1960s, Soviet thinkers believed that initial operations, nuclear or otherwise, would predetermine the course and outcome of a war. However, keeping a future war conventional from beginning to end in the 1970s altered the functionality of IPW. In the 1970s, the Soviet General Staff sought to inhibit the enemy from resorting to a nuclear attack by carrying out paralyzing conventional deep penetrations called "anti-nuclear maneuvers", carried out primarily by armored divisions enabled by theatre

¹⁹⁵ A. Grechko, 1974, quoted in Kokoshin, p. 128.

¹⁹⁶ Hines, p. 57.

¹⁹⁷ V. Zemskov, 1974, quoted in Kokoshin, p. 128.

¹⁹⁸ Glantz, p. 208.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Hines, p. 41.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

²⁰² Ghulam Dastagir Wardak, *The Voroshilov Lectures: Materials from the Soviet General Staff Academy, Volume-1*, (Washington: The National Defence University Press, 1989), 81-82.

level nuclear weapons.²⁰³ These maneuvers, "which grew in length from several hours to 7-8 days", formed the initial operations.²⁰⁴ In Europe, the Soviets sought to implement these maneuvers in two theaters at once, one in the center and one in the south. Subsequently, the Soviet's first echelon aimed to control a territory up to 600-1200 km deep.²⁰⁵ Anti-nuclear maneuvers would expand from the Soviet border up through the Rhine River.²⁰⁶ However, follow-on strategic (nuclear) operations remained uncertain.²⁰⁷ Therefore, the functionality of the IPW shifted from a decisive period of war to a period when the Soviet military sought to grasp the strategic initiative through anti-nuclear manoeuvres.

In this context, Soviet thinkers re-designed the theory of deep operations in accordance with the research done on the concept of IPW. According to Marshall Kulikov,

"In a nuclear war, if it is unleashed by aggressive countries, simultaneous nuclear strikes on the enemy and skilful exploitation of the results of those strikes are most important. During combat with only conventional weaponry, the skilful concentration of superior forces and weaponry is required to deliver blows on selected directions and also rapid dispersal of those forces after fulfilment of the combat missions."²⁰⁸

Unlike the mid-1940s and early 1950s, the principal precondition for victory was the surprise conduct of penetrative strikes by forces concentrated well forward.²⁰⁹ In contrast to the previous period, the Soviets attached more importance to initial conventional penetrations. Accordingly, the Soviet High Command changed its war design from the *three-echeloned deep operations of the 1930s* (first, second and reserve) to *single echelon front offensive operations*. Hence, the first echelon had to deliver deep paralysing blows to the enemy without requiring a second echelon or reserve.²¹⁰ These operations sought "to attain swift victory against unprepared or partially prepared forces occupying (or trying to occupy) relatively shallow defences and lacking significant operational reserves."²¹¹ These operations aimed to gain strategic initiative during the IPW and pre-empt the enemy from using nuclear weapons. If

²⁰³ Glantz, p. 208 and 215.

²⁰⁴ Hines, p. 56.

²⁰⁵ Odom, p.77-78.

²⁰⁶ Hines, p. 56.

²⁰⁷ Odom, p. 78.

²⁰⁸ Kulikov, in Glantz, pp. 215-216.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 209.

²¹⁰ U. Molostov, A. Novikov, 1988, quoted in Glantz, p. 209.

²¹¹ Glantz, pp. 229-230.

conventional deterrence failed, the Soviet High Command considered the possibility of carrying out limited nuclear and un-limited nuclear strikes during the subsequent phases of war.²¹²

5.4.3.2. Combat readiness

Ensuring nuclear parity and attaining conventional supremacy hinged on the combat readiness of the Soviet military. According to the Soviet military doctrine, "war can break out by a surprise attack without a preceding period of threat, can be initiated after a period of threat or can escalate from a military action of limited scope."²¹³ Out of these contingencies, "without a preceding period of threat" was the most dangerous form.²¹⁴ Due to this possibility, the Soviet High Command concluded in the 1970s and 1980s that "the Armed Forces must be kept in a high state of combat readiness" in peacetime as well as in wartime.²¹⁵ Overall, the scope of combat readiness expanded from selected units tasked with repelling an enemy nuclear attack to the entire Soviet Armed Forces.²¹⁶ In this new scheme, the combat-ready nuclear forces could deliver timely initial strikes by surprise.²¹⁷ In addition, combat-ready ground forces could repel enemy invasions and carry out deep and decisive blows against unprepared enemy defences in continental theaters of strategic military action (TSMA).²¹⁸

In the 1970s, special attention was paid to the concept of combat readiness in Voroshilov Lectures of the Soviet General Staff Academy. Accordingly, the Soviets defined combat readiness as "a state and capability which ensure the desired security of the nation in peacetime and the achievement of specific aims in the case of war."²¹⁹ In addition, combat readiness should comply with the "requirements of a future war and the objectives and missions assigned to the Armed Forces."²²⁰ The organization of units, the use of modern weapons, personnel training, and the swift deployment of units were within the scope of this concept.²²¹ Therefore, Soviet combat readiness could not

²¹² Hines, p. 56.

²¹³ Wardak (Voroshilov-1), p. 70.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 70 and 240.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* p.177.

²²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 178.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

be limited to early warning systems and the constant rehearsals of troops. It should also consist of the capabilities and competencies of units to carry out assigned duties.²²²

During the 1960s, nuclear forces, the first echelon troops, border troops, and air defence troops were kept in a high-readiness posture.²²³ The mission of these forces was to repel a nuclear attack and secure significant economic and strategic centers. During the 1970s and "980s, "high combat readiness was required of the entire armed forces, of all subunits, units, ships, and large units, regardless of the areas of their location."²²⁴ Connected to this, the Red Army put a three-level combat readiness system in place: constant (*postoiannaia*), increased (*vyssshaia*), and full (*polnaia*) combat readiness.²²⁵ In a state of constant combat readiness, units conducted prescribed military trainings and exercises.²²⁶ Strategic nuclear forces, air defence forces, and the groupings of ground forces always remained in a state of constant combat readiness at full wartime strength. At increased combat readiness, units were alerted, personnel mobilization was completed, and combat preparations started.²²⁷ At full combat readiness, units would be ready to carry out combat missions.²²⁸ Accordingly, all units of the Soviet Army were kept in a state of constant combat readiness during peacetime. Soviet strategic deployment relied predominantly on transitioning from constant to full-time combat readiness in times of war or the threat of war, without the need for major additional mobilization.²²⁹ In case of a protracted war, mobilization would be central to achieving war objectives.²³⁰

Taken together, the concept of "combat readiness entered the strategic category" in Soviet strategy.²³¹ Likewise, Soviet Chief of General Staff M.V. Zakharov asserted that improving *combat readiness* was the priority and foremost task of Soviet military science in the 1970s.²³²

5.4.3.3. Correlation of forms and methods

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 205-212.

²³⁰ Glantz, p. 221.

²³¹ Wardak, (Voroshilov-1), p. 179.

²³² Zakharov M.V, "Leninism and Soviet Military Science." In *Selected Soviet Military Writings: A Soviet View 1970-1975* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1977), 86-92

In the 1970s and 1980s, the "relative correlation of combat, economic, and moral-political capabilities" of the Soviet Union influenced the characteristics of war strategy.²³³ In the context of that, correlation enquiries helped the Soviet Army determine the amount and quality of troops necessary to win both a short nuclear war and a protracted future war. Savkin argued that a victory in a short-lived nuclear war could be attained by the "unlimited employment of all means of conflict... at the beginning of the war."²³⁴ On the other hand, victory in a protracted war depended "on the correlation of the combatants' military potentials" in the long run.²³⁵

In the 1960s, Soviet military science was aimed at increasing correlation over the enemy by prioritizing quality over quantity. In the 1970s, Soviet military strategy still saw "the maintenance of military-technological superiority over the enemy as one condition for the successful conduct of a general nuclear war."²³⁶ However, parity in strategic and theater (tactical) nuclear missiles resulted in the possibility of warfare remaining conventional in the 1970s.²³⁷ Therefore, attaining superiority in conventional forces and means over the enemy also became vital.²³⁸ For Soviet thinkers, technological advances altered the characteristics of conventional war. The growing significance of operational maneuver and the appearance of new high precision weapons were the new means of warfare.²³⁹ Therefore, Soviet strategy in the 1970s was aimed at achieving conventional superiority over the adversary during the initial (non-nuclear) period of war.

Given the West's conventional superiority on modern anti-tank systems (precision-guided munitions), the Soviet breakthrough echelon's ratio of correlation of forces decreased in comparison with the 1944/45 Army operations' breakthrough phase.²⁴⁰ Accordingly, the ratio of Soviet forces to NATO forces during the breakthrough operations went down from 5:1 (Soviet/NATO) to 3:1.²⁴¹ Thus, the Soviets aimed to increase the correlation of the breakthrough echelons by carrying out preventive tactical

²³³ Wardak, (Voroshilov-1), p. 234.

²³⁴ Savkin, p. 65 and 89.

²³⁵ Ibid. p. 90.

²³⁶ Wardak (Voroshilov-1), p. 83.

²³⁷ Glantz, pp. 243-244.

²³⁸ Wardak (Voroshilov-1), p. 209.

²³⁹ Glantz, p. 254.

²⁴⁰ Fritz Stoecki, "The correlation of forces and success in overcoming anti-tank defenses", *The Journal of Soviet Military Studies* 1:2 (1998), 249.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

nuclear, artillery and air strikes on enemy defences.²⁴² Therefore, enhanced *combat readiness* could change the *correlation of forces* in favor of the Soviet military.²⁴³ The Soviet military planning rested on the notion that the Soviet military must be ready to strike first before the enemy defences were established.²⁴⁴ Furthermore, the Soviets believed that combat against modern anti-tank systems demanded keeping nuclear and conventional fire systems and electronic systems at high levels of combat readiness.²⁴⁵

In the nuclear realm, strategic stability was the main objective.²⁴⁶ From the mid-1970s to 1990, attaining nuclear superiority was no longer on the agenda of the Soviet Union.²⁴⁷ In the 1980s, the Soviet High Command emphasized the necessity of maintaining a general nuclear balance. After Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985, Soviet leadership concluded that there could be no victory in a strategic nuclear war.²⁴⁸ Some military thinkers went so far as to argue that the achievement of military superiority is useless. Instead, the emphasis was placed on the "defence of the Soviet Union."²⁴⁹ Furthermore, Soviet Minister of Defence S.L. Sokolov stated in 1986 that "it is impossible to win not only nuclear war but also the arms race."²⁵⁰ In 1988, the Marshall of the Soviet Union, Dmitry Yazov, emphasized that "the Soviet Union does not strive for the superiority, does not claim more security, but it will not agree to less security and will not permit any other power to gain military superiority over it."²⁵¹

The Soviet High Command acknowledged that "further raising the level of parity [in nuclear weapons] would not increase the security of either side."²⁵² In this context, the nuclear strategy of the Soviet Union shifted from a *pre-emptive strike* to a *retaliatory strike*.²⁵³ Next to that, nuclear weapons re-tasked with the provision of a nuclear umbrella in case of a full-scale conventional war.²⁵⁴ Therefore, the Soviet military's correlation strategy relied on achieving conventional supremacy during the initial (non-nuclear) period of war.²⁵⁵ Meanwhile, strategic and tactical nuclear forces remained at

²⁴² Ibid, p. 252.

²⁴³ Ibid. p. 260.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Kerry Lee Hines, "Competing Concepts of Deep Operations", *The Journal of Soviet Military Studies* 1 (1998), 62.

²⁴⁶ Hines, p. 57.

²⁴⁷ Kokoshin, p. 133.

²⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 140.

²⁴⁹ Ibid. pp. 127-128.

²⁵⁰ S.L. Sokolov, quoted in Kokoshin, p. 140.

²⁵¹ D.T. Yazov, 1988, quoted in Kokoshin, p. 133.

²⁵² Kolikov, 1985, quoted in Kokoshin, p. 141.

²⁵³ Hines, p. 57 and Gray, p. 34.

²⁵⁴ Gray, p. 34.

²⁵⁵ M.A. Gareyev, quoted in Kokoshin, p. 137.

increased levels of combat readiness. After the mid-1980s, the Deputy Minister of Defense, V.M. Shabanov, publicly announced that the Soviet Military intended to attain a qualitative leap in developing conventional weapons through the use of "strike-reconnaissance" systems and complete mechanisation and military robotics.²⁵⁶

Stoecki studied the Soviet attack echelons' decreasing ratio of *correlation of forces* given Western conventional superiority on modern anti-tank systems.²⁵⁷ Thus, Stoecki analyzed how enhanced *combat readiness* could change the *correlation of forces* in favor of the Soviet military.²⁵⁸

5. 5. A synthesis of fundamental military concepts between 1945 and 1990

	Forecasting (<i>Prognozirovat</i>)		
	a major and protracted conventional war between 1945 and the mid-1950s	a decisive and spontaneous full-scale nuclear war between the mid-1950s and 1960s	a protracted conventional war under the constant threat of the use of nuclear weapons during the 1970s and 1980s.
Initial Period of War (<i>nacalnyi period voyny</i>)	The initial operations determine the further development and character of deep operations	The IPW is the main and decisive period of a future nuclear war.	The IPW operations help the Soviet military gain strategic initiative and prevent enemy from using nuclear weapons.
Combat Readiness (<i>Boevaya gotovnost</i>)	The attainment of peacetime combat readiness to win initial battles and carry out sequential mobilization to win deep operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attaining constant combat readiness to win 'the initial period of a war' ensuring mobilization readiness to win the 'subsequent period of war' 	The Soviet Armed Forces as a whole must be kept in a state of constant combat readiness to win the objectives of the IPW without the need for additional mobilization.
Correlation of Forms and Methods (<i>sootnesheniye sil i sredstv</i>)	- The attainment of superiority in mechanized warfare under the theory of deep operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The achievement of qualitative superiority in nuclear forces The achievement of qualitative superiority in conventional weapons by means of operational and tactical nuclear missiles 	The achievement of parity in nuclear forces and superiority in conventional forces (especially precision guided munitions)

Figure 3: The evolution of Soviet fundamental military concepts between 1945-1990

Figure three shows an overview of the evolution of Soviet fundamental military concepts between 1945-1990. Closer inspection of the figure indicates that the concept of forecasting was key to determining Soviet military strategies during the period of investigation. Accordingly, the forecasts helped the Soviet military identify qualitative leaps and discontinuities in a future war's character. The vertical column of the figure

²⁵⁶ V.M. Shabanov, quoted in Kokoshin. p. 140.

²⁵⁷ Fritz Stoecki, "The correlation of forces and success in overcoming anti-tank defenses", *The Journal of Soviet Military Studies* 1:2 (1998), 249.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 260.

indicates these leaps between 1945 and 1990. These are *a major and protracted conventional war between 1945 and the mid-1950s, a decisive and spontaneous full-scale nuclear war between the mid-1950s and 1960s, and a protracted conventional war under the constant threat of the use of nuclear weapons during the 1970s and 1980s*. Despite the discontinuities in Soviet strategy, fundamental military concepts remained intact. Nevertheless, the functionality of the IPW, combat readiness, and COFM underwent transformation under the three forecasted periods. Therefore, each horizontal row indicates the changing semantic contents of fundamental military concepts within forecasted periods.

It is apparent from this figure that the semantic content of the IPW saw marginal changes over three periods. While the IPW specified the further development of deep operations between the mid-1940s and mid-1950s, it became the decisive period of nuclear war from the mid-1950s to the 1960s. After the 1970s, the Soviet military intended to gain strategic initiative and prevent the enemy from resorting to nuclear weapons during the IPW. In this regard, the IPW functioned as the 'decisive' period of a nuclear war and the shaping period of conventional war in a nuclear-scared posture.

The semantic content of combat readiness did not see any change. From 1945 to 1990, achieving the objectives of the IPW without the need for further mobilization was the ultimate aim of Soviet combat readiness. Because the IPW of a nuclear war acquired a decisive character after the mid-1950s and 1960s, combat readiness assumed greater importance. After the 1970s, the objective of winning the IPW of both conventional and nuclear war compelled the Soviet High Command to keep the entire armed forces in a state of constant combat readiness. Therefore, the functionality of combat readiness did not change over time. Nevertheless, the content of the IPW determined the content of combat readiness to a considerable degree between 1945 and 1990.

Finally, the content of the correlation underwent a series of changes. During Stalin's era, the Soviets thought that superiority in mechanized warfare would ensure a victory following the theory of deep operations. Between the mid-1950s and 1960s, the Soviet Military intended to achieve qualitative superiority in terms of nuclear and conventional troops. After the 1970s, the Red Army aimed at strategic stability in nuclear weapons and supremacy in conventional weapons. Thus, it can be argued that qualitative superiority took precedence over quantitative superiority in Soviet thinking during the

Cold War period. Among other things, a high state of combat readiness was one of the core characteristics of qualitative superiority in Soviet military strategies.

5. 6. Conclusion

The most prominent finding to emerge from this chapter is that fundamental military concepts secured their continuity and strategic relevance in Soviet strategic thinking during the Cold War. Despite an initial tendency to discard old concepts, these concepts helped the Red Army design new strategies that responded to the changes in military technology. The study has shown that forecasting was essential for building various Soviet military strategies. Soviet forecasts specified military strategy and the functionality of the other concepts, such as the IPW, combat readiness, and correlation. Firstly, the IPW remained one of the most discussed concepts of Soviet strategic thought. Despite the changing character of war, the IPW was utilized as it had been designed to in the Imperial Russian and early Soviet periods. In conformity with the concept's early use, the IPW was regarded as the 'decisive' period of a short (nuclear) war of annihilation and 'shaping' period of a long war of attrition. Secondly, gaining strategic initiative during the IPW put the concept of combat readiness at the centre stage of Soviet strategy. Accordingly, the Soviet combat readiness system constantly sought to achieve the objectives of the IPW without the need for further mobilization. When the IPW acquired a decisive character, the Soviet High Command put almost the entire armed forces in a state of constant combat readiness. Therefore, this investigation shows that the content of the IPW specifies the combat readiness level and scope of the Soviet military. Finally, the results of this study support the idea that qualitative superiority takes precedence over quantitative superiority in Soviet thinking, and, furthermore, that combat readiness constituted the qualitative aspect of correlation inquiries.

Therefore, the research concludes that fundamental military concepts remain essential in Soviet strategic thinking between 1945 and 1990. First and foremost, shifts in military strategy took place in close conformity with the forecasts of a future war. (Figure-1) Secondly, fundamental military concepts prevailed even during the period of *nuclear euphoria*. The Soviet military had recourse to these concepts while designing new strategies that responded to the shifts in military technology. In this regard, the objective of *winning the IPW of a war of annihilation (nuclear war)* molded the Soviet nuclear war strategy between the mid-1950s and late 1960s. When the traditionalists

increased their efficiency in the Soviet High Command in the 1970s, the functionality of these concepts resembled their use in the 1920s and 1930s. For instance, *single echelon front offensive operations* (anti-nuclear maneuvers) of the 1970s were an adjusted version of the original theory of deep operations, dating from the 1930s. When the U.S. gained technological superiority in precision-guided munitions in the 1980s, ensuring a high correlation of combat potentials (instead of active troops) became the essential criterion for winning a long war of attrition.

To conclude, this chapter has shown that fundamental military concepts ensured a considerable level of continuity in Soviet thinking during the Cold War. The principles that originated during the late Imperial Russian and early Soviet periods continued to function as the basis of Soviet military thinking. Despite war's changing character, these concepts remained strategically essential.