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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-6

### The Evolution of Russian Fundamental Military Concepts Between 1990 and 2010

*After the end of the Cold War, the Russian High Command struggled to accommodate itself to the requirements of modern warfare. Against the backdrop of changing political circumstances, the Russian Military underwent a complete organizational transformation. This transformation also necessitated a doctrinal and conceptual makeover of Russian military thought. Therefore, this chapter aims to investigate the continuity and discontinuity of fundamental military concepts in Russian military thought between 1990 and 2010. The research finds that the Russian military put forecasting and the correlation of forms and methods at its center while steering the military transformation. These concepts helped the Russian military to anticipate the character and outcome of future conflicts and to make itself ready for waging modern wars. Seizing the strategic initiative by permanent combat readiness formations during the IPW was essential to military success during this period. The research shows that the traditionalist body of opinion in the Russian High Command Russianized new Western military concepts by looking at them through the prism of fundamental military concepts.<sup>1</sup> The research concludes that fundamental military concepts continued to give form to the military doctrine, organisational structure, and strategy, even though the Russian military went through a complete transformation.*

#### 6.1. Introduction

After the Cold War, the Russian military has struggled to adapt itself to the new security environment. In addition, war's changing character demonstrated a pressing need for military reform. In this regard, military transformation is key to understanding the roots of Russia's new conceptualization of warfare after the 1990s. In this regard, considerable literature has grown up around the Russian military reform theme between 1990 and 2010. Nevertheless, research on the subject has been mostly restricted to cognitive and organizational transformation.<sup>2</sup> Other studies have centred on contextual

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<sup>1</sup> Traditionalist-modernist classification of the Russian military belongs to the author.

<sup>2</sup> Anne C. Aldis and Roger N. McDermott, *Russian Military Reform: 1992-2002* (Ebsco Publishing: 2003); Micheal Orr, "Reform and the Russian Ground Forces, 1992–2002", in *Russian Military Reform: 1992-2002*, eds. Anne C. Aldis, Roger N. McDermott, 122-138 (Ebsco Publishing: 2003); Alexei G. Arbatov, "Military Reform: From Crisis to

and socio-political change while scrutinizing Russian military transformation.<sup>3</sup> Such approaches, however, have failed to address the doctrinal and conceptual transformation of Russian military thought. Furthermore, previous studies have not dealt with the historical roots of military reform. Russian military transformation cannot be properly understood in seclusion from the historical context. Existing accounts fail to resolve the contradiction between Western and Russian approaches to warfare from a conceptual perspective. Therefore, this chapter traces the development of Russian military thought by centering on fundamental military concepts between 1990 and 2010. By this means, this chapter sets out to investigate the historical continuity, enduring relevance and interrelation of fundamental military concepts in contemporary Russian military thought.

This chapter again uses a conceptual history approach to investigate the evolution of five fundamental military concepts. For the purpose of this research, *fundamentalness* is inextricably linked with historical continuity and strategic relevance. In the previous chapters, the research investigated the rise and evolution of four fundamental military concepts: forecasting, correlation of forms and methods (COFM), the initial period of war (IPW), and combat readiness in Russian military thought between 1856 and 1990. This chapter adds another concept to that investigation: reflexive *control*, which helps the Russian military influence the enemy's decision-making processes. The research data in this chapter has been drawn from three main categories of resources: the accessible publications of the Russian Journal of Military Thought (*Voennaya Mysl*) after the 1990s, the scholarly works of Russian thinkers and some relevant Western publications on Russian military thought. Among these resources, the Russian Journal of *Military Thought* is a primary resource. Therefore, this chapter includes a detailed analysis of the journal's selected articles (43 articles). The selection was made on the basis of these articles either being about or using the concepts under study.

This chapter has been divided into five sections. Section two gives a brief overview of the socio-historical circumstances of the period between 1990 and 2010. The following sections (three, four, and five) will scrutinize fundamental military concepts at length

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Stagnation" in *The Russian Military Power and Policy* eds. Steven Miller and Dmitri Trenin, 95-119 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); Bettina Renz, "Russian Military Reform," *The RUSI Journal* 155:1 (March 2010)

<sup>3</sup> Pavel K. Baev, "The Trajectory of the Russian Military: Downsizing, Degeneration, and Defeat", in *The Russian Military Power and Policy* eds. Steven Miller and Dmitri Trenin, 43-72 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 46; Steven E. Miller, "Moscow's Military Power: Russia's Search for Security in an Age of Transition" in *The Russian Military: Power and Policy*, eds. Steven Miller and Dmitri Trenin, 1-42 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), Marcel de Haas "Russia's Military Reforms: Victory after 20 years of Failure?" *Clingendael*:5 (November 2011)

by dealing with three themes: *the character and outcome of a future war, the periodization of war* and *the influence of non-military means on Russian military thought*. These themes reflect the broader discussions in the Russian Federation Academy of Military Sciences about war and strategy during the 1990s and 2000s and represent broader strategic debates under which military concepts tend to disappear, survive, or gain a new semantic content. Therefore, they offer important insights into the theoretical context in which concepts are defined and discussed. The Russian General Staff utilized forecasting and correlation to anticipate a war's new character and outcome. The discussions on the initial period of war specified the periodization of war in Russian thinking. Finally, reflexive control symbolized the broader discussion on the prominence of non-military means, especially information means, in Russia's approach to modern war. Drawing upon the findings of the previous parts, the remaining sections of this chapter will synthesise the findings to draw conclusions on the historical continuity and semantic evolution.

## **6.2. The general characteristics of Russian military strategy between 1990 and 2010**

After the Cold War, the Russian military struggled to carry out military reform in the absence of clear political guidance. Due to the deplorable economic situation, the military saw a reduction by a factor of three in terms of numerical strength and by a factor of ten in terms of the share of gross domestic product allotted to defence.<sup>4</sup> Despite the ongoing process of military downsizing, complete political supervision could not be achieved. The Kremlin was unable to lead the change since it depended entirely on military power to secure itself against possible coup attempts. Following the withdrawal of troops from the post-Soviet space, the Russian military became embroiled in a protracted war with the Chechen insurgency in the mid-1990s. Afterwards, the Russian political elite prioritized internal security over defence.

Indeed, the Chechen war laid bare the Russian military's doctrinal and material incompetence to cope with the new types of threats in the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> In addition, a new epoch in warfare began in the 1990s when Western militaries resorted to novel methodologies and means in Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The essential characteristics of these wars were the increasing effectiveness of air campaigns and the

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<sup>4</sup> Baev, p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 58.

use of conventional strategic weapons (stand-off weapons, i.e. precision offensive and defensive conventional weapons) and information technologies in a concerted manner to attain political objectives. In Moscow's way of thinking, all these developments demonstrated a pressing need for military reform. Unassisted by sufficient political guidance, the Russian military struggled to reform itself in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Instead, the political elite frequently "used (and abused) the military for its own purposes."<sup>6</sup> For instance, Boris Yeltsin preserved the Russian State's existing military and defence structures instead of forming a new civilian-controlled military command. Yeltsin sought to earn the Russian High Command's loyalty by maintaining the Russian military's sphere of influence.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, the Russian High Command disregarded criticism and resisted scrutiny.<sup>8</sup>

Many internal and external factors influenced the process of structural military reform. Firstly, the discussions revolved around whether the Russian military should prioritize unconventional security threats. Alternatively, should the Russian military draw more attention to NATO by perceiving the Alliance's eastward enlargement as a more significant threat?<sup>9</sup> While the proponents of the first view argued that contemporary threats in Russia's neighbourhood required the formation of capable conventional forces, the advocates of the second view gave strategic nuclear forces a priority.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, internal discussions concentrated on ordering weapon systems. While the modernist body of opinion preferred conventional strategic weapons and information/electronic warfare assets, the traditionalists gave attention to ground forces and strategic nuclear weapons. Thirdly, other Russian thinkers denounced the military elite's unawareness of the non-military dimensions of strategy. This school of thought condemned the prevailing view of the General Staff, which downgraded the concept of war to armed conflict. Criticism also targeted the Marxist-Leninist base of Russian military science. According to this view, the perception of armed conflict as inevitable until socialism won was preventing military science from developing.<sup>11</sup> In light of the protracted evolution of the Chechen wars, the Russian political and military elite leaned towards the idea that Russia's capabilities for fighting small wars should be enhanced.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Baev, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Pavel Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles* (London: Sage, 1996)

<sup>8</sup> Arbatov, p. 98.

<sup>9</sup> Baev, p. 54.

<sup>10</sup> Orr, p. 126 and see Pavel, pp. 54-55.

<sup>11</sup> I.S. Danilenko, "From Applied Military Science to a Basic Science of Warfare: Part 1", *Military Thought* 17:4 (October 2008): 92.

<sup>12</sup> Baev, p. 58.

Nevertheless, this strategy did not offer viable solutions to the Russian High Command's growing concern about Western military superiority in terms of conventional weapons. Furthermore, the modernists were uneasy about the underestimation of non-military means of warfare.

Another meaningful discussion took place on the issue of whether Russian military thought had lost its function and relevance. The modernist body of opinion, led by I.N. Vorobyov and V.A. Kiselev, advocated for the emergence of "innovative military science" to develop a new warfare theory.<sup>13</sup> This approach encouraged studying future warfare by continually revising military concepts and leaving behind classical dogmas.<sup>14</sup> According to this body of opinion, an innovative approach could answer questions about the technological aspects of warfare.<sup>15</sup> Even though the proponents of this view did not attempt to replace fundamental military concepts in their works, they tried to upgrade and enrich their definition. On the other side, the traditionalists led by the President of the Russian Federation Academy of Military Sciences, General M.A. Gareyev and Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov put strategic cultural inheritance at the centre of military thought. This body of opinion aimed to address modern challenges by employing strategic and conceptual schemes of the previous periods. Their violent-centric and direct approaches to war promoted the continuity and functioning of fundamental military concepts. The proponents of this view were mainly senior in rank and had a positional advantage over the modernists in the Russian High Command. They also cited the Russian military's technological inferiority as a legitimate excuse while defending their thesis.

Nevertheless, modernist opinions were not undermined in theoretical discussions. According to the modernists, research on military thought did not correctly focus on discovering the nature of warfare in the new era.<sup>16</sup> This era was characterized by a new form of relatively swift air-ground-space operations with large-scale employment of high-precision weapons and technological innovation on computer science, outer space, robotics, and artificial intelligence.<sup>17</sup> The modernists suggested that these developments proved to be beyond the forecasts of Russian strategists who adhered to traditionalist

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<sup>13</sup> I.N. Vorobyov and V.A. Kiselev, "On the Innovative Development Concept in the Armed Forces", *Military Thought*, 18:3 (July 2009): 52.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 53.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Vorobyov and Kiselev, p. 53.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

frameworks.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the existing modernist literature on military thought emphasized the relevance of US military strategy and doctrine. Consequently, these studies made several attempts to import these ideas into Russian military thought.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, these endeavours succumbed to traditional currents. These ideas were *Russianized* through the lenses of existing military concepts and strategies. This tendency promoted the resilience of fundamental military concepts.

### **6.3. Estimating the character and outcome of a future war: Forecasting and correlation of forms and methods (COFM)**

#### **6.3.1. Forecasting the character of a future war**

After the political rupture of 1991, the Russian military faced several uncertainties. Against this backdrop, the concept of forecasting would be the most appropriate military theoretical instrument to identify the regularities and tendencies in modern warfare. During the Cold War period, the Soviet military defined the concept as “the study of the military-political situation, the pattern of future war, the prospects of developing strategy, operational art and tactics, the qualitative and quantitative composition of the means of armed conflict, the prospects for the development of a war economy in the future, and also the forecasting of the enemy’s strategic and tactical plans.”<sup>20</sup> After the 1990s, the meaning and functionality of the concepts remained intact. For instance, Major General I.N. Vorobyov suggested that:

“[The] fundamental goal of military science has at all times been to cut a window into the future and to study such an extremely complex phenomenon as warfare and the impact that the latest scientific achievements and future weapon systems can make on the nature of warfare. Without this, it is impossible to develop a coherent military doctrine... Figuratively speaking, a futurological forecast is a leap over an information divide, the identification of the essence of forthcoming military phenomena with obviously incomplete background data.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> A.V.Raskin and V.S. Pelyak, “On Network Centric Warfare”, *Military Thought* 14:2, (April 2005), M.M. Khamzatov, “Network-centric War Conception and Its Impact on the Character of Modern Operations”, *Military Thought* 15:4 (September 2006): Vorobyov and Kiselev, (2009).

<sup>20</sup> Yu. V. Chuyev and Yu. B. Mikhaylov, *Forecasting in Military Affairs*, (Moscow 1975 translated into English by the DGIS Multilingual Section, Secretary of State Department, Ottawa Canada, Published under the auspices of the United States Air Force): 12

<sup>21</sup> I.N. Vorobyov, “Military Futurology”, *Military Thought* 17:2, (April 2008): 164.

By emphasising the 'leaps over information divides', Vorobyov echoed the dialectic basis of this concept. According to the Soviet dialectic-materialist view, a series of quantitative changes led to a sudden and qualitative leap or breakthrough in military affairs.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Soviet ideology formed the basis for the semantic content of forecasting after the 1990s. In a similar study, I.N. Vorobyov and VA Kiselev argue that the "forecasting function of innovative military science reveals regularities and tendencies in warfare at the new stage in its development".<sup>23</sup> Military strategic forecasting identifies trends and patterns in the evolution of war. It also explores structural changes in the material-technical base and forms and methods of warfare by employing short (five years), mid-term (five to ten years) and long term (over ten years) projections.<sup>24</sup> In another study, Col. V.I. Lutovinov examines this concept as a theoretical function of military policy. According to Lutovinov, the forecasting function "helps create necessary conditions to ensure successful functioning of the state bodies and highest military authorities."<sup>25</sup> Therefore, forecasting contributes guidance to military-technical, military-economic, and military-strategic studies. By this means, the concept allowed the supreme bodies of the Russian government to work in a synchronized manner.<sup>26</sup> In this context, the concept of forecasting ended up being a recognized branch of military science, and it took a position on the hierarchical ladder.<sup>27</sup>

Russian military thinkers carried out several forecasting studies during this period. For instance, Major General V.K. Kopytko introduced the view that the 1990s and 2000s should be seen as the fifth period of Russian military thought in the development of operational art.<sup>28</sup> This period was characterized by "an increased likelihood of local wars and armed conflicts, the adoption in the armies of the leading world states of long-range precision weapons and weapons based on new physical principles...the grown role of information warfare."<sup>29</sup> In another seminal article entitled *Certain Typical Features of Future Wars*, General M.A. Gareyev argues that "[t]he main task [of the Russian

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<sup>22</sup> Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p.70.

<sup>23</sup> Vorobyov and Kiselev (2009), p. 54.

<sup>24</sup> Timothy Thomas, "Thinking Like a Russian Officer", *The Foreign Military Studies Office*, (April 2016):7.

<sup>25</sup> V.I. Lutovinov, "Russia's Military Policy in Modern Conditions", *Military Thought*, 17:4 (October 2008):42.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Vorobyov (2008), p. 162.

<sup>28</sup> V.K. Kopytko, "Evolution of Operational Art", *Military Thought* 17:1 (January 2008):208-209. The first period (from the late 1920s to the early 1940s) witnessed army scale offensive operations; the second period (1941-1953) was represented by deeper echeloning (defense/offense) of forces, increased maneuver and firepower; the third period (1954-1985) was defined as the possibility of a nuclear war; the fourth period (mid-1980s and the late 1990s) was introduced as the rising significance of conventional weapons.

<sup>29</sup> Kopytko, p. 209.



military] is to forecast a nature of future wars, since correct forecasts can help identify which armed forces and which troops will be needed."<sup>30</sup> Generally speaking, Gareyev's work on forecasting examined the broad trends in the evolution of warfare. However, he did not entirely ignore the past experience. In this regard, Gareyev reiterated that the Russian military ought to be ready to fight local wars and armed conflicts, while not entirely ruling out the possibility of waging regional wars.<sup>31</sup>

The most widely known Russian classification of armed conflict is based on "warring states and the scale of hostilities".<sup>32</sup> This classification consists of local wars, armed conflicts, regional wars, and large-scale wars.<sup>33</sup> By definition, armed conflicts are "waged to resolve political, ethnic, religious, territorial, and other kinds of difference through the use of arms."<sup>34</sup> Armed conflicts occur either in the form of internal armed conflict or between two or more countries.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, this category includes the involvement of both state and non-state actors. The second category includes local wars waged between two or more countries to attain limited political objectives.<sup>36</sup> The third category is regional wars. These wars "involve two or more countries (group of countries) within a single region confined by the waters of seas/oceans and aerospace, with the warring sides pursuing critical military and political goals".<sup>37</sup> Finally, a large-scale war is a "war between coalitions of countries or larger world powers".<sup>38</sup>

The Russian perception of the increasing likelihood of large-scale wars became even more severe in 2007. This shift in perception can primarily be attributed to the West's resolve to make a breakthrough in the military-technological field.<sup>39</sup> Secondly, the Russian General Staff thought that the deployment of NATO forces in close proximity to Russia's borders disturbed military balance to Russia's disadvantage.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, General Gareyev and Defence Minister S.B. Ivanov stated that the likelihood of a large-

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<sup>30</sup> M.A. Gareyev, "Certain Typical Features of Future Wars", *Military Thought* 12:2 (March 2003):188.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> V.N. Gorbunov and S.A., Bogdanov, "Armed Confrontation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", *Military Thought* 18:1 (January 2009): 23-24

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> "Mission and Objectives of the Russian Armed Forces", Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, <https://eng.mil.ru/en/mission/tasks.htm> (accessed 20 April 2021)

<sup>35</sup> Gorbunov and Bogdanov, p. 23.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> M. A. Gareyev, "Russia's New Military Doctrine", *Military Thought* 16:2 (April 2007):5.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

scale war was not diminishing in 2007. Nevertheless, the Russian military focused attention on waging local wars, armed conflicts, and anti-terrorist operations.<sup>41</sup>

Forecasts of a future war stirred up discussions among Russian thinkers about the means of warfare. Generally speaking, the wars in Yugoslavia and Iraq (the first), for the most part, influenced the modernists' insights on modern warfare. In a related study entitled *Warfare of the Future*, Lieutenant General S.A. Bogdanov asserted that future wars would begin with air-space operations, including precision-guided munitions (PGMs) and information assets.<sup>42</sup> Against the backdrop of this, using these systems in an integrated manner would have a decisive impact on war's general outcome. Nevertheless, Bogdanov admitted that the ultimate military goals could not be attained without ground forces. Indeed, these forces would take essential roles in the subsequent periods of war. Thus, it is conceivable that Bogdanov's forecast prioritised qualitatively (technologically) superior weapon systems over quantitatively superior ground forces. Similarly, Maj. Gen. I.N. Vorobyov delineated patterns in the evolution of warfare with his "[e]lectronic warfare (EW)-strike operations" model.<sup>43</sup> In this scheme, the merging of information with airborne stand-off weapons systems would be the principal means of effective engagement in future warfare.<sup>44</sup> These studies demonstrated that the modernists gave priority to the elevated importance of information/electronic warfare and technological superiority in a future war.

In contrast to the modernists, the traditionalists exhibited a critical attitude towards the obsession with a weapon system, namely PGMs, even though they admitted that technology would influence the character of warfare.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, this attitude bears a resemblance to the ideas of the *traditionalists* in the 1970s. Their argument proceeded on the basis that "no single weapon or mode of warfare alone could decide the outcome of a war."<sup>46</sup> In this context, A.V. Suprayaga argued that the launch of stand-off wars did not decrease the importance of contact wars with ground forces.<sup>47</sup> On that note, contact wars were supposed to be located at the opposite end of stand-off wars, where warring factions resorted to precision offensive and defensive conventional weapons,

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> S.A. Bogdanov, "Warfare of the Future", *Military Thought* 13:1 (January 2004):36.

<sup>43</sup> I.N. Vorobyov, "Characteristics of Combat Actions (Operations) in Future Wars", *Military Thought* 14:2 (April 2005): 65.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> A.V. Suprayaga, "Wars of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", *Military Thought* 11:4, (July 2002)

<sup>46</sup> Lawrence Freedman and J. Michaels, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, (London, Palgrave Macmillan: 2019): 188.

<sup>47</sup> Suprayaga (2002)

information weapons, and EW assets and nuclear weapons.<sup>48</sup> In this regard, Suprayaga further argued that “[Western] stand-off wars of the 21st century could become contact wars for any states [i.e. Russia].”<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the traditionalists insisted that ground force deployments would be the primary strategic objective of the Russian military in local wars. Next to that, the traditionalists did not rule out the unending nuclear threat in modern warfare. For instance, Gareyev introduced strategic nuclear weapons as the most reliable instrument in future wars.<sup>50</sup> These studies suggest that the traditionalists put more emphasis on ground forces and nuclear weapons in their forecasting analyses.

The discussions on forecasting also revolved around non-military means of warfare. In this regard, numerous studies reached a consensus that the prominence of non-military means in a future war would be considerably increased. Although the Russian military acknowledged the rising importance and share of non-military means in modern warfare, they questioned their decisiveness. In connection with that, Russian thinkers questioned whether non-military means could be the primary means of war.<sup>51</sup> In an article entitled ‘On the notion of War’, Air Force Lt. General V.V. Serebryannikov highlights that “revolution in science and technology confers unprecedented violent capabilities on the means that were formerly regarded as non-violent.”<sup>52</sup> According to Serebryannikov, only then could non-military means be recognized as an instrument of war provided that they would be imbued with specific and measurable violence.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, *the militarization of non-military means*, such as using the information in precision strike munitions, could offer additional capabilities for the Russian military in future wars.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Gareyev argued that “[t]he non-military means, especially information means, greatly affect the nature of armed struggle, yet armed forces and violence are the main typical features of any war.”<sup>55</sup>

Maj Gen. S.A. Tyushkevich discussed the issue from a different perspective. Non-violent means of policy prevailed over public life in peacetime, with violent means playing a subordinate role.<sup>56</sup> This state of play was reversed during a war. Nevertheless, Tyushkevich prioritized military means by suggesting that “[t]he political goals of states

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Gareyev (2007), p. 10 and Gareyev (2003), p. 188.

<sup>51</sup> Gareyev (2003), p. 187.

<sup>52</sup> V.V. Serebryannikov, “On the Notion of War”, *Military Thought* 13:4, (October 2004):177.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* p. 178.

<sup>55</sup> Gareyev (2003), p. 187.

<sup>56</sup> S.A. Tyushkevich, “Shaping Military Ideology”, *Military Thought* 13:4 (October 2004): 164

are achieved predominantly by the armed struggle.”<sup>57</sup> Similarly, in a seminal article entitled, *Information Weapons and Information Warfare: Realities and Speculations*, Colonel V.I. Orlyansky argues that non-military means, especially information means, would never replace weapons and would never be the main principles or means of armed conflict.<sup>58</sup> However, the informational characteristics of an armed conflict had a significant and sometimes decisive impact on its outcome.<sup>59</sup> This would be the case when weapon systems were provided with up-to-date information. Finally, Col. V.N. Gorbunov and S.A. Bogdanov acknowledged that non-military means such as informational, psychological, and climatic varieties would considerably affect the character of war in the future.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, “future wars will be dominated by violence while diplomatic, and economic warfare types of engaging with the opponent will play a decisive role in preventing wars and armed conflicts.”<sup>61</sup> Taken together, Russian thinkers emphasized that the informational characteristic of an armed conflict could not change the armed struggle’s essence and could not transform it into information warfare.<sup>62</sup>

Eventually, Russian thinkers arrived at a consensus on the increasing likelihood of local wars and armed conflicts. Nevertheless, they did not entirely disregard the possibility of waging regional and large-scale wars. Besides, both the modernists and the traditionalists agreed that non-military means would likely increase their effectiveness; however, they remained incapable of replacing military means in future wars. Hence, forecasting analyses became dissimilar when it came to how the Russian military would wage a future war. Different points of view were associated with Russian thinkers’ preference for strategy. On the one hand, the modernists gave more prominence to the conventional strategic weapons and information/EW assets. This school of thought emphasized that the Russian military ought to possess these new technologies in order to unleash an offensive strategy.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, the traditionalists brought attention to ground forces and strategic nuclear weapons. The prioritization of weapons would seem to indicate that the defence was being privileged over the offence. In light of the Russian military’s apparent inferiority in PGMs, ground forces and existing nuclear

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 165.

<sup>58</sup> V.I. Orlyansky, “Information Weapons and Information Warfare: Realities and Speculations”, *Military Thought* 17:1. (January 2008): 183.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> V.N. Gorbunov and S.A., Bogdanov, (2009), p. 23.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Vorobyov (2005), p. 64.

weapons would be the most reliable instruments of strategic deterrence against external aggression in future warfare.<sup>64</sup> Beyond that, the modernists used the concept of forecasting to access innovative military science.<sup>65</sup> By this means, this concept could promote the emergence of a new theory of warfare inspired by innovation, technological advances, and military-theoretical developments. The extent of modernist influence emanated from forecasting's futurist outlook. This prospect allowed the Russian military to adapt to a new operational environment by devising modern methods and means. Nevertheless, the traditionalists utilized this concept to deal with war's changing character with the existing means and methods.

### **6.3.2. Forecasting the results of a future war: Correlation of forms and methods**

Alongside its character, predicting the outcome of a future war continued to take an important place in Russian military thought. In this regard, Russian thinkers put the concept of correlation of forces and methods (COFM) into practice to disambiguate the results of a future war. By definition, correlation of forms and methods is "an objective indicator of the combat power of opposing forces, which makes it possible to determine the degree of superiority of one force over the other or the outcome of a war."<sup>66</sup> While the traditionalists used the 'parity' factor to estimate a war's outcome, the modernists invented new criteria for military success in modern wars.

The concept of correlation of forms and methods emerged in the 1920s. During the Cold War, this concept sought to anticipate war's outcome by using the 'parity' factor. After the 1990s, it continued to occupy an important place in Russian military thought. According to Colonel V.S. Tsygichko, "the appraisal of balance [correlation] of forces in an operation (a combat) serves to forecast the course and outcome of military (combat) operations under prevailing situations and determine the forces and fires needed for an operation (combat)."<sup>67</sup> Tsygichko further emphasized that correlation by parity factor yielded correct results in traditional military operations.<sup>68</sup>

After the 1990's, the Russian military found itself in a highly unfavorable situation, particularly in regard to conventional strategic weapons (precision-guided munitions).

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<sup>64</sup> Gareyev (2003), pp. 187-189.

<sup>65</sup> Vorobyov and Kiselev (2009), p. 54.

<sup>66</sup> Russian military encyclopaedia, quoted in Thomas (2016), 8.

<sup>67</sup> V.N. Tsygichko, "Balance of Forces Category in Potential Military Conflicts", *Military Thought* 11:2 (March 2002): 107.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

Therefore, the end of the Cold war witnessed a “drastic change in the correlation of forces to Russia’s disadvantage” in a future war against NATO.<sup>69</sup> In 2007, General M.A. Gareyev admitted that Russia had an “extremely unfavorable correlation of forces in all strategic sectors.”<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, he further emphasized that future wars would be “fought with precision-guided munitions, but with the constant threat of the use of nuclear weapons.”<sup>71</sup> Gareyev reiterated this statement another time in 2009 when he outlined the general principles of Russia’s strategic deterrence.<sup>72</sup> In these premises, nuclear forces would remain the most reliable deterrence against Western superiority in conventional strategic weapons.<sup>73</sup> In 2009, Gareyev stated that:

“Given the extremely unfavourable, for Russia, correlation of forces in all theatres of operations, its most important and reliable means of strategic deterrence remains its nuclear potential, whose significance the Americans are trying to lessen and undermine by creating their AMD [Air Missile Defence] system and long-range high-precision conventional arms. Strategic nuclear forces must therefore be continually perfected.”<sup>74</sup>

Likewise, Colonel General V.V. Korobushin also stressed the prominence of strategic nuclear weapons. In 2007, Korobushin suggested that the preservation of nuclear deterrence capability would be one of the Russian state's essential strategies and military policies in the next several decades.<sup>75</sup>

In addition to nuclear forces, the Russian military considered increasing its correlation through general-purpose forces.<sup>76</sup> General-purpose forces are air-mobile light infantry ground units. These units would perform combat missions in local wars in Russia’s immediate neighbourhood. By this means, the Russian military aimed to increase its deterrence posture against NATO troops’ deployments when Poland and the Baltic states became Alliance’s new members in 1999 and 2004, respectively.

Therefore, the Russian High Command intended on compensating for its technological inferiority in PGMs by relying predominantly on its nuclear forces and newly formed

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<sup>69</sup> Orr, p.124.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Gareyev (2007), p. 10.

<sup>72</sup> M.A. Gareyev, “Issues of Strategic Deterrence in Current Conditions”, *Military Thought* 18:2 (April 2009)

<sup>73</sup> Gareyev (2007) and Gareyev (2009).

<sup>74</sup> Gareyev (2009), p.7.

<sup>75</sup> V.V. Korobushin, “Strategic Nuclear Weapons in Russia’s Military Doctrine”, *Military Thought* 16:2, (April 2007): 47.

<sup>76</sup> Gareyev (2007), pp. 9-10.

general-purpose forces. These units constituted the main enablers of Russia's strategic deterrence. According to Colonel A.I. Khryapin and Col. V.A. Afanasyev, the Russian military should put strategic deterrence into practice through using the "threat of retaliation". This approach consisted of "taking actions to dissuade a potential military-political adversary from planning or contemplating a war against the Russian Federation."<sup>77</sup> While the Russian military regarded the availability of battle-worthy general-purpose forces and nuclear forces as the *necessary* precondition of Russia's strategic deterrence, they considered the combat capability of these forces as the *sufficient* precondition.<sup>78</sup> Russian thinkers measured the availability with the parity factor in a quantitative manner. Nevertheless, combat capability, which was defined as a capability geared to "inflict a ... level of damage on a potential aggressor", was measured by using qualitative criteria.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, technological and numerical competency and sufficiency laid the groundwork for the concept of correlation.

### 6.3.3. The limits of Russian forecasting

Russian thinkers realized that the most notable successes in forecasting (the outcome of future war) were achieved in those areas that were subject to quantification.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, correlation yielded effective results when applied to the conventional wars, where the quantitative 'parity' factor was put into practice to compare the combat capabilities of opposing sides. However, in unconventional wars, where it was deemed necessary to use qualitative indicators, *correlation via parity* fell short of anticipating outcomes.<sup>81</sup> In Russian thinking, *unconventional wars* consisted of insurgency operations and non-military forms of warfare. Estimating the outcome of these types of wars necessitated a new criterion other than parity. In this regard, Major General V.D. Ryabchuk designed "intellectual potentials".<sup>82</sup> This new criterion was aimed at superiority in areas requiring a mixture of ideology, scientific knowledge, information systems, information means, and information management.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the superiority in these domains and means promised a victory in unconventional forms of warfare. While Ryabchuk attached decisive importance to attaining information and intellectual

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<sup>77</sup> A.L.Khryapin and V.A. Afanasyev, "Conceptual Principles of Strategic Deterrence", *Military Thought* 14:1 (January 2005): 31.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Vorobyov (2008), p. 162.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> V.D. Ryabchuk, "Warfare Science and Military Forecasting in the Conditions of Intellectual Informational Confrontation", *Military Thought* 17:2 (April 2008): 143.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 143-145.

superiority in future wars, he revealed the Russian's military's deficiency in this field. Therefore, he argued that "not a single calculation technique of relative strengths takes into consideration the interrelationship of the intellectual potentials of the opposing sides."<sup>84</sup>

Major General I.N. Vorobyov and Colonel V.A. Kiselev examined this shortcoming from a strategic perspective. According to these thinkers, the "strategy of indirect approach" took precedence over the "strategy of force" [destruction] in modern wars.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, the strategy of routing the adversary by creating numerical superiority in forces and assets lost its prominence. On the contrary, the indirect approach strategy put the asymmetry at its center by utilizing information warfare, stand-off warfare, and EW-strikes in conjunction with conventional forces in the foreseeable future.<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, forecasting the outcomes of unconventional wars became an issue of grave concern for Russian thinkers. When some Russian thinkers attached decisive importance to *intellectual potential*, this notion became even more critical.<sup>87</sup> The decisiveness was linked to the appearance of new weapon systems in the 1990s, whose effectiveness hinged on the availability of precise information. In this regard, the Russian Federation Academy of Military Science specified "forecasting the character and results of unconventional and non-military forms of warfare' as the areas of special attention" in the mid-2000s.<sup>88</sup>

Consequently, the modernist body of opinion generated new ideas to replace the 'parity' factor of correlation. The development of new factors allowed the Russian military to explore methods to increase its strength against an adversary that resorted to unconventional warfare. One of those was the *civilizing factor*. Russian thinkers introduced this factor as the public opinion about casualties and damage to state infrastructure.<sup>89</sup> The civilizing factor resembled the West's public opinion phenomenon. In the Russian version, this factor "set permissible limits and conditions on the use of force by the [public opinion] developed countries and the types of conflicts that can be acceptable to them."<sup>90</sup> Accordingly, the public opinion endorsed a (Western) preventive

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* p. 144.

<sup>85</sup> I.N. Vorobyov and V.A. Kiselev, "The New Strategy of Indirect Approach", *Military Thought* 15:4 (October 2006): 30.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Ryabchuk, p. 146.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* p.155.

<sup>89</sup> Tsygichko, p. 110.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*



intervention provided that the military had overwhelming military-technical superiority over the enemy who was incapable of inflicting severe retaliatory damage.<sup>91</sup> If a ([Western) country was threatened with aggression, the *civilizing factor* transformed into the *parity* factor.<sup>92</sup> In this regard, the “price” of a military intervention and “the size of unacceptable damage” determined the limits of Western military interventions (stand-off wars). This modelling made it possible to analyze different scenarios of military conflicts.

Another of those factors was the *concentration of capacities*.<sup>93</sup> According to Colonel M.M. Khamzatov, the main feature of the character of modern operations “is not the proportion of space and quantity of armed forces, but the availability of new multiservice mobile formations and units, which realise their capacities at the basis of network-centric methods of reconnaissance, control, and support.”<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the *concentration of capacities* was aimed at taking advantage of weapons that used information technologies to gain strategic initiative over the enemy in the first minutes of wars.<sup>95</sup> *Being better informed* was another factor. According to a group of Russian high-ranked military experts, “being better informed, under otherwise identical conditions, is a decisive factor of the actual correlation of forces of the opposing parties taking part in fighting.”<sup>96</sup> Therefore, getting accurate and reliable information before the enemy would be a new correlation factor. Only then could the Russian military attain information superiority over the enemy in a future war. <sup>97</sup>

This chapter has found that the correlation between military and non-military actions in modern wars changed the Russian perception of modern warfare.<sup>98</sup> In Moscow’s way of thinking, indirect actions (asymmetric methods) and unconventional forms of warfare were effectively utilised by Western Armies in a decisive manner, hand in hand with conventional enablers. According to Air Force Lt. Gen. V.V. Serebryannikov, “[w]ars and armed conflicts (particularly in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq) demonstrate an essential change in correlation between traditional and non-traditional means and forms of struggle, particularly between warfare proper and non-military actions, between

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> Khamzatov, p. 26.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Ye, A. Karpov, N.I. Burenin and N.A. Zyuzin, “Building a Single Information Network: Problems”, *Military Thought* 13:4 (October 2004): 184.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Gareyev (2003), p. 190.

military and political victory.”<sup>99</sup> Likewise, the Russian doctrinal document entitled, *Urgent Tasks in the Development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation* pointed out that the victorious side won the seven most critical armed conflicts of the last decade without inflicting planned military damage on the target country.<sup>100</sup> It is conceivable that these wars included but were not limited to the Gulf War, the wars in Yugoslavia, and Afghanistan.

The traditionalist body of opinion acknowledged that the correlation of non-military means of achieving political goals changed as they obtained a more target-specific and coordinated character. Nevertheless, this body of opinion did not ascribe decisive importance to non-military forms of warfare. Beyond that, other state bodies were held responsible for addressing non-military threats instead of the Russian military. In this regard, Gareyev advised other state bodies to prevent, localize, and neutralize non-military threats with available means under the framework of “defence doctrine” instead of ‘military doctrine’.<sup>101</sup>

Although the modernists put more emphasis on non-military means, the Russian military relied on military power. Consequently, the *parity* factor continued to constitute the basis for estimating the outcome of future armed conflicts. The traditionalist’s direct and violent-oriented approaches to warfare became influential in this result.

#### **6.4. The periodisation of war: the initial period of war and combat readiness**

##### **6.4.1. The Initial Period of War (IPW)**

The end of the Cold War diminished the likelihood of a nuclear confrontation between Russia and the US. Nevertheless, the threat of the use of nuclear weapons continued to prevail in Russian military thinking. By this means, the utility of strategic nuclear weapons served to realize *the strategy of deterrence* instead of *the strategy of destruction*.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, the rising likelihood of local wars and armed conflicts shifted the focus of the Russian High Command to conventional weapon systems. Consequently, the conditions required for the Russian military to think that an enemy

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<sup>99</sup> Serebryannikov (2004), p. 178.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Gareyev (2007), p. 5.

<sup>102</sup> Valery Vasilyevich Gerasimov, “Strategy Speech”, *Red Star*, 2019, online: <http://redstar.ru/vektory-razvitiya-voennoj-strategii/> (accessed 17 March 2021)

surprise attack was imminent did not exist anymore. Accordingly, the importance that the Soviet High Command ascribed to the IPW would be expected to lessen after the 1990s. However, Russian thinkers continued to put emphasis on the IPW in their works between 1990 and 2010.

The Western approaches to the war in the 1990s predominantly determined the traditionalists' analyses on the IPW. To begin with, A.V. Supryaga suggested that local and regional wars would be characterized by air and air defence operations in a selected and paralyzing manner, especially during the IPW.<sup>103</sup> Supryaga called these "selected engagement wars."<sup>104</sup> Gareyev also thought that "at the initial stage of military actions, aviation and the navy will deliver massive blows to destroy the major economic objects of the enemy and its energy system and thus deprive it of the will to fight."<sup>105</sup> Likewise, the Journal of Military Thought editorial board gives an account of this view in 2002 in an article entitled *Main Principles of Combat*.<sup>106</sup> Accordingly:

"The operations of the initial period of war are the whetstone that tests the pre-war system of combat readiness, field instructions, command and control systems, the person's moral and combat qualities, etc....From this, it follows that combat training should start with profound studies of the initial operations that are especially hard to wage, the course of which hard to predict, the situation which is changing quickly together with state of troops and the sides' balance [correlation] of forces."<sup>107</sup>

Considering the critical armed conflicts of the last decade, Russian military thinkers believed Western armies would not deploy land forces during initial operations.<sup>108</sup> Land forces would be brought into action when key military and economic targets were annihilated. By this means, Russian thinkers thought Western militaries sought to decrease the number of land force deployments.<sup>109</sup> Therefore, it was a widely held view that decisive air operations would characterize the IPW of modern wars. In this phase, a special place was accorded to the air and space theater of war, and conventional strategic weapons would be the main instruments of war.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Supryaga (2002)

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Gareyev (2003), p. 189.

<sup>106</sup> "The main principles of Combat", Editor, *Military Thought* 11:4, (July 2002): 19.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.

<sup>108</sup> Gareyev (2003), p. 190.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

The modernist body of opinion also drew sufficient attention to the IPW in their works on future warfare. According to Lieutenant General S.A. Bogdanov, future wars would most likely have *initial* and *final periods*, while the IPW would likely become the primary and decisive period.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, this notion recalls the importance attached to the IPW by G.A. Leer in the 1890s and V.D. Sokolovsky in the 1960s. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the opening phase of war was the decisive and primary period in which the Imperial Russian army aimed to exert an extreme force to attain strategic objectives. The IPW once again proved to be the decisive period of a short war of annihilation in the 1950s and 1960s in anticipation of a surprise nuclear attack. In other times, 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.

	<b>Military and non-military activities</b>
<b>The preparatory phase of war</b>	The use of non-military means to attain political objectives
<b>The Initial period of war</b>	Stand-off wars by use of PGMs, EW, and information war assets
<b>The Final Period of war</b>	Ground operations

**Table-1:** The Periodization of Modern Wars (From a Russian perspective)

Table-1 summarizes the Russian periodization of modern (Western) wars between the 1990s and 2000s. A closer inspection of the table highlights that it comprised the preparatory, (threatening) initial and final periods of war. During the preparatory phase, Western armies resorted to non-military means. Following this, the Initial period of western wars comprised air and space operations, information operations, and high-precision strikes virtually to the entire depth of the country subjected to aggression.<sup>112</sup> During the IPW, the attacker aimed at destructing critical military targets, disrupting the state system, command and control centres, and disabling the main elements of the military-industrial complex predominantly by using airborne PGMs.<sup>113</sup> According to Gorbunov and Bogdanov;

<sup>111</sup> Bogdanov (2004), p. 36.

<sup>112</sup> Gorbunov and Bogdanov (2009), p. 27.

<sup>113</sup> A.B. Tasbulatov and V.I. Orlyanskiy, "The Specifics of Modern Armed Conflicts", *Military Thought* 14:4 (October 2005)

"...the main objectives of future wars will be achieved in the opening phase, and that will become the turning point determining the fate of a war. More specifically, it will be a period when the opponents in the military campaign will put all their efforts into the fighting to attain their military and political objectives."<sup>114</sup>

Subsequently, the land group of forces would join the battle at the final period of war, after the enemy's firepower and critical targets were destroyed entirely.<sup>115</sup>

Overall, these results indicate that both schools of thought (modernist/traditionalist) agreed on the initial period of modern wars. The IPW comprises an "intense struggle for information, EW, and air superiority by using space-based assets."<sup>116</sup> In this context, the side that managed to seize the fire initiative and achieve the element of surprise would ensure superiority at this phase. In a study entitled, *Upgrading the Military*, Col. Gen. V.V. Zherebtsov argues that "it is in the initial stage of a conflict that there are, as a rule, favourable conditions for the destructive forces to take the initiative and subsequently enabling them to effectively oppose measures being taken by official authorities."<sup>117</sup> Indeed, the emphasis on 'a rule of war' would seem to indicate that the importance ascribed to the IPW by Soviet military thinkers in the 1930s remained unchanged. In 1934, G. Isserson had also pointed out that the IPW permitted combat-ready attack echelons to make maneuvers along the flanks of the positional front.<sup>118</sup> Likewise, according to Russian Defence Minister S.B. Ivanov, modern wars required the opposing sides to "seize the initiative at the very outset of the conflict."<sup>119</sup> For Ivanov, the US's military successes in Iraq could be attributed to its ability to exercise prompt and effective command and control of its forces during the initial phase of war.<sup>120</sup>

The modernist body of opinion suggested that technological breakthroughs increased the decisiveness of the initial operations. For example, Lieutenant General V.A. Vinogradov suggested that modern operations took on an annihilation character because they entailed conventional strategic weapons.<sup>121</sup> The surprise and suddenness

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<sup>114</sup> Gorbunov and Bogdanov (2009), p. 27.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>116</sup> I.N. Vorobyov, "Characteristics of Combat Action", *Military Thought* 14:2 (April, 2005): 70.

<sup>117</sup> V.V. Zherebetsov, "Upgrading the Military", *Military Thought* 14:1 (January 2005): 159.

<sup>118</sup> Georgii Samoilovich Isserson, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013): 39-49.

<sup>119</sup> S.B. Ivanov, "The Military Command and Control System Today and Ways of Improving It in Light of New Defence Tasks and Changes in the Character of Future Wars", *Military Thought* 13:4 (April 2004): 191.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>121</sup> V.A. Vinogradov, "Characteristics of Modern Combined-Arms Operations", *Military Thought* 10:1 (January 2001): 25.

of the first strikes primarily determined the course and outcome of the initial operations, and the decisiveness of their objectives determined the nature of war.<sup>122</sup> Col. VI Kulikov also pointed out that the integrated use of precision weapons systems with non-nuclear ammunition, information warfare, and unconventional warfare would “lay the groundwork for rapid achievement of decisive superiority and strategic initiative during the initial stages of war.”<sup>123</sup> Therefore, Kulikov argued that the IPW of the selected engagement wars would annihilate the critical targets of enemy state administration, power industry, and strategic military installations with minimum impact on the civilian population. According to Air Force Lieutenant General V.V. Serebryannikov, the delivery of devastating airstrikes by airborne PGMs at the beginning of a war immediately revealed military superiority and primarily determined the entire subsequent course of events.<sup>124</sup> Finally, Major General I.N. Vorobyov and Col V.A. Kiselev thought that the IPW was growing shorter considering the time needed for the mobilization and strategic deployment of forces.<sup>125</sup>

These results suggest that Russian military thinkers opted to use their own periodization model (preparatory/initial/final) while stereotyping what they understood as Western approaches to war. However, this does not necessarily mean that these military and non-military activities demonstrate the Russian way of war. Notably, the research has found that the periodization of Russian wars has remained the same; however, it entailed different military and non-military activities. First and foremost, Russian military thinkers realised that they would experience a military failure if they assumed the strategy of defensive/counter-offensive during the IPW. Because the initial operations, in principle, required the Russian Army to seize the strategic initiative from the first moments of an operation. This notion has predominated Russian military thought since Leer defined *the principle of the extreme exertion of force at the beginning of war* in 1894.<sup>126</sup> Even if the Russian military adopted the strategy of pre-emption, it would still be difficult to win the initial operations against the US/ NATO. The Russian military was technologically inferior in PGMs, information, and EW assets even if it could

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> V.A. Kulikov, “Organization of the State Armament System: Evolution and Development”, *Military Thought* 13:4, (September 2004): 176.

<sup>124</sup> Serebryannikov, p. 180.

<sup>125</sup> I.N. Vorobyov and V.A. Kiselev, ““Time” and “Space” as Strategic Category of Contemporary Wars”, *Military Thought* 17:3, (July 2009): 41.

<sup>126</sup> Leer Genrikh Antonovich, *The Method of Military Science: Strategy, Tactic and Military History* (St. Petersburg, 1894), 53.

use the advantages of a surprise attack. Therefore, the Russian High Command developed a Russian approach to the periodization of war.

	<b>Military and non-military activities</b>
<b>The preparatory phase of war</b>	The prevention, localization, and neutralization of non-military threats with diplomatic, economic, information, and other non-military means
<b>The initial period of war</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The use of permanent readiness general-purpose ground formations in an asymmetrical and indirect manner, when responding to emerging threats in local wars</li> <li>- The preparedness to use tactical/operational nuclear weapons if the enemy carried out an offensive with superior conventional forces</li> </ul>
<b>The Final Period of war</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The use of armed forces in a direct manner</li> <li>-The mobilization of armed forces to fight a protracted war</li> </ul>

**Table-2:** The Periodization of the Russian approach to war

Table-2 shows an overview of the periodization of the Russian approach to war between 1990 and 2010. It is apparent from this figure that the Russian military’s strategic scheme consisted of preparatory, initial, and final periods. During the preparatory phase of war, the Russian military, in coordination with the other state bodies (within the framework of Gareyev’s *defence security* concept), aimed at preventing, localising and neutralizing threats with political, economic, information, and other non-military means.<sup>127</sup> This phase involved several countermeasures against the Western equivalent of the preparatory period of modern wars and aimed to avoid a direct military confrontation with the enemy. Nevertheless, the opposing sides would become embroiled in non-military confrontations using economic, informational, psychological, diplomatic, climatic, technological, scientific, and ideological instruments of power.<sup>128</sup> In Russian thinking, this period would allocate time for the strategic deployment of regrouped troops before the attacker launched its offensive.<sup>129</sup> This notion relates to the old idea

<sup>127</sup> Gareyev (2003), p. 187.

<sup>128</sup> Gorbunov and Bogdanov (2009), p. 27.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

that mobilization during peacetime helped the Russian military to begin the war with a standing army.<sup>130</sup>

During the initial period of war, the Russian military strategy did not rely on air strikes with precision-guided munitions for two reasons. Firstly, it became obvious that the Russian military was incapable and technologically inferior in PGMs to win the initial operations. Secondly, it was regarded as provocative. In 2009, Gareyev pointed out that:

“If we were to follow this example [air strikes with PGMs] and fight in a strictly “democratic” fashion, the Russian army should have bombed Tbilisi, Batumi, Kutaisi, Poti, the country’s [Georgia] entire infrastructure and thus forced Georgia to capitulate. But this is not a “democratic” but a barbaric method of warfare. And from the point of the interests of strategic deterrence, we could not have acted otherwise, because that could have resulted in a direct confrontation with NATO.”<sup>131</sup>

Instead, responding to emerging threats by using permanent readiness general-purpose ground forces constituted the Russian military’s initial operations. Since its tanks were outdated and the air force was incapable, Russian thinkers saw the permanent readiness of general-purpose forces as a flexible and agile way of countering and preventing threats and seizing a strategic initiative during the IPW.<sup>132</sup> Nevertheless, the Russian High Command prioritized asymmetric and indirect methods during this phase within the context of the *strategy of indirect action* (SAI).<sup>133</sup> Unlike the annihilation strategy, the strategy of indirect action entailed “military actions through the indirect physical destruction (smashing) of the adversary in a roundabout way.”<sup>134</sup> The indirect action strategy was aimed at creating asymmetry by making armed forces more maneuverable and strategically mobile during the initial operations.<sup>135</sup> Vorobyov and Kiselev pointed out that the “principle of dominant maneuver” was the core element of the strategy of indirect action. Therefore, the initial operations would be carried out by general-purpose forces in an asymmetrical fashion in the first place. Thus, carrying

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<sup>130</sup> S.P. Ivanov, *The Initial Period of War* (Moscow, 1974), 70. Translated and published under the auspices of The United States Air Force.

<sup>131</sup> Gareyev (2009), p. 8.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>133</sup> I.N. Vorobyov and V.A. Kiselev, “The New Strategy of the Indirect Approach”, *Military Thought* 15:4 (October 2006)

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32.



out air-mobile maneuvers against emerging threats, breaches, or exposed flanks would ensure asymmetry in local wars and armed conflicts.<sup>136</sup>

Nevertheless, general-purpose forces alone remained incapable of addressing the PGM threat during the IPW. Generally speaking, the Russian High Command saw strategic weapons as the most reliable and essential assets to ensure strategic deterrence.<sup>137</sup> As to the PGM threat, tactical and operational nuclear weapons would be brought into action if the enemy attacked using superior conventional strategic forces, because the Russian High Command compensated for its inferiority in conventional strategic systems (PGMs) by the threat of the use of tactical/operational nuclear weapons. In addition, strengthening air-defence posture and performing deception operations against enemy air attacks would prevent the enemy from attaining success at this phase.<sup>138</sup>

Much of the Russian literature emphasized that military confrontation should be avoided during the preparatory phase of wars. If this failed, the Russian military sought to attain political objectives during the initial operations in an asymmetric manner. Nevertheless, a relatively small body of Russian literature is concerned with the final period of war in local wars and armed conflicts. If the Russian military failed to achieve its objectives during the IPW, this would mean that the likelihood of conflict gaining a large-scale character would remain high. Therefore, the possibility of a large-scale regional war would be *the final period of war*. A direct military approach was put into practice after every other asymmetrical and indirect means were exhausted in this phase.<sup>139</sup> At the final period of war, the *mobilization readiness* of armed forces was key to winning political objectives. Therefore, the evidence suggests that the Russian military intended to attain political objectives during *the initial period of a local war*. In addition, Russians prepared for waging a protracted war in *the final period of a large-scale regional war*.

#### **6.4.2. Combat readiness**

The concept of combat readiness retained its relevance in Russian military thought after the 1990s. During the final phases of the Cold War, high combat readiness was required for the entire Soviet armed forces to win the initial period of both conventional and

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<sup>136</sup> Vorobyov (2005), p. 71.

<sup>137</sup> Gareyev (2009), p. 6 and Vorobyov (2005), p. 71.

<sup>138</sup> Vorobyov (2005), p. 71.

<sup>139</sup> Vorobyov (2005), p. 71

nuclear wars.<sup>140</sup> This consideration remained intact after the 1990s. In an editorial article entitled, 'Main Principles of Combat', it was argued that "[t]oday the principle [combat readiness] has acquired even more importance and has become the heart of all measures related to the art of warfare."<sup>141</sup> Therefore, the demands of ensuring combat readiness would be higher than before.<sup>142</sup> Russians defined the principle as "a subunit readiness to join in a battle in an organized way and at a time specified by command and to carry out the tasks successfully."<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, the content and scope of combat readiness were determined mainly by the forecasts of a future war.<sup>144</sup> Therefore, the Russian military aimed to upgrade its combat readiness system according to the Russian forecasts of a future war.

The Russian High Command's forecasting analysis demonstrated that the likelihood of waging local wars and armed conflicts was higher than fighting large-scale regional wars. In local wars, military studies testified that the operations of the IPW were the most critical ones since they constituted the whetstone that tested the pre-war system of combat readiness.<sup>145</sup> Therefore, the Russian military needed a combat readiness system that could seize the initiative during the IPW. This is exemplified by Gareyev's statement in 2007. He argued that

"In light aforementioned threats, the priority for the Russian Armed Forces and other troops is the readiness to perform combat missions in local wars, armed conflicts, and anti-terrorist operations...But in circumstances a large-scale regional war could break out: There is no immediate threat of such a war, but it cannot be entirely ruled out so it is necessary at least to ensure the mobilisation readiness of the Armed Forces."<sup>146</sup>

Therefore, ensuring permanent readiness to win the initial period of local wars and attaining mobilization readiness to win large-scale regional wars became the objectives of Russian combat readiness.

In Russian doctrine, preparedness (capability and intention) was one of the two essential criteria (next to explicit evidence of violence) which transformed *military*

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<sup>140</sup> Ghulam Dastagir Wardak, *The Voroshilov Lectures: Materials from the Soviet General Staff Academy: Volume-1* (Washington: The National Defense University Press, 1989): 178.

<sup>141</sup> "The Main Principles of Combat", *Military Thought* 11:4 (June 2002): 15.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.

<sup>146</sup> Gareyev (2007), p. 10.

*danger* into a *military threat*.<sup>147</sup> Consequently, "military threat implies the preparedness of one of the policy subjects to inflict damage on the vital interests of another policy subject by using armed violence forces and means for settling contradictions between them and for gaining unilateral advantages."<sup>148</sup> Military threat turns into an armed struggle when one side substantiates its capability of using overt violence.<sup>149</sup> Therefore, combat readiness was located one level ahead of armed struggle, albeit with no change in capabilities. In this regard, Russia perceived any increase in the combat readiness level of NATO troops along its borders as an indicator of war. For instance, General Gareyev argued that the presence of a substantial difference between the US and NATO forces "endanger threats in the most important strategic sectors."<sup>150</sup> In this correlation, Russian thinkers concentrated solely on the US and NATO capabilities rather than their intentions.<sup>151</sup> In return, the Russian military concluded that combat readiness contributed to its deterrence posture. For instance, Colonel V.F Gatsko suggested that:

"It appears that the repertoire of the politico-military measures, which minimise the potential threats to Russia's military security, must give prominence to the build-up of the Armed Forces and other Federal power structures capable of effective and guaranteed suppression of the entire spectrum of the military dangers and threats, both external and internal."<sup>152</sup>

In this regard, the perception of being under *military threat* emboldened the Russian High Command to put combat readiness at the center of strategic deterrence.<sup>153</sup> Then, combat readiness helped the Russian military ensure strategic deterrence and affect the military-political situation.<sup>154</sup> In an article entitled *Conceptual Principles of Strategic Deterrence*, Colonel A.L. Khryapin and Colonel V.A. Afanasyev argue that strategic deterrence was "based on the capability of RF Armed Forces in peacetime to put the country on a war footing in a timely manner ... and to inflict on a possible aggressor damage that would be too great for it and outweigh potential gains."<sup>155</sup> The "necessary precondition" for credible strategic deterrence was the availability of general-purpose

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<sup>147</sup> V.F. Gatsko, "On the Concepts of Military Threat and Military Danger and their Correlation in Russia's Military Security System", *Military Thought* 15:2 (April 2006): 11

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>150</sup> Gareyev (2009), p. 7.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

<sup>153</sup> Gareyev (2003), p. 189.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Col. A.L. Khryapin and Col V.A. Afanasyev, "Conceptual Principles of Strategic Deterrence", *Military Thought* 14:1 (January 2005): p. 31.

and nuclear forces with efficient command, control, and logistic systems.<sup>156</sup> On the other hand, the “sufficient precondition” for strategic deterrence was the combat capability of these forces to inflict an assumed level of damage on a potential aggressor’s military and economic situation.<sup>157</sup> The availability (necessary) and combat capability (sufficient) of these forces also represented quantitative and qualitative characteristics of combat readiness, respectively. This statement resembled the Cold War definition of combat readiness: “a state (availability) and capability which ensure the desired security of the nation in peacetime and the achievement of specific aims in the case of war.”<sup>158</sup> Compared to the Soviet era, the essential characteristics of combat readiness remained unchanged between 1990 and 2010.

Preserving a very high degree of readiness for general purpose and nuclear forces formed the essential Russian combat readiness system elements. Combat readiness applied to peacetime, the period of threat preceding the outbreak of war and after the outbreak of war. Since it could apply to peacetime and wartime conditions, Russian thinkers referred to it as *permanent combat readiness*. In this regard, the peacetime activity of the Russian military was “the strategic deployment of the Armed Forces and their subsequent use in various forms in strategic actions.”<sup>159</sup> According to Gareyev, strategic actions were “unequivocally oriented towards direct confrontation with a potential enemy.”<sup>160</sup> Therefore, the Russian combat readiness system aimed to be ready for a direct military confrontation with the potential adversary. To that end, the availability and high battle efficiency of general-purpose and nuclear forces could be the operational objectives of the Russian combat readiness system.

First of all, the selection of general-purpose forces came out of a decade long military debate about whether to rely on land forces or aerospace forces in a future war. A large and growing body of literature in the early 2000s indicates that the advocates of rapidly deployable land forces (general-purpose forces) prevailed over those who prioritized aerospace forces. This preference was primarily the outcome of traditionalist influence in Russian military thinking and the war in Chechnya. Leading traditionalists such as M.A. Gareyev and Defence Minister S. B. Ivanov continued to use the operational schemes of the previous periods. In the 1970s and 1980s, Soviet strategy intended on

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Wardak, p.177.

<sup>159</sup> Gareyev (2009), p. 5.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

launching deep and paralysing conventional strikes against deep-echeloned enemy defences under the Soviet nuclear umbrella.<sup>161</sup> Likewise, Russian military planning was geared towards responding to threats by swiftly deploying general-purpose forces. Secondly, after the Russian military bogged down into insurgency warfare in Chechnya, the priority shifted to internal security in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In 2004, Russian Defence minister S.B. Ivanov stated that “our view of future conflicts gradually began to evolve through the prism of the counter-terrorism operations in Chechnya.”<sup>162</sup> Consequently, the Russian political and military elite prioritized fighting local wars with capable ground forces over fighting stand-off wars.<sup>163</sup>

Thus, traditionalists drew the Russian High Command’s attention to the role of land forces in local wars, armed conflicts, and counter-terrorism operations. In the framework of that, the Commander in Chief of the Russian Ground Forces, Colonel General A.F. Maslov suggested that “in such conflicts [not only in counter-terrorism operations but also in local wars], a decisive role in achieving victory belongs to the Ground Forces” in so far as the Russian military possessed nuclear weapons as a powerful deterrent.<sup>164</sup> Therefore, the Russian High Command entirely disagreed with the modernist idea that the ground forces had outlived their usefulness. General Maslov reacted to this modernist argument by putting forth three counter-arguments. According to Maslov, ground forces, first and foremost, played a decisive role when the operation aimed to take control of territory and repulse the invasion.<sup>165</sup> Secondly, ground forces could counter against enemy stand-off attacks thanks to their possession of long-range guided weapons systems (i.e. SS-26 ISKANDER missiles).<sup>166</sup> Thirdly, Maslov reiterated a long-standing traditionalist argument: “victory in a modern combat operation is only achieved by their [combat systems] joint and well-coordinated efforts, aimed to perform a considerable number of interconnected, complex tasks.”<sup>167</sup> This statement echoed the prevailing view of the 1970s: no single weapon system or mode of warfare could decide the outcome of a war.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, the Russian military aimed to deal with a set of internal and external challenges primarily using rapidly deployable

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<sup>161</sup> John G. Hines, *Soviet Intentions: Volume II Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, (McLean VA: BDM Federal, 1995): 57 and Gray, pp. 29-57

<sup>162</sup> Ivanov (2004), p. 190.

<sup>163</sup> Baev, p. 47 and 65.

<sup>164</sup> A.F. Maslov, “The Ground Forces: Past and Present”, *Military Thought* 15:4 (October 2006): 18

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19.

<sup>168</sup> Lawrence Freedman and J. Michaels, *The Evolution of Soviet Strategy* (London, Palgrave Macmillan: 1981): 188.

ground force formations. It is for that reason that the General Staff called them general-purpose forces.

Therefore, Russian military thinkers examined the ways of increasing the combat readiness level of ground forces. To begin with, I.N. Vorobyov and VA Kiselev emphasized the importance of ensuring strategic mobility by general-purpose forces in an article entitled *Military Science at the Present Stage* in 2008. The authors argued that rapid maneuverable forces' ability to respond to a crisis would ensure strategic mobility and create asymmetry in local wars.<sup>169</sup> Therefore, forecasts of a future war required the Russian military to change its initial operations from the defensive/counteroffensive stereotype to asymmetric joint air-ground operations. In this operational scheme, the objective would be the "rapid creation of mobile screen, maneuvering with air-mobile reserves and delivering air and space strikes."<sup>170</sup> By this means, *battle-worthy operational (border) covering troops* and *rapid deployment forces* would be vital to making air-mobile defences against the enemy's in-depth penetrations. This operational scheme could also be applied to offensive operations. However, in the mid-2000s, Russian thinkers admitted that the ground forces were numerically insufficient and qualitatively incapable of performing the duties mentioned earlier.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, the Russian High Command launched a military reform program in the early 2000s to upgrade the combat readiness level of general-purpose forces (and nuclear forces). These upgrades on the Ground Forces predated widely known military reforms initiated by Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov.<sup>172</sup> It is conceivable that these military upgrades laid the groundwork for Serdyukov's reforms when the Georgian war in 2008 laid bare the Russian military's inefficiencies on the state of the art technology.

In this regard, the Russian military restructured the Ground Forces to promptly and efficiently respond to military threats with a minimum cost. In connection with this, Russian Ground Forces were reorganized with the introduction of three structural components on the basis of their designation and specific missions.<sup>173</sup> The first component was the *combined formations and units of permanent combat readiness*. These units were capable of performing missions at peacetime strength levels in local

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<sup>169</sup> I.N. Vorobyov and V.A. Kiselev, "Military Science at Present Stage", *Military Thought* 17:3 (July 2008).

<sup>170</sup> I.N. Vorobyov, "Characteristics of Combat Actions (Operations) in Future Wars", *Military Thought* 14:2 (April 2005):71.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>172</sup> Renz, p. 58.

<sup>173</sup> Maslov, p. 17.

armed conflicts.<sup>174</sup> General-purpose forces entered into that category. The second component comprised *the units of reduced staffing levels, arms, and equipment*.<sup>175</sup> These units were responsible for carrying out limited combat missions at peacetime strength levels. The third component comprised the reserves, who would reinforce the first and second components of forces in a regional war.<sup>176</sup>

Among these, the first component was given a very high priority in combat equipment and manning. Although the level of combat equipment was generally satisfactory, “the share of modern equipment was extremely low (under 20%).”<sup>177</sup> Therefore, the Russian Land Force Command equipped *the units of permanent combat readiness* with new-generation information assets (reconnaissance, communication, and EW), about 4000 multi-purpose vehicles, and precision-guided (smart) weapons in the mid-2000s.<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, a contractual basis manning system was put in place to enhance the operational combat effectiveness of the units of permanent combat readiness. In this context, the Russian Ground Forces staffed 59 military formations and units based on the contractual system of manpower acquisition between 2004 and 2008.<sup>179</sup> According to Commander in Chief of the Land Forces Colonel General A. F. Maslov, these measures aimed:

“to fulfil the tasks of localising and settling armed conflicts on regional and local levels, effectively (asymmetrically) responding to existing threats and challenges including the terrorist threat, and guaranteeing Russia’s military security under any scenario.”<sup>180</sup>

The second vital element of the Russian combat readiness system was strategic nuclear weapons. Much of the available traditionalist literature on future war introduced the possession of nuclear forces as a powerful deterrent against large-scale aggression with stand-off systems.<sup>181</sup> Furthermore, strategic nuclear weapons would be the most fundamental and economical means of ensuring national security.<sup>182</sup> According to Colonel-General V.V. Korobushin, missile and nuclear weapons were “not only less expensive, but also require substantially less personnel to maintain them in constant

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, p. 20.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. pp. 21-23.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

<sup>181</sup> Maslov, p. 18 and Gareyev (2009)

<sup>182</sup> Korobushin, p. 47.

combat readiness and rely on a fairly compact but technologically advanced scientific and engineering base.”<sup>183</sup> Therefore, the existing strategic nuclear weapons with upgraded alert and command and control systems would constitute a powerful strategic element of Russia’s combat readiness system in the long term. In 2006, Russian Defence Minister Colonel-General S.B. Ivanov revealed the importance of nuclear weapons, stating that “[w]e must have such strategic weapons that would guarantee our security now as well as 20 or 40 years from now.”<sup>184</sup>

Accordingly, there was no question of downsizing or de-alerting strategic nuclear weapons as long as they were entrusted with the task of inflicting assured damage on the opponent.<sup>185</sup> This strategy could be regarded as the continuation of Russia’s defensive nuclear strategy in the 1980s under its no-first-use policy. On behalf of the Russian Academy of Military Science, General Korobushin rejected a proposition on unilateral reduction of strategic nuclear forces in 2007, arguing that any reduction of the ‘offensive’ Russian strategic nuclear missiles would increase the effectiveness of the US missile defence system, since its (the US’s) operational effectiveness was proportional to the number of warheads and antimissile systems.<sup>186</sup> Therefore, Russians believed that any decline in strategic nuclear weapons would increase correlation favouring the US and decrease Russia’s combat readiness posture. Therefore, by not downsizing strategic nuclear missile capability, the Russian military preserved its essential nuclear deterrence capability.

In this way the Russian combat readiness system aimed to respond to local and regional armed conflicts (through general-purpose forces) and prevent the enemy from waging a large-scale stand-off war (by Russian strategic nuclear weapons). This model bears a resemblance to the Soviet strategy of the 1970s and 1980s. During that time, the Soviets saw anti-nuclear maneuvers (by armoured divisions) as a way of delivering paralyzing blows to the enemy under its nuclear umbrella.<sup>187</sup> Generally speaking, the Russian military pursued a similar strategy in the 2000s. Nevertheless, general-purpose forces took over the tasks of Soviet armoured units. Next to that, the war objectives were confined to Russia’s immediate neighbourhood.

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> U. Molostov, A. Novikov, 1988 quoted in David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art: In Pursuit of Deep Battle*, (Oxon: Frank Cass, 1991): 209.



## 6.5. A new Russian concept: reflexive control within the context of information warfare

Much of the available literature on Russian military thought pays sufficient attention to fundamental military concepts. Nevertheless, fewer studies concentrate on new concepts and ideas, especially about information warfare. One of these concepts is the concept of reflexive control (RC). There are various definitions of this elusive concept. In general, RC is defined as a method of transferring to adversaries specifically prepared information or disinformation in order to nudge them to make predetermined decisions desired by the sender.<sup>188</sup> Indeed, academic research about RC started in the 1970s in response to the US's game theory. Nevertheless, it was not until the early 1990s that Russian thinkers considered reflexive control worthy of military attention. The growing significance of information assets in modern warfare also accelerated this process. Therefore, much of the current literature on reflexive control after the 1990s pays particular attention to information warfare and deception.

In 1995, Colonel S. Leonenko defined the concept as;

"RC [Reflexive Control] consists of transmitting motives and grounds from the controlling entity to the controlled system that stimulate the desired decision. The goal of RC is to prompt the enemy to make a decision unfavourable to him. Naturally, one must have an idea about how he thinks."<sup>189</sup>

Reflexive control happens when the transmitting actor conveys motives and reasons to influence the adversaries' decisions. Nevertheless, the decision should be made independently by the receiving actor.<sup>190</sup> Major General MD. Ionov clarified this issue in the mid-1990s. Ionov argued that "the objective of reflexive control is to force an enemy into making objective decisions that lead to his defeat by influencing or controlling his decision-making process."<sup>191</sup> In this way, enemy decision-makers would annul their original plan and make disadvantageous decisions.<sup>192</sup> In the framework of this, Ionov specified the reflexive control techniques. These were intimidation, enticement, disinformation, deception, concealment, and other measures to shorten the enemy's

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<sup>188</sup> Timothy, L. Thomas, "Russia's Reflexive Control Theory and the Military", *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 17 (2004): 237

<sup>189</sup> S. Leonenko, "Reflexive control of the enemy", *Army Collection* 8 (1995): 28.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> Ionov, 1994, quoted in Thomas (2004), p. 243.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

decision-making time.<sup>193</sup> Furthermore, power pressure, the use of superior force, force demonstrations, provocative maneuvers, ultimatums, and even limited strikes could underpin reflexive control measures.<sup>194</sup> All these would influence the enemy's decision-making and its decision-making time.<sup>195</sup> Nevertheless, being better informed about the status of enemy forces, the nature of its actions and its strategic intentions, above all, played the most crucial part in reflexive control.<sup>196</sup>

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, studies on reflexive control put more emphasis on information warfare. In 1999, Captain F. Chausov highlighted that the conduct of RC was mainly dependent on the intellectual potential of Russian commanders and their awareness of the situation, primarily when global information space determined the conditions of modern wars.<sup>197</sup> Therefore, situational awareness of the information space enabled the Russian military to forecast the enemy's decisions and give them the incentive to change them in Russia's favor. Similarly, Col. A.V. Raskin and V.S. Pelyak discussed RC within the context of *network-centric warfare* in 2005. The authors positioned RC at the first stratum of creating a controlled chaos situation in the enemy's network-centric organization (see figure-4).<sup>198</sup> Stratum one;

"Stratum one [Figure-4] reflects the procedure of reflexive controlling the enemy which we can describe as personalistic. It consists of selecting from among the adversary's leadership the main persons who make decisions under various situations and transmitting to them certain types of various information to serve the basis for making decisions. The objective of reflexive control is to create favourable conditions for the performance of own combat mission by adversely affecting the opposing side's decision making."<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> M. D. Ionov, "On Reflexive Control of the Enemy in Combat", *Military Thought* 1 (January 1995): 46-47.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48-49.

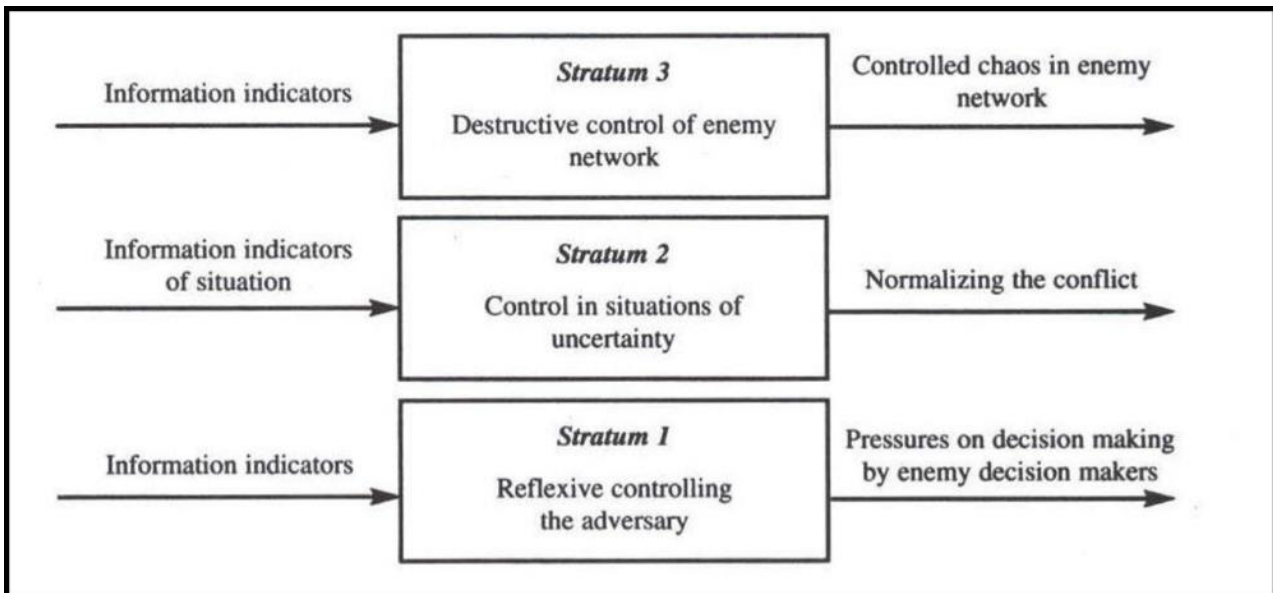
<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> Ionov, p. 1995, quoted in Thomas (2004), p. 256.

<sup>197</sup> Thomas (2004), p. 247.

<sup>198</sup> A.V.Raskin and V.S. Pelyak, p. 91.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.* pp.91-92.



**Figure-4** Stratified Model of Destructive Controlling the Enemy Network-Centric Organisation. (Source: A.V.Raskin and V.S. Pelyak, "On Network Centric Warfare", *Military Thought* 14:2, (April 2005): 91.)

The following of *stratums* had the aim of attaining information superiority through the "destructive control" of the enemy's network-centric organisations.<sup>200</sup> RC concentrated on influencing enemy decision-making. On the other hand, information warfare was aimed at destructing the enemy's entire command and control systems. Likewise, Vorobyov and Kiselev took part in the discussion in 2008 by associating reflexive control with information warfare in an article entitled *Military Science at the Present Stage*. In addition to that, S.A. Komov defined RC as the "intellectual method" of information warfare.<sup>201</sup>

The introduction of RC as an element of information warfare was subjected to criticism by the traditionalist school of thought. This criticism rested on the idea that the system of measures to influence 'human mentality' did not amount to information warfare. According to this view, RC used other types of impacts on the enemy, next to informational.<sup>202</sup> According to Orlyansky;

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> S. A. Komov, "About Methods and Forms of Conducting Information Warfare", *Military Thought* 4 (July–August 1997): 18–22.

<sup>202</sup> V.I. Orlyansky, "Deceiving the Enemy: Some Points of Essence", *Military Thought* 16:3-4 (July 2007): 236.

“They [RC] are sooner psychological operations where deception might have limited uses and narrow aims such as exaggerating the danger and thus disorganising the enemy manpower.”<sup>203</sup>

In light of Orlyansky’s definition, RC seeks to exaggerate Russian military power to force the enemy commander to limit its course of actions. In this regard, RC was dissimilar to Russian information operations, which aimed to deceive the enemy in operations to achieve the surprise effect.<sup>204</sup> While RC could apply to all kinds of operations, information operations were deviational and situation-specific. Therefore, it is conceivable that the purpose of the RC is not to conceal a particular Russian operational plan. Instead, RC seeks to increase the Western perception of Russian military posture. The goal was to prevent the enemy from using its armed forces in a strategically reasonable manner.

In 2008, Orlyansky went as far as to call into question the effectiveness of RC. For Orlyansky, RC was an operational concept of conscionable wars, wars of ideologies, which aimed to apply individual and public consciousness manipulation methodologies.<sup>205</sup> While Orlyansky admired RC’s theoretical evolution, he contradicted its effectiveness in military practice. According to Orlyansky, “information can render certain influence upon individual persons or targeted populations; however, the effectiveness of this influence is estimated today as rather low.”<sup>206</sup> In the long run, the studies on influencing individual and public consciousness would be promising. Nevertheless, Orlyansky argued that “it is probably too early to insist that such methods are really available” in 2008.<sup>207</sup>

The ambiguity began to emerge as more explanations were made regarding RC from different perspectives. Therefore, the outgrowth of military theoretical works on RC might not guarantee an effective operational concept. On the other side, criticism of RC could reflect the traditionalists’ broader denunciation of information means and assets in modern warfare. Generally speaking, their argument rested on the idea that information, as a tool, could not be used instead of a weapon in warfare. <sup>208</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.* p. 236.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> Orlyansky (2008), p. 184.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.* p. 185.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*

Furthermore, information itself could not be the object or subject of influence unless integrated into a carrier (i.e. weapon system).<sup>209</sup>

## **6.6. Continuity and discontinuity of fundamental military concepts**

The results of this investigation have shown that forecasting, correlation of forms and methods, IPW, and combat readiness privileged continuity in Russian military thinking even though war's character underwent a fundamental change in the 1990s. For the most part, this continuity was stimulated by the traditionalist school of thought in the Russian High Command. Even though the modernists introduced new Western military concepts in their works, they did not attempt to replace fundamental military concepts. Nevertheless, modernists' thinking played a crucial role in integrating a concept of the 1970s, reflexive control, into Russian approaches to information warfare. In addition, the modernists endeavoured to upgrade the definition of fundamental military concepts in parallel with the changing operational environment.

The study has found that forecasting's content and strategic relevance remained unchanged. In a manner reminiscent of the Soviet era, the Russian military put the concept of forecasting into practice to predict a future war's character. By using the laws of dialectic materialism, forecasts continued to investigate a qualitative leap in military affairs. In the 1990s and 2000s, this leap was characterized by a breakthrough in conventional strategic weapons and information technologies. This leap was also accentuated by the rising importance of non-military means of warfare. Unlike traditionalists, the modernists attached great importance to forecasting since this concept promoted a new theory of warfare inspired by innovation. On the other side, the traditionalists argued that military means would dominate future wars, whereas non-military means would play decisive roles in preventing wars and armed conflicts. Finally, forecasting determined the semantic content of the other concepts, because forecasts of a future war allowed the Russian military to determine the strategic context in which the other concepts operated.

The study has found that the correlation of forms and methods secured its function of forecasting the war's outcome between 1990 and 2010. Nevertheless, the concept's semantic content tended to undergo a transformation. After the 1990s, the Russian military experienced difficulties while estimating the outcome of unconventional wars.

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid. pp. 186-188.

Even though the modernists attempted to develop new indicators to replace the quantitative 'parity' factor, traditionalists paid insufficient attention to these attempts. The traditionalists acknowledged the increasing importance of non-military and unconventional forms of warfare, while continuing to emphasize the decisiveness of military power. Therefore, the *parity* factor remained intact as the basis for estimating the outcome of future armed conflicts. Thus, the semantic content of the concept tended to adapt itself to the requirements of unconventional warfare.

Like much of the Cold War period, the Russian military periodised both the Western and its own war design by using *preparatory, initial, and final periods*.<sup>210</sup> Among these periods, the emphasis was placed on the initial period of war. As it was in the late 19th century and the 1950s and 1960s, the IPW was considered the principal and decisive phase of war. In Russia's way of thinking, initial Western military operations with stand-off weapons and information/EW assets would determine the course and outcome of modern wars. For Russia, initial operations aimed to seize the strategic initiative by carrying out air-mobile maneuvers enabled by the threat of the use of tactical and operational nuclear weapons. Russian strategy was analogous to the Soviet war strategies of the 1970s and 1980s. At this time, gaining the strategic initiative through the use of paralyzing deep conventional manoeuvres and preventing the enemy from resorting to nuclear weapons laid the groundwork for the Red Army's initial operations.<sup>211</sup> These operations demonstrated contextual similarity between Soviet and Russian approaches to initial operations. Therefore, the semantic content of the IPW remained intact after the 1990s.

Just as in the Soviet period, the long-standing objective of seizing the initiative during the IPW required the Russian military to build a compatible combat readiness system. Therefore, military supremacy during the IPW was inextricably linked with a high state of combat readiness. Accordingly, performing initial operations with *permanent combat readiness* formations in a local war and ensuring *mobilization readiness* to wage a large-scale regional war would become the strategic objectives of the Russian combat readiness system. In the framework of this, permanent combat readiness units comprised strategic nuclear forces and newly-built general-purpose forces. Attaining war objectives with agile conventional troops under the nuclear umbrella indicated a

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<sup>210</sup> During the 1970s and 1980s, During the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviet High Command re-periodised the war as a period of non-nuclear options [IPW], the period of limited nuclear actions, the period of nuclear options and concluding period.

<sup>211</sup> Wardak, p. 81-82 and Hines, p. 56.

pattern similar to the Soviet military's deep conventional maneuvers. Nevertheless, the research has found that these maneuvers acquired a mobile and asymmetric character in the 2000s. In addition, these operations were constrained to attain their objectives in local wars and armed conflicts instead of in regional and major wars. Thus, combat readiness remained essential in Russia's strategic thought. The semantic content of the concept remained unaltered. In addition, combat readiness was regarded as the sufficient precondition for ensuring deterrence and military superiority over the enemy. Thereby, this concept is linked to the correlation. Like the Soviet era, combat readiness is associated with the qualitative characteristic of the correlation.

Finally, the research has shown that a new concept, *reflexive control*, was introduced in Russian military publications between 1990 and 2010. The modernists discussed this concept within the context of information warfare. Thus, the modernist efforts played a crucial role in integrating reflexive control into Russian approaches into attaining information superiority over the enemy. On the other hand, the traditionalists insisted that this concept should operate within the confines of psychological operations. Therefore, the Russian High Command did not arrive at a consensus about the meaning and functionality of this elusive concept. While the modernists attached decisive importance to this concept in information operations, the modernists discussed it under war prevention and as a way of reducing the number of an enemy's courses of action. Furthermore, the traditionalists doubted the effectiveness of this concept in general and information itself in particular. Traditionalist criticism rested on the notion that information itself could not replace a weapon system and could only give the expected outcome in a carrier system (i.e. weapon system). Despite the rising importance of non-military means of war, the traditionalists' violent-centric and direct approaches to strategy prevailed in Russian military thinking in the 2000s. As a result, reflexive control remained intact; however, its relevance and functionality were widely discussed. Therefore, the study concludes that reflexive control falls into the category of essentially contested concepts.

## **6.7. Conclusion**

The chapter set out to investigate the continuity and discontinuity of Russian fundamental military concepts between 1990 and 2010. The second aim of this chapter was to scrutinize the evolving semantic content of these concepts under various Russian military strategies. The chapter has identified that fundamental military concepts continue to lend substance to Russian military doctrine, organisational structure, and

strategy, even though Russian military thought has undergone a complete organizational transformation. A possible explanation for this is that Russian strategic culture might direct the course of military reform. Another possible explanation for this might be that the traditionalists gained a positional, numerical, generational and rank-wise advantage over the modernists in the Russian High Command. Furthermore, the modernists did not attempt to replace these concepts with Western military concepts, instead endeavoring to upgrade their semantic contents. Therefore, fundamental military concepts privileged continuity over change, provided that the Russian General Staff updated their semantic content. In this regard, the Russian military put forecasting and the COFM at its center while *anticipating the character and results of a future war*. On the other hand, *ensuring permanent combat readiness to achieve the objectives of the IPW* became one of the main principles of the Russian strategy between 1990 and 2010.

The research has also shown that the Russian High Command used fundamental military concepts to outline the U.S./NATO war strategies even though a few modernists have held to Western terminology. By this means, the traditionalists *Russianized* new Western military concepts by looking at them through the prism of fundamental military concepts. Significantly, the traditionalists disagreed on matters that run counter to the main assertions of these concepts. Instead, new ideas were questioned, de-emphasized, ignored or put into a traditionalist framework. As a result, the Russian military designed war strategies within the confines of these concepts. Therefore, understanding Russian military strategies hinges on the proper appreciation of the meaning and functionality of these concepts in military thought.