

The Development of Russian Military Thought: the Russian Empire and the Soviet Period and Their Legacies

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Military thought and military issues traditionally played an important role in Russia's history. Even economic, political, social and educational reforms were mainly triggered by the needs related to military issues – preparation for wars or unsuccessful military campaigns of the Russian Empire (between the 17th and 19th centuries against Poland and Ottoman Turks and in the 20th century by Russia's defeat in the war against Japan). It should be noted that the reforms during the reigns of Peter the Great and Catherine II and also in the 19th century, were introduced under military and external security challenges. In this regard, after the seizure of power, despite their tremendous critics on Tsarist government militarization policies, Bolsheviks hugely relied on military power too. The military affairs were doctrinalized during the Bolsheviks rule for the first time in Russian history.

This paper analyzes the military thought in the Russian Empire in the end of the 19th century and its transformation during the first years of Soviet rule in the early 20th century. It also studies discussions among the Soviet political and military elite on theoretical and practical facets of the military and methods of waging war in 1920s as well as explores the creation of the Russian non-linear warfare theory, the only warfare concept of the Soviet Union which is recognized worldwide. The paper concludes that the thought dating back to those periods is also used in contemporary Russia.

Keywords: military, military strategy, warfare, the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, the Russian military thought, non-linear warfare theory.

The Military Thought in the Russian Empire

Since the Muscovite period, the military has been the main aspect of Russian statehood. As Richard Pipes put it, 'even more than the western monarchies of the early modern age, Moscow was organized for warfare.'

'No European country had so long and exposed a frontier, such a mobile population expanding outward in search of land and *promysly*, and such vast territory to garrison. The principle resources of the empire were channelled into military purposes. When

we say that in the second half of the seventeenth century, 67 percent of all the *tiaglo* people lived on land of secular proprietors, we are saying in effect that two-thirds of the labour of the country went directly for the support or “feeding” of the military. This figure becomes even more impressive if one considers that the bulk of the moneys which the crown secured from the taxes as well as from its properties and business activities were also devoted to these purposes.¹

Despite these facts, Russian army was weaker than the western ones in terms of its forms, tactics and technical innovations. This fact was the main reason for Peter’s reforms as well as the reforms of the subsequent centuries in Russia. According to Pipes, the establishment of a large standing army which was initiated by Peter the Great is one of the critical events in the Russian history.

‘At Peter’s death Russia had a powerful force of 210,000 regular and 110,000 supplementary troops (Cossacks, foreigners, etc.) as well as 24,000 sailors. Relative to the population of Russia at the time (12 or 13 million) a military establishment of this size exceeded almost three times the proportion regarded in eighteenth-century western Europe as the norm of what a country could support, namely one soldier for each one hundred inhabitants. For a country as poor as Russia, the maintenance of such an armed force represented an immense burden. To enable it to carry the load, Peter had to re-vamp the country’s fiscal, administrative and social structures, and, to some extent, transform its economic and cultural life as well.’² The army and the military values played also a dominant role in the XIX century. After the reforms at that time, as the economy expanded and society became more complex, ‘the army lost some of its former hold over the lives of the upper classes, but nothing justifies the suggestion that it became in any sense insignificant.’³

But Russia had not its own military thinkers who would author famous works and influence the development of military thought in the world. Despite the fact that several main military thinkers of the 19th century, such as Carl von Clausewitz and Antoine-Henri Jomini, were in service in Russian army, Russia could not succeed in introducing large and significant military reforms at the same age. According to Walter Pintner, Russia entered the nineteenth century ‘with the practical experience of military success, in part because of the backwardness, or at least because of the distinctive characteristics of its social and political order (...) But nothing in the cultural or intellectual efforts of their countries was comparable with their political and military achievements. They were the winners, but they had to look to the West, in a sense to the losers, represented by Clausewitz and Jomini, to instruct them in strategic thought.’⁴

¹ R. Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974, p. 115.

² G.N. Clark, *The Seventeenth Century*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947, p. 100.

³ W. Pintner, ‘Russian Military Thought: The Western Model and the Shadow of Suvorov’, in P. Paret (ed), *Makers of Modern Strategy – from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, p. 354.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 357.

Since the 17th century, the western military thought has hugely influenced formation the Russian military school. But there were also some differences and the Soviet Union together with contemporary Russia would also maintain the Russian Empire military thought legacy. The cardinal part of it constitutes the so called Suvorov's legacy, the crucial importance of moral or spiritual factors and the role of the human will in war. Prominent supporters of this theory were M.I. Dragomirov and G.A. Leer. Dmitrii Miliutin, who was the minister of war between 1861 and 1881, was clearly struck by Suvorov's emphasis on the crucial importance of moral or spiritual factors at war. According to him, there are two sides of the military art – the material and the spiritual. 'Army is not only a physical power, a mass consisting of weapons for military operations but it is a union of humans endowed with intelligence and heart as well. Spiritual force plays an important part in all considerations and calculations of the military leader, and consequently, for the latter it is insufficient to rule armies as a machine. He must be able to rule the human being to fasten the army to him, and with his spiritual power over the army acquire conditional authority.'⁵ Despite that predominant conservative attitude in Russia's military thinking, some new ideas regarding waging war circulated among the military elite in the beginning of the twentieth century. And the main catalyst for them was the defeat in the war. As Walter Pintner put it, 'the defeat in the Russo-Japanese war brought forth a wave of self-criticism and for some this meant, as it always had throughout Russian history, looking west for solutions.'⁶ Such military thinkers as Colonel A.A. Neznamov (lecture on tactics at the General Staff Academy) and N.P. Mikhnovich should be named here. The former's thoughts were close to Blitzkrieg, the latter's ideas about waging war were similar to attrition warfare and had some elements of asymmetric warfare.

According to Walter Pintner, Neznamov discussed the problems of dealing with mass armies on extended areas. Neznamov stressed that the goal of war remained the destruction of the enemy army in a quick decisive battle but he realized that such an outcome was unlikely in the future war he attempted to describe. 'However, he did not foresee the stalemate of trench warfare, but expected the continued deployment of large forces over wide areas with considerable movement as each side tried to outflank the other, a scenario that presumably could not last for more than some months, so that the war would be short.'⁷

Another Russian military thinker at that time was General N.P. Miknevich, whose thoughts might be interesting for his preferable methods of waging war. General

⁵ D.A. Miliutin, *Istoriia voiny s Frantsiui v Tarsstvovavnie Imperatora Pavla I, v 1799 godu*, 5 vols., St. Petersburg, 1822–1855, vol. 5, p. 115, cited in W. Pintner, op.cit., pp. 361–362.

⁶ W. Pintner, op.cit., p. 368.

⁷ A.A. Neznamov, 'Sovremennaia voina', in *Beskrovnyi, Russkaia voenno-teoriticheskaia mysl*, St. Petersburg 1912, pp. 557–561, 567, 624; A.A. Neznamov, 'Plan Voiny' (St. Petersburg 1913), in *Beskrovnyi, Russkaia voenno-teoriticheskaia mysl*, 673–693. See also the discussion of Neznamov in Von Wahlde, 'Military Thought', pp. 223–233, cited in W. Pintner, op.cit., p. 369.

Mikhnevich was a one among few Russian military thinkers who also held high decision making positions in the army. Between 1904 and 1917 he was the head of the General Staff Academy and the chief of the general staff. In contrast to Neznamov and many European writes of that time, Mikhnevich rejected the notion of a ‘lightning war’ and argued that Russia had an advantage over the more developed European industrial states, whose economies would be disrupted by the mobilization of labour: ‘Thus time is the best ally of our military forces, and for that reason it is not dangerous for us to follow “a strategy of attrition and exhaustion”, initially avoiding decisive engagements with enemy at the border when the superiority of forces may be on its side.’⁸ According to Pintner, this opinion, ‘which recalls Gulevich, was something of a departure from the usual national view that discounted economic backwardness as an advantage, despite the possible example of Kutuzov’s defeat of Napoleon.’⁹ At the end of the nineteenth century, Lt. Colonel A.A. Gulevich of the General Staff Academy recognized the close connection of modern war and the national economy. He could predict that the next war in Europe would be exhausting rather than quick and decisive. Together with Mikhnevich they considered Russia’s economic weaknesses and poor social conditions as better enabling it to withstand the strain of such a war. According to him, a smaller proportion of Russia’s large labour force would be mobilized than in the well-developed industrial economies of France and Germany, which were much more fragile, easily disrupted, and would suffer more because of greater withdrawals of manpower due to mobilization.¹⁰

In fact, Gurevich and Mikhnevich optimistically argued for the use of the indirect strategy against the direct one which is classified as the main factor supporting the weak side’s victory in contemporary asymmetric wars.

The Soviets and Military Thought

During the Soviet period some developments took place in security thinking of the political elite. They were related mainly to the official state ideology as well as to several tremendous non-natural elite change processes which were the results of the 1917 revolutions. The official ideology of the Soviets, Marxism-Leninism, largely dealt with warfare. War was one of the basic elements of that ideology. The founding fathers of Marxism-Leninism fully appreciated Clausewitz’s contribution not only to military thought but to social thought in general. According to Walter Gallie, ‘Marx himself, despite his many other heavy intellectual preoccupations, but more particularly Engels and Lenin’ drew out of it some of their most-interesting implications. ‘The Marxist leaders special interest in Clausewitz’ writes Gallie ‘was only one expression

⁸ W. Pintner, op.cit., p. 373.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ A.A. Gurevich, *Voina i narodnoe khoziaistvo*, St. Petersburg 1898, pp. 15–16, 23–32.

of a more general facet of their thought: their ever increasing concern, after 1849, with the relevance of war and of military force, military preparation and military threats, to their own revolutionary predictions, plans and projects.¹¹ According to Marx and Engels's point of view, Tsarist Russia was always the first country which needed war. Tsarism's drive to war had both a simple and a much more sinister explanation. War was the one means by which Tsarist Russia could pursue its own interests and, among these interests, perhaps the most important was that no notable constitutional or economic reform should be made by its immediate neighbours, as such reform would arouse similar aspirations within Russia. Marx and Engels took it for granted that Russia, under virtually any form of government, was secure from foreign conquest. Therefore, if Tsarism was ever to be dislodged from its position as the gaoler of Europe, this must happen through revolution from inside Russia itself.¹² In contrary to Marx and Engels who had maintained that Tsarism would fall only to a revolution from within Gallie writes 'Lenin was of the opinion that it would fall only as a result of an utterly disastrous war –and that meant as long a war, and as generalized on global a war, as possible.'¹³ But after the Bolsheviks took power, they faced cold reality which often contradicted Marxism visions on waging war. Although Marxism provided a framework, it did not provide an exact plan or strategy. According to Condoleezza Rice, 'the Bolsheviks tried to take seriously Engels's promise that freeing the proletariat will create its special and entirely new military method.'¹⁴ First years of the Bolsheviks government after the revolution and the creation of the new socialist society, took place in complex and hazardous circumstances. The recently won victory was threatened by internal and external enemies and sometimes it seemed that the Bolshevik government would last but a matter of months:

'Facing first the war with Germany and then civil war, Soviet leaders fought to protect embryonic socialist society while "correctly" divining the relationship of armed forces to socialist progress. The few clues that they received from their ideological heritage often clashed with the reality of their circumstances. To harmonize ideological expectation with cold reality is a fundamental task facing new societies. It was never more critical than in revolutionary Russia, where necessity, more often than not, dictated the direction taken.'¹⁵

As far as the military theory and strategies of the Soviet Union are concerned – there were several discussions and documents on how to wage future wars, however, they recommended thinking and acting/fighting differently. This facet of security thinking

¹¹ W.B. Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War: Kant, Clausewitz, Marx, Engels and Tolstoy*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1989, pp. 66–67.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 89.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 98.

¹⁴ K. Marx, F. Engels, *Sochineniia*, Moscow, 1960, vol. 8, p. 460, cited in C. Rice, 'The Making of Soviet Strategy', in P. Paret (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 648.

¹⁵ C. Rice, *op.cit.*, p. 648.

of military and political elites has been important since Russia's prerevolutionary period. Historically, tactical and operational plans were more important for military elites than official and unclassified documents such as strategies. Anyway, official documents (strategies, plans, statements) are important for understanding and prognosis of trends in Russia's security policy. In the first years of the Bolshevik government, discussions were held about military and external security problems among political and military elites. According to Condoleezza Rice, the creation of a standing army was 'a distasteful compromise for the young Soviet state' (...) 'Such a force was thought to be a reflection of a prior epoch, when the ruling classes needed coercion, internally and externally, to maintain their power. Lenin, Engels, and Marx all declared the militia (the concept of a citizen's volunteer army – the armed working class) to be the appropriate form in the socialist era.'¹⁶ According to Engels 'in the communist society, no one will think of a regular army.'¹⁷ According to Rice, radicals like Bukharin on the Left believed that Germany could be defeated from within, by fomenting revolution. 'Seriously overestimating both the solidarity of the workers and the weaknesses of Germany, they assumed that victory could be achieved by armed insurrection. Some, flushed with the victory of October, wished to fight a "bare-handed" revolutionary war against Germany. More moderate ideas were put forth by Lev Trotsky, who wished to threaten Germany with a dictum of "no war, no peace," in which the Soviets would refuse to make war while allowing internal instability to halt the German advance.'¹⁸ Trotsky's point of view is interesting regarding its asymmetric nature. In his book, 'The real situation in Russia,' he explained his thoughts in the following way:

'Our whole work ought already to be carried on under these slogans: (1) Down with the war of the imperialists against the workers' state and proletarian dictatorship. (2) Transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war in all states attacking the Soviet Union. (3) Defeat of all the bourgeois states making war against the Soviet Union. Every honest proletarian of the capitalist countries ought to actively work for the defeat "his" government. (4) Coming over to the Red Army of every foreign soldier who does not want to help the labour exploiters of "his" country. The Soviet Union is the fatherland of all workers. (5) The Slogan "Defend the Fatherland" will be a false disguise of the interests of imperialism in all bourgeois countries, except the colonial and semi-colonial countries which are conducting national revolutionary wars against the imperialists.'¹⁹

Although Trotsky could win his the debate with Lenin who insisted on immediate peace with Germany, after the Germany's massive offensive he lost his argument.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 649.

¹⁷ F. Engels, *Izbrannyye voennyye proizvedeniye*, Moscow 1957, p. xiv.

¹⁸ C. Rice, op.cit., p. 649.

¹⁹ L. Trotsky, *The Real Situation in Russia*, transl. M. Eastman, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928, p. 145.

The Discussion on the Unified Doctrine – Frunze vs. Trotsky

Fighting simultaneously with internal (white forces) and external (Japan, France, Britain, the United States and units of Czechoslovak soldiers of former Austro-Hungarian army) urged Soviets to establish the centralized and strong army. They faced a difficult choice. Centralized, disciplined, and trained forces were critical for victory, but sounded to some like the resurrection of the standing army that they recently helped to destroy. A new army needed specialists, high rang officers which who were not possible to be found among proletarians and peasants. Therefore, by December 1918, 22 315 former imperial officers were serving in the Red Army and by August 1920 that number had grown to 48 409.²⁰

The sharpest divisions of that time might have been seen between so called Frunze and Trotsky groups and regarded a unified military doctrine and forms of waging of war.

In his article ‘A Unified Military Doctrine and the Red Army,’ Frunze wrote that a unified doctrine was important to all countries; it expressed the system of life and the class character of the state. According to him, European countries, such as Germany, England and France had unified doctrines, but Russia did not, owing to the pathetic state of military affairs under tsar. ‘It was not even possible to have discussion about any broad scientific work.’²¹ Trotsky was against the formulation of the doctrine and heavily criticized its proponents.²² He stated that the theses about the unified doctrine were ‘theoretically incorrect, practically non-productive.’ ‘Ukraine thesis’ of Frunze and other commanders in the Ukraine Army was considered by Trotsky ‘dangerous and harmful.’²³ It should be noted that the importance of a unified military doctrine was an old issue in Russian military thought and was fiercely debated by the imperial staff from the end of the Russo-Japanese War until the outbreak of WWI.²⁴ There were numbers of tough discussions between the parties. One of the interesting points in these discussions regarded the forms of waging future wars. Frunze strongly insisted on the importance of a manoeuvring, but Trotsky preferred the ‘war of position’ operations. More interestingly, Frunze in his report of 1922 mentioned the importance of some aspects of future war operations which would constitute basic elements of the Soviet

²⁰ J. Erickson, *The Soviet High Command*, New York and London: St. Martin’s Press – Macmillan, 1962, p. 33.

²¹ M.V. Frunze, ‘Edinaia voennaia doktrina I Krasnaia armia’, *Voennaia nauka i revoliutsia*, Iyul-avgust 1921, Moscow; *Perepechatana v Voennaia Mysl*, 2008, No. 5, <http://militaryarticle.ru/voennaya-mysl/2008-vm/10112-edinaja-voennaja-doktrina-i-krasnaja-armija> (accessed on 18 November 2018).

²² L.D. Trootsky, *Kak voruzhalas revoliutsia*, vol. 3: *Tysiacha devyatsot dvatsaty pervyi-tretii gody*, Kniga 2, Moscow: Vysshii Voennyi Redaktsionnyi Sovet 1925, pp. 210–240.

²³ Vysshii Voennyi Redaktsionnyi Sovet 1922. Osnovnaya voennaya zadacha momenta. Diskussiyana temu o edinoi voennoi doctrine. Doklady t.t. Trotskogo, Frunze i preniya po nim. Stenograficheskii otchet 2-go dnya soveshchaniya voennykh delegatov XI-go S’ezda R.K. P. 1-go aprelya 1922g. Vysshii Voennyi Redaktsionnyi Sovet. Moscow, available at: <http://rkka.ru/analys/doktrin/main.htm#s3> (accessed on 28 October 2018).

²⁴ C. Rice, op.cit., p. 655.

non-linear warfare theory that would be actively used by Russian military elite after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In one part of his speech, ‘Manoeuvre – the feature of future revolutionary wars’ Frunze stated:

‘...And to the main practical question about the nature of possible future operations, our meeting gives a definite answer: of course, the elements of manoeuvrability and mobility will prevail. Where does this come from? From the very nature of our possible future wars. They will be closer in type to our civil war. What caused the imperialist war to be the war of position? The fact that, the entire hinterland represented a single whole and the two countries, like a wall, were facing each other. With an equality of forces, with a large number of armies, equilibrium is created for a more or less long time. Could it be so now? Since our public prognosis is considered correct, we must admit that there can be no such stability of the front line, since each country will have allies on the other side of the front, and this fact will kill the immobility.’²⁵

The question was: for what kind of military operations the Red Army should be prepared for, offensive or defensive ones? As C. Rice notes:

‘Clearly the notion of “defensive” operations was foreign to communist thinkers; Marxism as a dynamic theory of historical progress saw defence only as a temporary condition until the offensive could be seized. But this ideological concern masked a serious military debate, in which such soldiers as Tukhachevsky, Svechin, and Shaposhnikov took part. Trotsky, influenced primarily by military specialists, like Svechin, whom he brought into the army, found the worship of the offensive repugnant, drawing his conclusions from the world war. Frunze never succeeded in clarifying whether the political offensive or the military strategy of the offensive was at the core of his argument. But debate survived both Frunze and Trotsky. A version of this unresolved dichotomy lingers in Soviet thought today. Soviet political doctrine is explicitly defensive, but Soviet military strategy is undeniably offensive, even pre-emptive in character. There is a peculiar wedding of a defensive political doctrine and an offensive military strategy that would seek to gain the upper hand by initiating attack.’²⁶

It was also the result of the period of military discussions that the Soviet Union owes the legacy of the whole country being prepared for war, the legacy of the garrison state which Russia was also before the revolution. At that time the main initiator among the state’s military was Frunze who argued for the militarization of key industries and the centralization of authority in military decision making circles.²⁷

The Russian Revolution provided the stimulus for theorists to attack old intellectual shibboleths on the basis of fresh insight and proximate historical military experience. ‘With the Great War in the recent past, and even as the Russian Civil War raged,

²⁵ Vysshii Voennyi Redaktsionnyi Sovet..., op. cit.

²⁶ C. Rice, op.cit., pp. 657–658.

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 660.

Soviet theorists began to subject traditional military verities to intense scrutiny and criticism. There gradually emerged a new visualization of state's warfare appropriate to the changing means and methods of the industrialized twentieth century. By the late 1920s and early 1930s the cumulative work of Soviet theorists added up to a revolution in military thought.²⁸ It was the Non-linear (Operations in depth or Deep operations in Russian parlance) warfare theory.

The first work on the Soviet non-linear warfare theory was written around 1928 by the head of the operations administration of the Red Army staff, Vladimir Triandafillov and the chief inspector of the tank forces, Konstantin Kalinovskii. 'The theory of the offensive of modern armies in modern warfare,' demonstrated the enormous potential of the armoured troops in conducting offensive operations. The essence of this theory was achieving in the course of military operations the following two main tasks:

- breaking the frontline of the enemy's defence with a simultaneous strike on his entire tactical depth;
- immediate entry of mechanized troops into the breakthrough operation, in which they should launch rapid attack on the entire depth of operational defence of the enemy before the defeat of enemy's entire group.²⁹

Thus, this theory reflected the modification of military operations, which was introduced precisely due to the emergence of mechanized troops: the theory of sequential operations, where military operations are conducted mainly on the line of contact with the consistent displacement of the enemy from the occupied lines, was replaced with the theory of highly manoeuvrable war.³⁰

Triandafillov's ideas were further developed by Tukhachevskii, Isserson, Berzin, Nikokov, and others. One of the adherents and also the main continuator of the theory, who improved it, was Georgii Isserson who, on the eve of the WWII, published his book 'New forms of struggles.' This book concluded the ideas of the theory and in more detailed form elaborated on them. It also justified concept with practical explanations from contemporary wars and battles (the Spanish civil war, Nazi Germany occupations of Czechoslovakia and Poland).

Although there was the need for military reform in the 1920s, the main reason of it was the direct continuation of political strife among the Soviets. The inner-party discussion, opened by Trotsky in the fall of 1923, forced his opponents to search for effective countermeasures. The Red Army, the former patrimony of Trotsky, incited the ruling triumvirate's – I.V. Stalin, L.B. Kamenev and G.E. Zinoviev – worst fears.

²⁸ G.S. Isserson, *The Evolution of Operational Art / Brigade Commander Georgii Samoilovich Isserson*, transl. B.W. Menning, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press US Army Combined Arms Center, 2013, p.viii.

²⁹ V. Raevskii, U. Yarukhin. 'Teoriia glubokoi operatsii "Ya zaveriau vas, tovarish Stalin..."', Fond veteranov voennoi razvedki, Kiev, 2015, p. 18.

³⁰ Col. R. Savushkin, 'K voprsu o zarzhdenii teorii posledovatel'nykh nastupatel'nykh operatsii', *Voennoe istoricheskii zhurnal*, 1983, May, pp. 77–83.

The attack on the Red Army pursued two goals: to weaken Trotsky's military and political authority in the party by discrediting the army and conducting a 'purge' among the troops, masking it with pragmatic arguments. Both these tasks were successfully achieved. On the other hand, the army truly needed changes. By the end of 1923, it still bore the imprint of the Russian civil strife of 1918–20, in which the army had grown up. Widespread breakdown here was feared, alternately with awaiting either inner peace or revolutionary chaos beyond its borders. Trotsky's frequent illness also hampered the inevitable reform in 1923–1924 as well as did the power vacuum in Russia during lasting several months illness of Lenin. In such conditions, when the split within the party occurred, paradoxically, it constituted the element that not only strengthened the modernization of the Red Army, but also made it possible in the shortest time.³¹ One of the distinguishing characteristics of 1920s and early thirties was the freedom of debate in the army.

The development of the non-linear warfare theory did not take place in a vacuum. Foreign military thoughts were studied by the Soviets and they played an important role in the formulation of the theory. Key factor here was the period of collaboration with Germany. This cooperation existed since the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922. According to Rice, the Germans needed a place to rearm out of view of the signatories to the Treaty of Versailles and the Soviets needed foreign military assistance.

In his report to the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b) and to Stalin on December 31, 1926, Józef Unszlicht, the deputy chief of the People's Commissars for Military and Naval Affairs, summed up the military, and in a certain sense political cooperation of the USSR with Germany taking into account the changes in the foreign policy of Germany and noted that: 'Until now, the main idea of cooperation for us has relied on the usefulness of attracting foreign capital to the matter of increasing the country's defence capability; for them, it stemmed from the need to have a completely concealed base of illegal weapons.'³² Despite this fact, however, Soviet militaries actively follow developments in the military thought in other western countries and carefully read the foreign literature on new developments in military affairs.

Thoughts about the non-linear warfare were, however, strongly opposed by so called old school proponents. Strangely, alliance between Voroshilov and former imperial officer Svechin promoted the opposing view, in which operations in depth to achieve decisive victory was questioned.

During the purges between 1937 and 1940 almost all main designers of the theory were arrested or executed. The purges also struck the Soviet Army professional staff. The bulk of the pre-war theory of the non-linear, mechanized and motorized operations which had been pioneered in Soviet military theorists' writings was forgotten in the aftermath

³¹ S. Yarov, *Istoriya dlya izucheniya obshchestvennykh nastroyeni i kul'tury Rosii XX veka*, Sankt-Peterburg: Nestor-Istoriya, 2009, pp. 304–305.

³² S. Gorlov, *Sovershenno sekretno: Al'yans Moskva–Berlin, 1920–1933 gg.*, Moscow: Olma-Press, 2001, <http://militera.lib.ru/research/gorlov1/04.html> (accessed on 21 September 2018).

of the military purges and had to be relearned in the hasty reorganization of Soviet defence following the outbreak of the WWII. Although there were some attempts to make changes after the Finish war, they were undertaken too late, just on the eve of the war with Germany. However, it should be noted that the Soviets' victory in that war was based on the concepts and theories which were formulated between 1920s and 1930s. Frunze's concept of the whole country's war and the non-linear theory played the key strategic role in the victory.

It should also be noted that since 1990s, works of the Soviet non-linear warfare theory authors have been actively studied by the foremost research centres in the West. As Thomas E. Hanson put it, 'the separate and unequal Allied efforts against Nazi Germany in World War II, followed immediately by the superpower competition of the Cold War, created a significant gap in American officers' understanding of the factors that contributed to Soviet victories on the Eastern Front. As a result, in the decades following the war the concept of "operational art" was recognized and adopted by the US Army almost as a proprietary creation. In the 1990s, however, Western military historians and theorists discovered that the Soviets had gotten there first.'³³

Influences of the State Ideology on Military Affairs

Analyzing the links between ruling elite security thought and Marxism, George Kennan emphasizes that after the establishment of Bolshevik regime, Marxist dogma, rendered even more truculent and intolerant by Lenin's interpretation, became a perfect vehicle for the sense of insecurity with which Bolsheviks, even more than previous Russian rulers, were afflicted: 'In this dogma, with its basic altruism of purpose, they found justification for their instinctive fear of outside world, for the dictatorship without which they did not know how to rule, for cruelties they did not dare not to inflict, for sacrifices they felt bound to demand. In the name of Marxism they sacrificed every single ethical value in their methods and tactics. Today they cannot dispense with it. It is fig leaf of their moral and intellectual respectability.'³⁴ According to him, without Marxism 'ruling elite stand before history, at best, as only the last of that long succession of cruel and wasteful Russian rulers who have relentlessly forced country on to ever new heights of military power in order to guarantee external security of their internally weak regimes.'³⁵

Kennan writes in his memories that during the war in the Korean peninsula in 1950–1953, he urged the American leaders that it is not appropriate to view the Soviet

³³ G.S. Isserson, *op.cit.*, p. iii.

³⁴ G.F. Kennan, *The Chargé in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State, Moscow, February 22, 1946, Part 2: Background of Outlook, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Eastern Europe, The Soviet Union, Volume VI, 861.00/2–2246: Telegram, 1969*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1946v06/d475> (accessed on 27 February 2018).

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

leaders as absorbed with the pursuit of something called a ‘grand design’ – a design for early destruction of American power and for world conquest. He defined this vision as a chimera and emphasized Russia’s weaknesses: ‘I pleaded with people to recognize that this was a chimera: that the Russians were not like that; that they were weaker than we supposed; that they had many internal problems of their own; that they had no “grand design” and did not intend, in particular, to pursue their competition with us by means of a general war. What we were confronted with from the Soviet side was, I insisted, a long term effort of rivalry and pressure by means short of general war.’³⁶

According to military thinking of that period, one of the most important tasks for the Soviet political and military elites since the end of the WWII until the collapse of the USSR was the avoidance of a decisive surprise attack in the first phase or ‘initial period’ of war. The repeat of the disastrous Soviet experience against the Nazi Germany in the early stages of the WWII, the invasion of Russia in June, 1941, could not be tolerated. According to Cimbala, ‘Soviet military theorists also wrestled later with the problem of avoiding defeat and ensuring victory in the initial period of war in the Cold War conditions: bipolarity and the availability of nuclear weapons to the U.S., NATO and the Soviet Union.’³⁷ In such conditions, two adversaries of the Cold War tried to avoid direct military confrontation. Instead, they used proxy wars actively using guerrilla war and other indirect methods of asymmetric warfare.

During Soviet period every official document in every sphere, including security, was based on or somehow linked to the ideology of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) – the Marxism–Leninism. In the 1960s, in the collective work of the Soviet military thinkers – ‘Military Strategy’, authors explained military problems and responses to them in view of the Marxist-Leninist concept. Almost throughout all of its chapters, military or security issues are analysed in connection with the Soviet ideology. The book under editorship of the Soviet Marshal Sokolovski, explains development of the Soviet military strategy in period 1941–1945 and the nature of warfare in 1960s from the point of view of ‘the Marxist-Leninist concept of the essential meaning of war in the present epoch.’³⁸ According to it: ‘permanent hostile attitudes of the capitalist world against the Soviet Union’ constituted the main thought in the perception of the external threat of the elite.

³⁶ G.F. Kennan, *Memories 1950–1963*, London: Hutchinson & CO (Publishers) LTD, 1973, p. 92.

³⁷ S.J. Cimbala, ‘Russian Threat Perceptions and Security Policies: Soviet Shadows and Contemporary Challenges’, *War Trauma in Post-Soviet Russia & Military Reform in Russia and the CIS-Russian Military Reform*, 2013, Issue 14/15, <http://journals.openedition.org/pipss/4000> (accessed on 27 February 2018).

³⁸ V.D. Sokolovski (ed.), *Voennaya strategiya*, 2nd ed., Moscow: Voenizdat, 1962, pp. 129–193, 194–239.

The Russian Empire and the Soviet Military Thought Legacy in Contemporary Russia

Immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union the need for reform or reorganizing the army and using new or appropriate warfare approaches gained on its significance. Although since then discussions have been continued, between 2000 and 2005 the commonly accepted thought – the use of several methods and approaches which would be appropriate for Russia's contemporary economic and military possibilities – was formulated. As Soviet ideologists would call it – dialectic approach in military affairs prevailed. It should be noted that majority of the contemporary Russian military scholars are followers of the Soviet military school legacy who studied and were in service during the Soviet period. That legacy has huge influence on the development of contemporary Russian military thought. Although they accept realities, experiences of military conflicts during the Soviet Union and especially the collapse of the USSR are rooted in their mind-set. Another key element of the Soviet military school which exist in present times constitutes considering military issues not only in purely military categories, but also as political issues – in Russian parlance as a 'military-political' problem. According to the Russian academic point of view, comparing thoughts and approaches of contemporary Russian and foreign scholars on the evolution of the nature and the essence of war at the present time, the following differences could be noted: primarily, Russians are driven by the violence theory regarding the issues of war, the foreign theorists tend to view these issues from the point of the conflict research. Another important difference in their approaches is that the representatives of Russian thought give priority to highlighting socio-political foundations, whereas the western thinkers – to the military-technical and geopolitical factors. Common characteristic of both groups is the statement of the changes that have taken place in the recent decade that have radically reflected on the phenomenon of war itself. This applies primarily to the transformation of the causes of war and the attitudes towards them; the emergence of new war actors such as supranational and regional entities, interstate economic, political and military alliances, transnational economic and financial corporations and other non-state actors; and also to the emergence of new means and methods of warfare.³⁹ Moreover, in foreign studies on the nature and the essence of modern war, the lack of uniformity in interpretation of these guidelines may be seen. Such characteristic is also common in modern Russian studies.⁴⁰ The works of leading Russian military scholars, such as M.A. Gareev, V.V. Serebryannikov, M.N. Shakhov and others define the objects of military and social sciences such as 'war' and 'peace', as a global system of interrelated social relations, reviewing and updating of which detects the adaptive

³⁹ I.V. Bocharnikov, S.V. Lemeshev, G.V. Liutkene, *Sovremennye kontseptsii vojn i praktika voennogo stroitel'stvo*, Moskva: Ekon-inform, 2013, pp. 75–76.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 72.

ability of war to the changing conditions of modernity.⁴¹ According to them, the above leads to the emergence of the new forms of war and new subjects of military violence. At the same time, the aforementioned authors believe that the armed struggle continues to remain the main sign of the war.⁴² Gareev writes that the main essence of the war specifics, its main feature, is the use of armed violence. According to him, war in its true sense is connected with military activities and there is no war with the use of non-military means alone.⁴³ At the same time, Gareev does not deny the influence of such forms of struggle as economic, ideological, psychological, informational, etc. (below, we will amply analyse Gareev's thoughts on asymmetric approaches). The opponents of Gareev, such as M.A. Borchev, V.P. Gulin, A. Kapitanetz, argue that war and armed struggle constitute an independent means of politics and therefore war can proceed without armed struggle. Those authors agree with the thesis that the bloody ones are replaced by 'bloodless', 'non-painful', 'civilized' wars, in which the goals are achieved not as a result of direct armed intervention, but through the use of alternative forms of violence: economic, informational, psychological, diplomatic.⁴⁴ In practical terms two key elements of historical legacy should be noted. Firstly, it is the revitalized interest in the non-linear warfare theory in contemporary Russia. Since the last years of the Soviet Union the military elite's view of future war has envisaged dynamic, high-tempo, high-intensity land-air operations which will extend over vast expanses and include new areas such as space. Tactical combat will be even more destructive than in the past and will be characterized by fragmented [*ochagovy*] or non-linear combat.⁴⁵ Russia's military elite, similarly as the Soviet strategic planners, believe that it would be possible to achieve requisite superiority of forces on the main axes of offensives and counteroffensives by exploiting qualitative improvements in firepower and mobility as well as the effects of surprise.⁴⁶ According to General Vladimir Slipchenko, high precision weapons, strong air and cosmic forces will play main roles in future wars. Although he emphasized the role of nuclear forces in deterrence, he notes that 'now there is no a single civilized state with a developed economic base and infrastructure which is able to survive even in a fourth-generation past war using conventional means of destruction, much less nuclear ones.'⁴⁷

⁴¹ M.A. Gareev, *Esli zavtra voina*, Moscow: Vldar, 1995.

⁴² V.V. Serebryannikov, 'Ot voinstvennosti k miroliubiu', *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, 2002, Vol. 5, pp. 81–88.

⁴³ M. Gareev, 'Kharakter voin budushzhego', *Pravo i bezopasnost'*, 2003, Vol. 1–2.

⁴⁴ I.V. Bocharnikov, S.V. Lemeshev, G.V. Liutkene, op.cit., p. 73.

⁴⁵ V.G. Reznichenko (ed.), *Taktika*, Moscow: Voenizdat, 1987, pp. 63, 181, 194.

⁴⁶ G.I. Salmanov, 'Sovetskaya voennaya doktrina i nekotorye vzglyady na kharakter voiny v zashchitu sotsializma', *Voyennaya mysl'*, dekabr 1988, Vol. 12, p. 9, cited in L.W. Grau, 'Soviet Non-Linear Combat: The Challenge of the 90s', *Foreign Military Studies Office Study*, September 1990, p. 1.

⁴⁷ V. Slipchenko, *Voiny shestogo pokoleniya: oruzhie i voennoe iskusstvo budushzhego*, Moscow: Veche, 2002, pp. 365–366.

Another main legacy of the past in Russia's military thought is the importance of the human will in war affairs. As mentioned above, it is also called Suvorov's legacy, the crucial importance of moral or spiritual factors in war which was formulated during the Russian Empire. This aspect was emphasized in the Soviet military thought and it is continued in the contemporary Russia, as well. In 2018, the Russian Defence Ministry recreated the Main Military-Political Directorate (GVPU). It is planned to be the main structure for the defence against information attacks and patriotic education of military staff. It should be noted that the department in the Armed Forces of the USSR with similar name, which existed until 1991, was based on the leading and guiding function of the All-Union Communist Party. All political leaders [*zampolity*] and commanders, from the squadron level and above, had to have the party membership card. In essence, the institute of political commanders was the hand of the CPSU in the Armed Forces. Now there is no such political force in the country. In addition, the Ministry of Defence stated that the military, even after the restoration of political control, would remain out of politics.⁴⁸ According to Colonel-General Andrei Kartapolov, the head of the directorate and the deputy minister of defence, 'unbending spirit, convinced patriotism and high spirituality will become the hallmarks of the future Russian soldier.'⁴⁹ Now, the Orthodox Church will replace the Marxism and Leninism as the main ideological pillar for disciplining the military staff. Concrete measures will be taken to achieve these goals – in particular, the Centre for the Training of Military Clergy will start to operate. It will be located in the Main Temple of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, which, as reported by the defence minister Sergei Shoigu, 'Will be built in the "Patriot" park on the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War.'⁵⁰ The temple will be a spiritual, educational, methodical and educational centre for military personnel.⁵¹

Conclusion

For understanding the formation process of Russia's security and military thought and its basic facets, it is important to review their history. It should be noted that the military and security thought of the 19th century and that of the Soviet period, constitute the basic elements of the contemporary Russia's security policy. Nowadays, several concepts of those periods' warfare theories are actively utilized in Russian

⁴⁸ 'RF vossozdalo Glavnoe voenno-politicheskoe upravlenie (2)', *Nezavisomaya Gazeta*, 28 December 2018, http://www.ng.ru/armies/2018-12-28/11_7476_army2.html (accessed on 5 January 2019).

⁴⁹ A. Zhorzhevich, 'Minoborony vzyalos' za soldatskii dukh', *Kommersant*, 5 September 2018, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3732686> (accessed on 27 December 2018).

⁵⁰ 'V parke "Patriot" postroyat glavnyi khram Voruzhennykh sil Rossii', TASS, 4 September 2018, <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/5521230> (accessed on 5 January 2019).

⁵¹ A. Savelov, 'V Minoborony rasskazali, kogda zavershitsya vozvedenie Glavnogo khrama VS RF', TV Zvezda, 2 February 2019, <https://tvzvezda.ru/news/forces/content/201902022350-t4f2.htm> (accessed on 5 January 2019).

security strategies. They are adapted and modified in the realities and challenges of the modern world. The crucial concept here is the concept of 'Deep Operations' (Operations in Depth) or non-linear warfare theory. That theory is also appropriate for waging asymmetric strategies in large scale military operations in these days. It is no coincidence that the Russian military leadership emphasizes using the Soviet Union period military thoughts for promoting Russia's interests in the international security. The article of General Valerii Gerasimov, the head of Russia's General Staff, which was released in 2013, largely used the non-linear warfare approaches to emphasize the importance of using unconventional methods. Gerasimov mentioned Isserson and even used a quotation from his aforementioned work. 'Our country paid a great deal of blood for not listening to the conclusions of professors of the Academy of the General Staff. Thus, neglecting new ideas, unconventional approaches and different point of view in military science is unacceptable. Even more unacceptable is the scornful attitude towards science by the practitioners.'⁵²

⁵² V. Gerasimov, 'Tsennost nauki v predvidenii', *Voенно-Promishlenniy Kurer*, 26 February 2013, <https://www.vpk-news.ru/articles/14632> (accessed on 10 October 2018).