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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-7**

### **Analysis**

This dissertation, has shown that there is a significant degree of continuity in Russian military thought due to the resilience and enduring relevance of Russian fundamental military concepts between 1856 and 2010. This study has investigated fundamental military concepts in four different socio-historical and strategically distinguished periods. These are the late imperial Russian period (1856-1917), the interwar period (1917-1945), the Cold War period (1945-1990), and the contemporary period (1990-2010). In the course of that, this study sets out to investigate the continuity of Russian fundamental military concepts primarily over the twentieth century by employing conceptual history. Moreover, this study analyzes the evolution of concepts' semantic context over time. The purpose of this investigation has been to understand how concepts' content undergoes a transformation as the socio-political and strategic contexts change over time. In this regard, the research seeks to determine whether concepts' linguistic reflection in a given period could promise a functional continuity in an entirely different context. Finally, this study attempts to answer the question of why some fundamental military concepts privileged continuity over change and why others did not. For this purpose, the research has carried out three different analyses. This chapter presents and discusses the main findings of these investigations.

The research's primary objective was to investigate conceptual resilience in Russian strategic thinking. Therefore, this study traces the rise and evolution of fundamental military concepts by examining the military history of ideas. In this regard, the continuity of fundamental military concepts over time has been scrutinized based on theoretical observations. While doing that, this research pays regard to the concepts' content in every different historical period. Thereby, the present research tries to understand whether the definitions of these concepts go through changes over four different historical periods.

The second analysis seeks to build a causal relationship between concepts' strategic relevance and continuity. The enduring relevance of concepts manifests itself in the form of the continuity of a strategic idea in Russian military thought over time. On the other hand, strategic irrelevance reflects a shift in strategic thinking. Consequently, this

research focuses on strategy in addition to history. Even though this study concentrates on the history of ideas, it also pays attention to the strategic context in accordance with the premises of conceptual history, since the circumstances of war may vary in such a way that it would not be possible to consider every concept as being equally crucial in various strategic contexts. Therefore, this analysis attempts to discover whether fundamental military concepts secure their strategic relevance. By this means, this study tries to unravel whether a concept represents an analogous strategic idea under different socio-political and strategic contexts. Therefore, the present research explores concepts' functional roles in varying contexts by relying on historical observations.

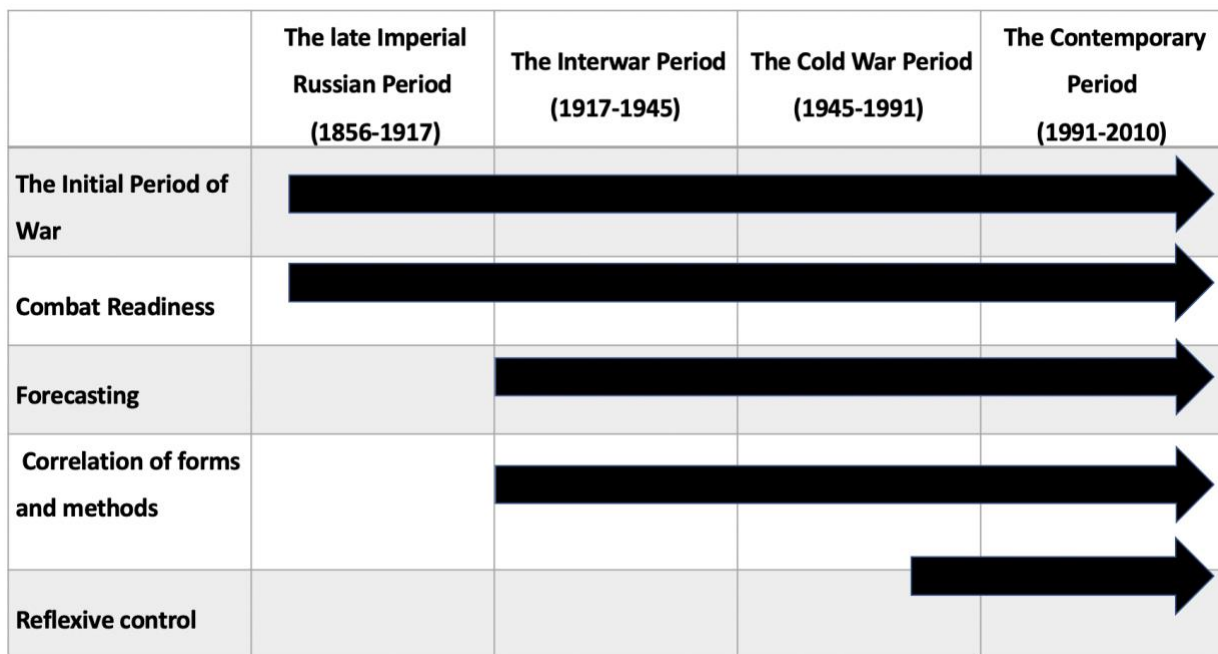
The third analysis investigates the system of concepts. The purpose of this investigation is to comprehend to what extent the interrelation among concepts promotes the continuity of a strategic idea in Russian military thought. The research tries to discover to what degree varying combinations of concepts lead to the emergence of a system of thinking that fosters conceptual resilience. In this way, the study seeks to identify causal linkages between historical continuity and interrelation. Consequently, this research reveals the genealogy of concepts in every period based on the functional and semantic role that concepts play in different strategic contexts.

Finally, the fourth analysis scrutinizes conceptual resilience. By drawing on the findings of the previous three analyses, this analysis seeks to examine why and how concepts can be resilient under the impact of socio-political and strategic ruptures.

### **7. 1. The first analysis: The continuity of fundamental military concepts**

The objective of this analysis is to discover whether socio-political and strategic ruptures have an impact on the continuity of fundamental military concepts between 1853 and 2010. In this analysis, the study begins by examining the rise and evolution of fundamental military concepts. Thus, this analysis unearths each concept's commonly agreed or formal contents in four different historical periods. These four periods could be distinguished from each other by their particular ideological, political, and strategic characteristics. In particular, Imperial Russian, Marxist-Leninist before and after the Second World War and contemporary Russian theory on war developed their own concepts or revisited the existing ones. The military thinkers of each period conceptualized warfare to attain the ideological and political objectives of the ruling elite. For instance, the political objective of spreading socialist ideology in the 1920s

and 1930s brought an offensive strategy and its adherent military concepts to the forefront. Moreover, changing strategic context from trench to manoeuvre war, and from nuclear to modern conventional war, influenced the evolution of military concepts over time. As the strategic context changes, some concepts become relevant, while others lose their significance. According to conceptual history, the linguistic reflections of concepts feel the pressure of change when social and political structures break up.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, socio-political and strategic ruptures are expected to cause a conceptual shift in Russian military thinking. In this regard, this analysis investigates to what extent fundamental military concepts change under external influence and how they respond. Consequently, this research gives an account of how contextual ruptures affect conceptual resilience in Russian military thought.



**Figure-5:** The continuity of fundamental military concepts between 1856 and 2010

Figure five shows an overview of the continuity of fundamental military concepts between 1856 and 2010. Closer inspection of the figure indicates a continuity of the initial period of war and combat readiness from the 1870s onward, forecasting and correlation of forms and methods since the 1920s, and reflexive control after the 1970s. Based on conceptual historical analyses, it can be concluded that the fundamental military concepts that emerged during the late Imperial Russian and early Soviet periods remained intact until 2010.

<sup>1</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, "Social History and Conceptual History", *International Journal of Politics Culture and Society* 2:3 (1989), 308

The current study has found that the historical origins of the initial period of war date back to Genrikh A. Leer's preparatory operations concept. Leer defined this concept as a period which "provides (favourable or unfavourable) initial conditions for the main operation."<sup>2</sup> In this regard, Leer thought this phase consisted of activities that sought to mobilize, deploy, and concentrate troops at the main area of operations without any enemy interference. Therefore, this concept allowed the Imperial Russian Army to seize the strategic initiative through an operational maneuver even before the declaration of war. During the early Soviet era, this concept inspired Alexander Svechin to formulate the initial period of war (IPW). The IPW was a preparatory period for major military operations, and it entailed all measures previously categorized as preparatory operations. Therefore, Svechin re-conceptualized an analogous idea with different terminology. According to Svechin, the IPW was "a special period of war lasting from the declaration of war to the beginning of major operations."<sup>3</sup> Svechin did not resort to Leer's terminology because he thought it would be inconvenient to categorize operational acts under the IPW. Unlike Leer, Svechin's vision of the IPW did not include a strategic maneuver before the beginning of major operations,<sup>4</sup> because Svechin defended the idea that concentration before the start of major operations could only produce limited objectives. For Svechin, the strategic maneuver could promise a victory based on the commander's operational judgment during the war, but not at the beginning.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, while the terminology changes, there exists a relative continuity in the awareness of a particular problem or conceptual space.

During the interwar period (1917-1939), Soviet military thinkers arrived at a consensus that major operations would not take place during the IPW. Therefore, the IPW could be characterized by a period that determined the future evolution and character of main operations. During the beginning of the Cold War, the definition of the concept underwent a transformation. In the early 1960s, the IPW of a modern missile war was defined as "the main and decisive period" that predetermined the entire war's development and outcome.<sup>6</sup> After the 1990s, the IPW remained the primary and decisive period of modern wars.<sup>7</sup> According to Russian thinkers, "the main objectives of

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<sup>2</sup> Genrikh Antonovich Leer, *Positive Strategy (Part 1)*, (Saint Petersburg, 1877), 6

<sup>3</sup> Alexander A. Svechin, *Strategy* (Moscow: Voennyi Vestnik, 1927) translated and published by (Minnesota: East View Information Services, 1991), pp. 201-203.

<sup>4</sup> Svechin, p.121.

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

<sup>6</sup> V.D. Sokolovsky, *Soviet Military Strategy* (Santa Monica: The Rand Cooperation, 1963), pp. 308-314.

<sup>7</sup> S.A. Bogdanov, "Warfare of the Future", *Military Thought* 13:1 (January 2004): 36.

future wars will be achieved in the opening phase, and that will become the turning point determining the fate of a war."<sup>8</sup>

This analysis has demonstrated that the IPW secured its position in Russian strategic thinking from the 1870s onwards until the 2010s. Therefore, it is plausible that the concept's meaning did not see profound variations over time, since the core idea behind the IPW was kept unchanged. This concept continued to regulate the opening phase of war and initial strategic operations. Depending on the strategic context, the concept's content was described as either the decisive or shaping period of war. As a result, the IPW could affect either the outcome or the course of war, respectively. Nevertheless, Russian military thinkers assigned different values to this concept depending on their preference for a particular strategy. According to conceptual history, concepts could gain new semantic contents in varying historical and strategic contexts. The relation between concepts' content and strategic context is examined in the second analysis.

The results of the study have shown that the antecedents of combat readiness can be traced back to the late Imperial Russian period. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the mobilization and concentration of troops during the preparatory operations phase would characterize Leer's understanding of combat readiness. By this means, the Imperial Russian military had sought to ensure superiority at the beginning of war against an otherwise numerically stronger but unprepared enemy.<sup>9</sup> During the early Soviet era, combat readiness was associated with militarizing the Soviet state organs such as the industry, economy, military etc., in peacetime within the framework of front and rear in the future war.<sup>10</sup> During the Cold War, the Soviet military described combat readiness as "a state and capability which ensure the desired security of the nation in peacetime and the achievement of specific aims in the case of war."<sup>11</sup> After the 1990s, the Russian General Staff specified combat readiness as "subunit readiness to join in a battle in an organised way and at a time specified by command and to successfully carry out the tasks."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the definition of the concept did not see a profound change over time. Nevertheless, the concept's meaning gained an operational character, especially after the beginning of the Cold War. Thereby, some operational criteria (i.e. state, capability,

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<sup>8</sup> V.N. Gorbunov and S.A., Bogdanov, "Armed Confrontation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", *Military Thought* 18:1 (January 2009): 27.

<sup>9</sup> Leer, p. 53.

<sup>10</sup> Walter Darnell Jacobs, *Frunze: The Soviet Clausewitz 1885-1925* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p. 123-125.

<sup>11</sup> Ghulam Dastagir Wardak, *The Voroshilov Lectures: Materials from the Soviet General Staff Academy, Volume-1*, (Washington: The National Defence University Press, 1989), 177.

<sup>12</sup> "The main principles of Combat", Editor, *Military Thought* 11:4, (July 2002): 15.

time) were added to the concept's definition to test and verify the combat readiness level of the Russian Armed Forces.

The study has found that the roots of forecasting date back to the early Soviet period. In the 1920s, Lenin associated scientific forecasting with the "knowledge of the objective laws of the evolution of nature and society."<sup>13</sup> Inspired by the Marxist-Leninist theory of cognition, the Soviet military thinkers believed that knowing the laws of the evolution of nature and society could help the Soviet military remove the uncertainties of future war.<sup>14</sup> In this regard, the Soviets employed forecasting to foresee the character of a future war, the enemy strategy, and the war's conditions. During the Cold War, the concept was defined as "the research process, as a result of which we obtain probability data about the future state of the object being forecast."<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the Soviets described military forecasting as "the study of military-political situation, the pattern of the war in the future, the prospects of developing strategy, operational art, and tactics, the qualitative and quantitative composition of the means of armed conflict (one's own and the enemy's), the prospects for the development of the potential of the war economy on the future, and forecasting of the enemy's strategic and tactical plans."<sup>16</sup> After the Cold War, the concept was defined as "a leap over an information divide, the identification of the essence of forthcoming military phenomena with obviously incomplete background data."<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the concept's content remained mainly unaltered. Broadly speaking, the concept signified the Russian military's endeavor to foresee a future war's character and qualitative leaps in military affairs.

This study has indicated that the correlation of forms and methods appeared in Russian military thinking in the 1920s, together with the studies on forecasting. Nevertheless, systematic conceptualization took place only in the 1970s. In the 1920s, the concept was used to compare different forms of warfare. In that regard, A. Svechin and G. Isserson utilized this concept to investigate whether the technological developments in weapon systems (i.e. tanks, artillery) would promise victory under offensive or defensive strategy in a future war. During the Cold War, the Soviet dictionary of military terms defined the concept as "the aggregate of indices permitting evaluation of the

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<sup>13</sup> Yu. V. Chuyev, and Yu. B. Mikhaylov, *Forecasting in Military Affairs: A Soviet View*, (Moscow: Ministry of Defence 1975) published by (Washington: The US Government Printing Office), 23. Translated by the DGIS Multilingual Section Translation Bureau, Ottawa.

<sup>14</sup> Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 24.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

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

relatively friendly and hostile troops, by comparative analysis of the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of troop organisation, performance, data on armament, and combat material."<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the concept was used to compare the means and methods of opposing forces to estimate the outcome of a conflict. After the Cold War the concept was introduced as "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>19</sup> Therefore, the concept served to determine supremacy in a future war by relying on selected criteria. The research has found that the concept's definition became more structured and detailed after the 1970s. Since then, the Russian General Staff has designed quantitative and qualitative criteria to anticipate a war's outcome.

Finally, the research has found that Russian thinkers considered reflexive control worthy of military attention after the 1990s, even though academic studies on this concept date back to the 1970s. In this regard, several Russian thinkers attempt to define the concept from various perspectives. For the purpose of this analysis, I'll present some of the more prominent definitions of this concept. According to S. Leonenko, 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."<sup>20</sup> According to A.V. Raskin and V.S. Pelyak,

"It [Reflexive Control] 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 [as] the basis for making decisions."<sup>21</sup>

According to V.I. Orlyansky, "[t]hey [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>22</sup> On the whole, the common thread in

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<sup>18</sup> Oleksij Ivanovyc Radzievskij, *Dictionary of Basic Military Terms: A Soviet View* (Moscow: The Ministry of Defence of the Soviet Union, 1965) Published by (Washington: The US Government Printing Office, 1965), 204. Translated by the DGIS Multilingual Section Translation Bureau Secretary of State Department.

<sup>19</sup> Russian military encyclopaedia, quoted in Thomas (2016), 8.

<sup>20</sup> S. Leonenko, "Reflexive control of the enemy", *Army Collection* 8 (1995): 28.

<sup>21</sup> A.V.Raskin and V.S. Pelyak, "On Network Centric Warfare", *Military Thought* 14:2, (April 2005): 91.

<sup>22</sup> V.I. Orlyansky, "Information Weapons and Information Warfare: Realities and Speculations", *Military Thought* 17:1. (January 2008): 184.



these explanations is that RC aims to influence enemy military decision makers' decisions to the Russian military's advantage. Therefore, there is a tacit agreement on the concept's content. In contrast, discussions revolved around the functional use of the concept. The arguments on the concept's semantic content will be presented in the second analysis.

The results of this investigation have shown that socio-political and strategic ruptures have a marginal impact on the continuity of fundamental military concepts over time. These concepts privileged continuity over change in Russian military thinking even though socio-political context and the character of war underwent a series of profound shifts. The results of this analysis have indicated that the Russian General Staff updated and enriched the content of fundamental military concepts, instead of entirely discarding them. As a result, concepts acquired new semantic contents in order to explain and deal with war's changing character. By this means, the concepts remained capable of laying the theoretical framework for new war strategies, defence, and arms production plans. The roots of conceptual resilience will be examined during the upcoming analyses.

Continuity of military concepts [is] primarily associated with the traditionalists' influence in military thought. Traditionalists managed to maintain relative dominance over promotions, professional military education, appointments to the military schools, and military curriculum, all of which resulted in a comparatively dominant body of military opinion among Russian military officers. In this regard, the traditionalists tended to revitalize military concepts' previous employment even though war's character underwent a change. Consequently, their ideas helped fundamental military concepts survive.

## **7.2. The second analysis: Investigating the causal link between strategic relevance and continuity**

This study investigates 'continuity' by analysing whether the concepts' strategic relevance continued over time. Therefore, this research has focused on Russian military strategy in addition to history. Thus, the continuity of fundamental military concepts would be meaningful if they secured the strategic idea ascribed to them over time. Thereby, *fundamentalness* is inextricably linked with the concepts' semantic content. Understanding the continuity of concepts' semantic content and functional use is possible, provided that this research discovers the socio-political and strategic context

during the period under investigation. Therefore, the second analysis of the study examines how concepts' semantic content evolved under various Russian war strategies. The purpose of this investigation is to measure the enduring relevance of fundamental military concepts over different socio-political periods.

For the purpose of this research, I have designed three categories to classify concepts' strategic relevance. These are: essentially contested, merely common, or strategically essential. Essentially contested concepts "involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users" even though there is an inexplicit agreement about the idea attached to this concept.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, much disagreement exists regarding the application of these concepts to a strategy. Merely common concepts involve a widespread agreement on their content; however, they are strategically irrelevant. Therefore, military strategies do not predominantly rely on the application of these concepts. Finally, strategically essential concepts are crucial to forming and practising strategies. In addition to that, there is a widespread consensus on their meaning.

	<b>The late Imperial Russian Period (1856-1917)</b>	<b>The Interwar Period (1917-1945)</b>	<b>The Cold War Period (1945-1991)</b>	<b>The Contemporary Period (1991-2010)</b>
<b>The Initial Period of War</b>	Strategically essential (as preparatory operations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Merely Common under the attrition strategy (the 1920s)</li> <li>• Strategically essential under annihilation strategy (the 1930s)</li> </ul>	Strategically essential	Strategically essential
<b>Combat Readiness</b>	Strategically essential	Strategically essential	Strategically essential	Strategically essential
<b>Forecasting</b>		Strategically essential	Strategically essential	Strategically essential
<b>Correlation of forms and methods</b>		Strategically essential	Strategically essential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategically essential under conventional war strategies</li> <li>• Essentially contested under unconventional warfare strategies</li> </ul>
<b>Reflexive control</b>				Essentially contested

**Figure-6:** Strategic relevance of fundamental military concepts between 1856 and 2010

<sup>23</sup> David Hillel Ruben, "W.B. Gallie and Essentially Contested Concepts," *Philosophical Papers* 39:2 (2010), 257.

Figure six provides a breakdown of the relevance status of fundamental military concepts between 1856 and 2010. First of all, forecasting prevailed in Russian strategic thought irrespective of changing strategic context. The Russian military utilized this concept from the 1920s onward to predict and deal with the qualitative leaps in military affairs. As seen in the concept's definition, the concept studies "the prospects of developing strategy, operational art, and tactics".<sup>24</sup> Thenceforth, this concept heavily influenced military strategy by foreseeing trends, shifts, and breakthroughs in war's changing character based on the specific laws of dialectic materialism. In that regard, forecasting laid the groundwork for developing various war strategies and defence and arms production plans in Russian military history. The study has shown that forecasting war's changing character helped the Russian General Staff determine military strategies for a future war. Furthermore, forecasting contributed to forming a strategic context in which other military concepts operate. Therefore, a vital link existed between forecasting and military strategy. Consequently, this study has found that forecasting has been a strategically essential concept in Russian military thought since the 1920s.

The Soviets and Russians pursued two primary approaches while establishing linkages between forecasting and war strategy. On the one side, the traditionalists saw existing means and methods as viable options for coping with the forecasted qualitative leaps in military affairs. For instance, the Russian General Staff relied on its nuclear and general-purpose forces while developing counter-strategies against Western supremacy in precision (guided munitions) warfare in the 2000s. On the other hand, the modernists emphasized that adapting to the forecasted operational environment required the Russian military to adopt and use new (primarily Western) means and methods. According to this body of opinion, forecasting allowed the Russian military to access innovative and technology-driven military science. This idea became more critical when the Russian military could not foresee the breakthroughs in unconventional means and methods of warfare after the 1990s. Therefore, forecasting was key to comprehending Western-led military conceptual and technological studies. It is not a coincidence that Gerasimov underscored forecasting in his famous speech in 2013 while stressing developments in modern warfare.<sup>25</sup>

The study has found that the IPW falls into the category of strategically essential concepts. The origins of this concept date back to Leer's pioneering studies on

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<sup>24</sup> Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 14.

<sup>25</sup> Valeriy Gerasimov "The value of science is prediction" *Military-Industrial Courier* 8 (2013) 1–3.

preparatory operations in the 1870s. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, preparatory operations consisted of a group of strategic actions performed in peacetime, such as concentrating and deploying the army at the theater of operations.<sup>26</sup> In Leer's operation design, the success of the main operations hinged predominantly on the preparatory operations phase's activities, because Leer was the advocate of a short war of annihilation. During the Soviet era, Leer's operational design drew criticism on the grounds that he was preoccupied with preparatory operations. By rejecting Leer's terminology, A. Svechin periodized war into three categories: the pre-mobilization period, the initial period and the subsequent period of war.<sup>27</sup> The IPW was characterized by a period "lasting from declaration of war to the beginning of major operations when general mobilisation is carried out, and armed forces are concentrated and deployed for the first major operations."<sup>28</sup> Since Svechin prioritized the strategy of attrition over annihilation, he did not predict that the decisive phase of war should be the IPW. Nevertheless, the advocates of the deep operations such as G.S. Isserson and M. N. Tukhachevsky in the 1930s ascribed relatively more importance to the IPW than Svechin. According to the proponents of the annihilation strategy, the initial operations determined the further development and character of deep operations.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the strategic relevance of the IPW gradually increased in the 1930s and 1940s under the theory of deep operations.

Since the Soviets anticipated a surprise nuclear attack in the 1950s and 1960s, the IPW became the 'decisive' period of a short war of annihilation. During the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviet General Staff re-periodized the war. These periods were: the period of non-nuclear options [IPW], the period of limited nuclear actions, the period of nuclear options, and the concluding period. Thus, the functionality of the IPW shifted from a decisive period of war to a period when the Red Army sought to grasp the strategic initiative, like in the 1930s, because the Soviet General Staff's forecasts necessitated a shift in strategy from a major nuclear war to a protracted conventional war under the threat of nuclear weapons. Gaining the strategic initiative by paralyzing deep conventional maneuvers and preventing the enemy from resorting to nuclear weapons had laid the groundwork for the Red Army's initial operations.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Leer, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Svechin, p.201-203.

<sup>28</sup> Andrei A. Kokoshin, *Soviet Strategic Thought, 1917-1991* (London: The MIT Press, 1998), p. 68

<sup>29</sup> Georgii Samoilovich Isserson, *The Evolution of Operational Art*, (Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013), 44.

<sup>30</sup> Wardak, p. 81-82 and Hines, p. 56.

After the Cold War, the Russian military held on to the scheme of *preparatory, initial, and final periods*. Among these, the Russian General Staff attached decisive importance to the IPW. Firstly, Russian thinkers argued that Western military operations acquired an annihilation character due to the effective use of precision warfare during the IPW.<sup>31</sup> In return, Russian General Staff adopted the strategy of indirect action, which included "military actions through the indirect physical destruction (smashing) of the adversary in a roundabout way."<sup>32</sup> This strategy aimed to create asymmetry by making armed forces more maneuverable and strategically mobile.<sup>33</sup> This strategy relied on air-mobile maneuvers against emerging threats during the IPW in order to seize the strategic initiative. At the same time, nuclear deterrence would thwart the enemy's possible stand-off attacks at this phase. Thus, the IPW remained the decisive phase of the strategy of indirect action. Therefore, the semantic content of the IPW remained intact after the 1990s. In addition to that, the study has identified a contextual similarity between Soviet and Russian approaches to initial operations.

The evidence from this study suggests that the content of IPW showed context-dependent semantic similarities. Under recurring loops, the IPW continued to function as either the decisive period of a war of annihilation or as the shaping period of a war of attrition between the 1870s and 1990. Under the indirect action strategy, the IPW became the decisive phase of war. Therefore, the content of the IPW ranged from a decisive period to a period when the Russian military aimed to grasp the strategic initiative over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite a short period of marginalization in the 1920s, the IPW became a strategically essential concept of Russian strategic culture. Next to its continuity, this concept secured its strategic relevance even though the strategic context changed over time.

The research has identified that combat readiness remained strategically essential between the 1870s and 2010. This concept appeared in Russian strategic thinking in the 1870s. Due to its backwardness in mobilization and technology, the Imperial Russian General Staff thought that only a standing combat-ready army could ensure superiority against an otherwise numerically stronger but unprepared enemy. According to Leer, the primary objective of combat readiness is to "suddenly (stealthily and quickly) concentrate superior forces on the battlefield before the enemy and put them

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<sup>31</sup> V.A. Vinogradov, "Characteristics of Modern Combined-Arms Operations", *Military Thought* 10:1 (January 2001): 25.

<sup>32</sup> I.N. Vorobyov and V.A. Kiselev, "The New Strategy of the Indirect Approach", *Military Thought* 15:4 (October 2006):27.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32.

in an advantageous position."<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the purpose of combat readiness was to win a short war of annihilation without a need for wartime mobilization. After 1917, the Soviets relied on offensive strategy due to the Soviet political ambition to spread the socialist revolution abroad. Under the deep battle strategy, peacetime combat readiness allowed the Red Army to break the enemy front during the IPW. Subsequently, the Soviets ensured wartime mobilization the readiness to empower the units to unceasingly carry out deep follow-up operations in a long-protracted war. In this regard, the Soviet General Staff sought to ensure perpetual combat readiness, which prevailed in peacetime and exponentially increased in times of war.

During the nuclear euphoria, the anticipation of a Western surprise nuclear attack stimulated the Soviet High Command to introduce combat readiness as the main priority and task of Soviet military science. Thus, attaining constant combat readiness to win the initial (nuclear) operations and ensuring mobilization readiness to win the subsequent (non-nuclear) period of war were crucial for Soviet strategy.<sup>35</sup> The Soviets prioritized constant combat readiness over wartime mobilization due to the anticipation of a surprise nuclear attack in the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, the objective of winning the IPW of both a conventional and a nuclear war compelled the Soviet High Command to keep the entire armed forces in a state of constant combat readiness.<sup>36</sup> After the 1990s, the functionality of combat readiness resembled the concept's use during the later stages of the Cold War. In this regard, performing initial operations with permanent combat readiness formations in a local war and ensuring mobilization readiness to wage a large-scale regional war became the objectives of the Russian combat readiness system.<sup>37</sup>

The common thread through all these historical definitions is that attaining the goals of the IPW without additional mobilization and achieving the objectives of the subsequent periods of war through mobilization readiness determined the content of the Imperial Russian, Soviet, and Russian combat readiness. Despite changing war strategies, the Russian General Staff's initial and subsequent war objectives were mainly founded on a well-designed and robust combat readiness system. Therefore, combat readiness was crucial for attaining Russian war strategies' objectives over different periods. Thus, the concept's strategic relevance remained unaffected between the 1870s and 2010. In

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<sup>34</sup> Genrikh Antonovich Leer, *Positive Strategy (Part 1)* (Saint Petersburg, 1877), 6

<sup>35</sup> V.D. Sokolovsky, *Soviet Military Strategy* (Santa Monica: The Rand Cooperation, 1963), 339.

<sup>36</sup> Wardak (Voroshilov-1), p. 178.

<sup>37</sup> M. A. Gareyev, "Russia's New Military Doctrine", *Military Thought* 16:2 (April 2007):10.

addition to its continuity, the concept remained strategically essential.

The correlation of forms and methods became strategically relevant during the Soviet period. The concept emerged in Soviet military thinking in the 1920s, and it became an effective theoretical instrument of predicting a war's outcome in different strategic contexts. During the interwar period, the correlation was employed to determine the impact of technological development on Soviet war strategies. Among others, Georgi S. Isserson concluded that new technical means, such as a machine gun mounted on a tank, brought a qualitative solution to the problem of Western quantitative firepower superiority.<sup>38</sup> In this regard, the Soviets believed that the qualitative effectiveness of new weapon systems would make 'the strategy of offence' a more viable option for the Soviet military. This concept was used during the nuclear era to estimate the war's outcome by comparing quantitative and qualitative distinctions of opposing forces using the parity factor. In this regard, the Soviets aimed to ensure parity in nuclear weapons to prevent the enemy from launching a surprise attack. After the 1970s, the parity in strategic and theatre (tactical) nuclear missiles resulted in the possibility of war remaining conventional. Subsequently, Soviet General Staff sought to attain supremacy in conventional systems.

During the 1990s, the correlation was primarily used to compare Russia's military-strategic and military-economic potential with that of an adversary by using the parity factor. Nevertheless, the research has found that the Russian military encountered challenges in correlating unconventional means of opposing forces. Thus, the concept's semantic content drew criticism from the modernist cadres of the Russian General Staff. As a result, this body of opinion made several attempts to upgrade and enrich the concept's semantic content with new qualitative criteria in addition to quantitative parity. Even though the traditionalists' view on the concept's semantic use (i.e. quantitative parity factor) prevailed in strategic thought, the debate on the concept's relevance under new unconventional and information means of warfare did not come to an end.

The correlation remained strategically essential under conventional war strategies. However, this concept fell into the category of essentially contested concepts under unconventional war strategies. Subsequently, the modernists endeavored to revitalize

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<sup>38</sup> Isserson, p. 49.

the concept's strategic relevance by offering new qualitative criteria for the concept's semantic content, such as being better informed (information superiority) and the civilizing factor (public opinion). These attempts indicate that the Russian military strove to keep this concept instead of discarding it. Thus, the concept continued to occupy a crucial function in Russian military thought even though its semantic content tended to undergo a transformation.

Finally, the research has found that reflexive control could be an essentially contested concept. Academic studies of this concept started in the 1970s. Nevertheless, it was not until the early 1990s that Russian thinkers considered reflexive control worthy of military attention. After the 1990s, the Russian High Command did not reach a consensus on this elusive concept's functional use, even though there is a preliminary agreement on the idea attached to this concept. Compared with the other fundamental military concepts, reflexive control occupied an ambiguous place in Russian military thought between 1990 and 2010, since its functionality remained impalpable.

After the 1990s, information means greatly influenced the character of armed struggle. Thus, modernist thinking played a crucial role in integrating reflexive control into Russian approaches toward attaining information and intellectual superiority over the enemy. 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. Therefore, this body of opinion marginalized the relevance of this concept.

The discussions revolved around whether this concept should be examined within the context of information warfare or psychological operations. On the one hand, the modernists suggested that reflexive control of the enemy constituted the first phase of the destruction of the enemy's information network.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, the traditionalists disagreed with this approach. According to this body of opinion, this concept should be examined as part of psychological operations, which aimed to increase the Western perception of Russian military posture. Apart from these, some Russian thinkers went as far as to question the military effectiveness of this concept.

The research has shown that reflexive control remained intact; however, the concept's employment varied. Despite the continuity, the strategic relevance of this concept is

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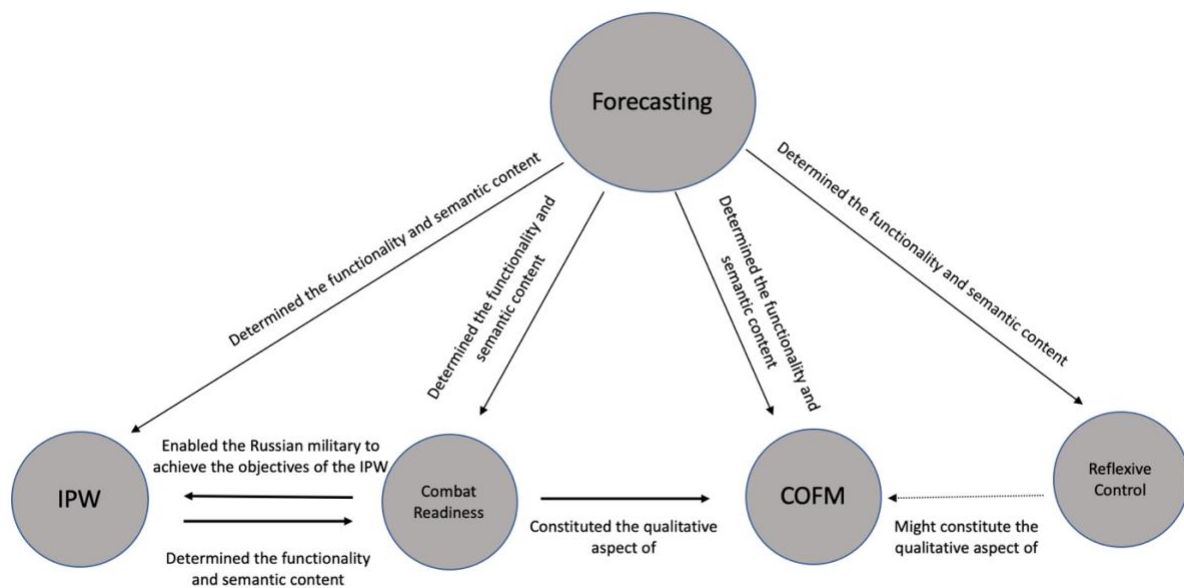
<sup>39</sup> A.V.Raskin and V.S. Pelyak, "On Network Centric Warfare", *Military Thought* 14:2, (April 2005): 91.



relatively weak compared to that of the other concepts. Subsequently, this research has not identified any evidence that makes this concept vital for attaining the objectives of annihilation, attrition, and indirect strategies. Instead, the traditionalists insisted on placing this concept (together with other non-military means) under the pre-war phase to reduce the enemy's courses of action. The research argues that the traditionalists played an essential role in deemphasizing the importance of reflexive control. Nevertheless, reflexive control survived after the 1990s and became even more critical under the new operational environment. Therefore, reflexive control falls into the category of essentially contested concepts, even though the concept privileged continuity over change after the Cold War.

### **7.3. The Third Analysis: Investigating the causal link between the genealogy of concepts and continuity**

The second analysis has shown that fundamental military concepts secured their positions in military thinking with the provision that they ensured their strategic relevance. In the third analysis, I seek to investigate another possible reason for the continuity: interrelation among fundamental military concepts. In this thesis, I defend the argument that fundamental military concepts privileged continuity over change on the condition that they were positioned within the genealogy of concepts. Genealogy refers to the degree to which the concepts have historically formed the basis for a particular system of thinking strategically. Genealogy typically connotes lineage rather than a system. Therefore, concepts secure their existence as long as they are tied to each other. The interrelation among these concepts promoted continuity. At the same time, a fundamental military concept would also function as a context for other concepts thanks to the relationship and interdependencies among them. Therefore, a fundamental military concept's functional use in a strategic context is connected with its relation to and dependency on other concepts. For this reason, this study has also examined the genealogy of concepts in four different periods, based on the functional role that concepts play in different strategic contexts. By revealing the level of interconnectivity and interdependencies among fundamental military concepts, I explain why these concepts remained valid over time. Because only in that way can the system of concepts lay the theoretical framework for Russian strategic thinking. In conjunction with this, the third analysis investigates how fundamental military concepts fit together into a whole system of military theory and analysis.



**Figure-7:** The interrelation among fundamental military concepts

Figure seven presents interrelations among fundamental military concepts. The figure illustrates that there is a certain degree of dependency and hierarchy among them. In this regard, forecasting was positioned at the top of the conceptual order of the genealogy of concepts. This concept studied the “prospects of developing strategy and operational art” by foreseeing the qualitative leaps in military affairs.<sup>40</sup> In doing so, forecasting helps the Russian General Staff specify the strategic context. Therefore, the semantic content of other fundamental military concepts differed under the forecasting’s suppositions. Thereby, forecasting was instrumental in the occurrence of shifts in Russian strategic thought. Consequently, the Russian General Staff revised fundamental military concepts’ semantic content to increase their capacity to explain the new operational environment.

As seen in the figure-3, the research has revealed dependencies between the IPW and combat readiness. These two concepts have been closely connected in Russian military thinking since the 1870s. Under the annihilation strategy, the longstanding objective of attaining superiority during the IPW without mobilization required the Russian military to keep its forces in a high state of combat readiness. Since this strategy ascribed decisive importance to the IPW, combat readiness became very critical. Because combat readiness enabled the Russian military to achieve the IPW’s goals. The research has observed this type of relationship during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; during the period of

<sup>40</sup> Chuyev and Mikhaylov, p. 14

nuclear euphoria (the late 1950s and 1960s); and in the early 2000s. For instance, when the IPW gained a decisive character during the nuclear euphoria, the Russian General Staff kept its armed forces in a state of constant combat readiness in peacetime and in times of war. The common thread in all these historical examples is that the Russian military increased its combat readiness footprint when the IPW became more critical. Under the attrition strategy, the IPW became the shaping period of war. In that situation, Russian combat readiness sought to ensure both peacetime combat readiness to win the initial operations and mobilization readiness to win the war. The research has found that this relationship was visible during the interwar (1917 and 1939) and the late Cold War periods (the 1970s and 1980s).

The IPW determined the relevance and semantic content of combat readiness, because the scale and content of combat readiness predominantly rested on the importance ascribed to the IPW. In this regard, the IPW has a superior position in Russian military thought in relation to combat readiness. On the other hand, combat readiness enabled the Russian military to achieve the objectives of the IPW. Therefore, combat readiness functioned as an enabler instead of a determinant. Taken together, these two concepts are strongly linked to each other. Moreover, these concepts operate together under various military strategies.

The research has identified a horizontal relationship between the correlation of forms and methods and combat readiness. In Russian thinking, correlation helped the Russian General Staff make quantitative and qualitative queries of the military forces of opposing sides to predict war's outcome. The qualitative aspect of this investigation was associated with combat readiness. Combat readiness fell into that category since the qualitative inquiry introduced 'the combat capability' as an adequate criterion and because the Russians defined combat readiness as 'the combat capability' of armed forces to ensure desired security and deterrence over an adversary.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the qualitative dimension of correlation hinged in part on the combat readiness level of Russian troops. (The other qualitative aspect of correlation was technological superiority) When the Russian military could not ensure numerical (in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century) or technological supremacy (after the Cold War) over the enemy, it attempted to compensate for these deficiencies by increasing its combat readiness posture. By this

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<sup>41</sup> A.L.Khryapin and V.A. Afanasyev, "Conceptual Principles of Strategic Deterrence", *Military Thought* 14:1 (January 2005): 31.

means, the achievement of surprise multiplies the correlation in the Russian military's favour.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, the research has not discovered any interrelation between reflexive control and the other fundamental military concepts. This concept was predominantly discussed under non-military means and methods of warfare between 1990 and 2010. During this timeframe, the prevailing idea in the Russian General Staff was that non-military means, especially information means, would play important roles in preventing wars and armed conflicts. Therefore, the concept did not interact with the concepts of performing war. Nevertheless, the Russian military's modernists' opinion argued that reflexive control could be vital for carrying out information warfare. In that regard, this concept would likely be more important if it were linked to the correlation, following the modernists' attempts to update the concept's (correlation) content (see figure-3 with a dashed arrow between correlation and reflexive control).

The research has found that the modernists considered quantitative parity ineffective in estimating the outcomes of unconventional forms of war (i.e. information warfare and counter-insurgency). If the modernists attempt to add qualitative criteria (i.e. being better informed) into the correlation's content became successful, the relevance of reflexive control would increase. In this case, reflexive control of the enemy would contribute to attaining information and intellectual superiority over the enemy in times of war. Therefore, the traditionalist's direct and violent-oriented perception of modern warfare could explain the relative seclusion of reflexive control from the genealogy of concepts. Nevertheless, a study in 2018 has already related information superiority to this concept.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the strategic relevance of reflexive control would increase as long as the concept served to attain information superiority over the enemy during the 2010s. This probability depends predominantly on the level of traditionalists school of thought's influence on non-military means of war.

The results of the third analysis have presented a certain degree of interrelation among fundamental military concepts. Thus, these linkages constituted a system of concepts that laid the theoretical framework of Russian military thought, doctrine, and principles. In this regard, this analysis concludes that fundamental military concepts privileged

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<sup>42</sup> David M. Glantz, *Soviet Military Operational Art: In Pursuit of Deep Battle* (Oxon: Frank Cass, 1991), 224.

<sup>43</sup> Timothy L Thomas, *Russian Military Thought: Concepts and Elements* (McLean: MITRE, 2019), 4-6

continuity over change on the condition that they were positioned within the genealogy of concepts.

#### **7.4. The fourth analysis: Examining the conceptual resilience**

This analysis seeks to investigate why and how fundamental military concepts can be resilient through changing historical contexts. Drawing on the findings of the preceding analyses, it can be argued that conceptual resilience is closely linked with the historical continuity of Russian strategic culture, the enduring relevance of the concepts and their development into a system of thinking. Towards that end, this query gives additional insights into the causes of conceptual resilience under the pressure of contextual change.

As to the historical aspect (the first analysis), the research has shown that conceptual change did not happen despite the fact that Russian military thought went through four contextual shifts between 1856 and 2010. Fundamental military concepts succeeded in securing their positions in Russia's conceptualization of modern warfare. There are several possible explanations for this result. Firstly, Tsarist officers in the Red Army ensured the continuity of Imperial Russian military heritage in Soviet military science. Consequently, the IPW and combat readiness prevailed in the Soviet's conceptualization of warfare during the interwar and Cold War periods. Secondly, after the 1990s, the Russian Military began seeking a new philosophy of war, shaped by Imperial Russian military heritage. As a result, contemporary Russian military thinkers and practitioners showed an increased interest in the ideas of Imperial Russian military thinkers.<sup>44</sup> In this regard, the ideas of Genrikh A. Leer, Nikolai P. Mikhnevich and Alexander Svechin were revitalized during the 2000s. This tendency could also be considered as an indication instead of an explanation. Nevertheless, the research has concluded that the legacy of the Imperial Russian military thinkers guaranteed the continuity of fundamental military concepts during the Soviet and contemporary Russian periods. Taken together, the historical continuity of Imperial Russian strategic culture was instrumental in promoting conceptual resilience.

The research has also shown that fundamental military concepts of Soviet military heritage remained intact even after the 1990s. Despite the decreasing influence of

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<sup>44</sup> Ofer Fridman, *Strategiya: The Foundations of the Russian art of Strategy* (London: Hurst&Company, 2021), 2.

Marxist-Leninist theory on war, forecasting and correlation continued to shape Russian military thinking. The permanence of Soviet military heritage could be explained by the role and influence of the traditionalist school of thought in Russian General Staff. Because this body of opinion gained a positional, numerical, and generational advantage over the modernists in the Russian High Command. Consequently, their ideas helped fundamental military concepts survive. Traditionalists' conservative outlook on military theory promoted the continuity of fundamental military concepts of both the Marxist-Leninist and the Russian Imperial theory of war. In this regard, the traditionalists struggled to revitalize military concepts' previous employment even though war's character underwent a change. In this regard, the Russian General Staff employed fundamental military concepts while designing new strategies that responded to the changes in military technology.

The study has found that fundamental military concepts secured their positions in military thinking, provided that they have remained strategically relevant. The research has concluded that fundamental military concepts have continued to influence the formation of the strategic context in every historical period. Succeeding generations of Russian thinkers and planners considered fundamental military concepts relevant to actual defence and operational planning. In this regard, concepts can be resilient as long as their dispositions and semantic content is able to explain and influence Russian military strategies under different circumstances. In this regard, we can conclude that 'strategically essential concepts' were more prone to continuity. They remained unscathed, provided that their semantic content continued to give form to overall strategic thinking. The research has also demonstrated that 'merely common concepts' proved resilient under specific strategies. Some concepts fell into the merely common concept category when a military strategic decision did not entirely depend on the suppositions of these concepts. Nevertheless, merely common concepts retained their relevance until the Russian General Staff opted for another strategy. Therefore, these concepts were not discarded from military thought. Finally, essentially contested concepts might be considered resilient on the condition that their semantic content underwent a transformation. While the rising debate on concepts' new semantic content makes them 'contested', the outcome of the discussion can push this concept into the category of strategically essential. Taken together, conceptual resilience is closely linked with strategic relevance in Russian military thinking.

The results of the third analysis have demonstrated that interrelation among fundamental military concepts promotes conceptual resilience. Fundamental military concepts continued over time, provided that they were closely connected. By this means, a fundamental military concept would also function as a context for other concepts, as a result of the interrelation among them. Thus, a concept's functional and semantic use in a strategic context depended on its relationship with other concepts. Consequently, fundamental military concepts could be turned into a coherent system of strategic thinking. For instance, the research has identified that the principle of 'ensuring peacetime *combat readiness* to win the *initial period* of a future war' became a longstanding objective of the Russian military primarily during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the Russian military tended to compensate for its backwardness in correlation (of quantitative and qualitative means) by increasing its *combat readiness* from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onward. These examples indicate that the interrelation among fundamental military concepts led to the formation of timeless principles and laws of war. As these principles and laws proved resilient, concepts privileged continuity over change. Therefore, interrelation among fundamental military concepts promotes continuity under varying strategic contexts.

This analysis has demonstrated that the Russian strategic system of thinking was formed by the complex set of relations among fundamental military concepts. Nevertheless, this system of thought did not emerge immediately but throughout generations. Therefore, the formation of the Russian system of thinking was the result of the military history of ideas. In the 1920s, the concepts of Tsarist and Soviet military heritage began merge to form a single system of thinking. Tsarist officers in the Red Army did not entirely reject the Marxist-Leninist teachings on warfare. This is evidenced by G. Isserson's thoughts on correlation and Svechin's forecasts of a future war.<sup>46</sup> The concepts of Marxist-Leninist teaching on war dominated strategic thinking mainly in terms of forecasting the character and outcome of a war. Nevertheless, the IPW and combat readiness preserved their positions under the conceptual order of Soviet strategic thought. Even though the books and teachings of Tsarist officers were banned in the Red Army in the late 1930s, the concepts of Tsarist military heritage were preserved during the Cold War. Therefore, a fusion occurred between the concepts of both schools of thought (Marxist-Leninist and Imperial Russian) in the early Soviet period.

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<sup>45</sup> "The main principles of Combat", Editor, *Military Thought* 11:4, (July 2002): 16.

<sup>46</sup> Isserson, pp. 57-58.

After 1945, Soviet thinkers purposefully integrated the Imperial Russian Army's concepts into a system of thinking, since the Red Army commanders practically tested them on the battlefield during the Second World War. Following the successful deep operations of 1944-1945, fundamental military concepts fell into the category of war-winning concepts. As a result, the interrelation among military concepts became more structural. Following this, the institutionalization of the merge of Imperial Russian and Soviet military concepts took place after the 1950s,<sup>47</sup> because the Soviet military succeeded in constructing a systematic approach to military thinking only after the mid-1950s. At that time, the interrelation among fundamental military concepts was solidified in various strategic possibilities. Fundamental military concepts took essential roles in the formation of the laws of war.<sup>48</sup> In nuclear and non-nuclear strategies, fundamental military concepts did not function individually or lose their strategic relevance. After the Cold War, the revitalization of the ideas of Tsarist military thinkers went hand in hand with maintaining the relevance of the concepts of Soviet military heritage due to the traditionalists' influence. To that end, contemporary Russian thinkers revisited the semantic content of the concepts of Soviet strategic thinking (forecasting and correlation) to increase their conceptual resilience.

## **7.5. Conclusion**

This chapter presents the main findings of four analyses: (1) investigating the continuity of fundamental military concepts with a focus on concepts' content, (2) examining the evolution of a concept's semantic content by taking note of the strategic context, (3) scrutinizing the genealogy of concepts with a focus on interrelation and (4) exploring the conceptual resilience. The first and second analyses mainly use historical observations to investigate the continuity. The third analysis explains the origins of continuity by building a theoretical framework of the system of concepts. The fourth analysis attempts to discover causes of conceptual resilience. The results of the first analysis showed that fundamental military concepts that arose during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries remained unaltered in Russian military thought. The second analysis has indicated that fundamental military concepts tend to become strategically essential by updating their semantic content under changing socio-political and strategic

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<sup>47</sup> Jan Angstrom and J.J. Widen, *Contemporary Military Theory: The Dynamics of War* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 81-82.

<sup>48</sup> Vasilii Yefisovich Savkin, *The Basic Principles of Operational Art and Tactics* (Moscow: The Ministry of Defence of the Soviet Union, 1972) Published by (Washington: United States Air Force, 1972), 65 and 89.



contexts. The third analysis has found that fundamental military concepts privileged continuity over change on the condition that they were positioned within the genealogy of concepts. The final analysis has demonstrated that historical continuity of strategic culture, the enduring relevance of the concepts, and their development into a system of thinking fostered conceptual resilience in Russian strategic thinking.