

### 3. CHANGING CONCEPTS OF WAR: RUSSIA'S NEW MILITARY DOCTRINE AND THE CONCEPT OF HYBRID WARFARE

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The following chapter unveils the conceptual background for the on-going Russian-Ukrainian conflict that began in 2014 by explaining the nature of unconventional warfare, the role of information warfare in it, and how they relate to the new Russian military doctrine.

Increasing our knowledge of Russian strategies in exploiting different avenues for realising its geopolitical ambitions helps other countries, especially those neighbouring Russia, to build their own strategies for countering these attempts. This is of utmost importance to NATO in order to enhance its unity in the face of Russia's possible attempts to try something similar against, for example, the Baltic States. Over the last years these countries have continuously faced deliberate efforts by Russia to discredit them in the international arena.

President Vladimir Putin approved the new military doctrine of the Russian Federation on 26 December 2014. This document takes into account the fundamentals of other key strategy documents: the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020, the Concept of Foreign Policy until 2020, the Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation until 2020, the Development Strategy of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation, and others.

The Chief of the Russian General Staff General Valeriy Gerasimov introduced the key elements of the new military doctrine to the wider public in January 2013.<sup>121</sup> The new doctrine was most probably tested during the conflict in Ukraine. In his speech<sup>122</sup>, Gerasimov emphasised the lessons learned from the Arab Spring and other conflicts. This was likely an attempt

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<sup>121</sup> **Герасимов, В.** 2013. Ценность науки в Предвидении. – Военно-Промышленный курьер 8 (476), 27 февраля–5 марта 2013, pp. 2–3. <[www.vpk-news.ru](http://www.vpk-news.ru)> (15.07.2015). [Герасимов 2013]

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

to legitimise his views and future actions by building on what others have done previously.

The second chapter of the Russian military doctrine defines the military risks and threats for the Russian Federation and describes also the Russian understanding of the characteristics of a modern military conflict. It is the key to understand Russian official views on modern war and fighting. By this doctrine, modern military conflicts are characterised by:

- Integrated use of military force, political, economic, informational, and other non-military tools, implemented with extensive use of the protest potential of the population, and special operations forces;
- Massive use of weapons systems and military technology, precision, hypersonic weapons, electronic warfare, weapons based on new physical principles comparable in efficiency with nuclear weapons, information management systems, unmanned aircrafts, autonomous marine vehicles, controlled robotic weapons, and military equipment;
- Impact on the enemy throughout the depth of its territory simultaneously in the global information space, in the air, on land, and at sea;
- Selectivity and a high degree of destruction of objects, speed of maneuver and fire of troops (forces), the use of various mobile groups of troops (forces);
- Reducing the time parameters to prepare for hostilities;
- Strengthening the centralisation and automation the command and control of troops and weapons as a result of the transition from a strictly vertical command and control system to the global network of automated management systems of troops (forces) and weapons;
- The creation of a permanent war zone in the territories of warring parties;
- Participation of irregular armed groups and private military companies in hostilities;
- The use of indirect and asymmetric methods of action;
- The use of externally funded and managed political forces and social movements.<sup>123</sup>

The similar approach is also seen in General Gerasimov's statement describing the modern military conflict as an integrated application of military, political, economic, informational, and other powers by state or non-state actors to achieve their political goals.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, warfare as under-

<sup>123</sup> <<http://www.rg.ru/2014/12/30/doktrina-dok.html>> (19.06.2015).

<sup>124</sup> Герасимов 2013, pp. 2–3.

stood by Russian military leaders is not ‘... *the continuation of politics by other (military) means...*’ but an integral part of politics.

For Russians modern wars will be fought on all levels of an adversary’s territory – on land, at sea, in the air and in space, as well as in the global information space. The latter being especially important, according to the new Russian doctrine, information superiority is essential for achieving victory on the battlefield in a modern war.<sup>125</sup>

The importance of non-military means in conflicts will increase dramatically. According to the Russian General Staff, the ratio of non-military to military means is expected to be 4 to 1.<sup>126</sup> As a result, the line between the state of peace and the state of war will be blurred.<sup>127</sup> This idea is similar to the older Communist idea of permanent struggle.

Alongside traditional military forces, a wide variety of paramilitary, special and insurgency forces will be used to achieve political objectives. An important and the most visible role in fighting will be carried out by irregular military formations, private military companies and insurgency forces with special forces supported and funded from outside. The open and visible participation of own military forces may take part only at the final stages of an operation to finalise the direct takeover, or if not possible/acceptable, as peacekeeping forces.

The implementation of the doctrine will be carried out by new forms and methods, such as:

- Military actions will start with peacetime units;
- Non-contact clashes of joint forces with high manoeuvrability;
- Annihilation of the adversary’s military and economic powers by precise short-time strikes against military and civilian infrastructures;
- Massive use of high-precision weapons, special operation forces, weapons based on new physical principles, and the use of armed civilians;
- Simultaneous impacts on an adversary’s military units and objects in across the entire breadth of its territory;
- Simultaneous battles on land, at sea, in the air and space, and in the global information space;
- The use of asymmetric and indirect methods;
- The command of forces in a unified information space.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Чекинов, Богданов 2013, p. 17.

<sup>126</sup> Герасимов 2013, pp. 2–3.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

After the publication of the new Russian military doctrine there were numerous discussions about the Russian new generation warfare, especially in relation to the crisis in Ukraine. Some analysts call it hybrid warfare, some call it the full spectrum conflict, asymmetrical, unconventional, or nonlinear warfare. At the same time, these new elements – information operations, physical and informational provocations, the use of special operation forces, paramilitary units, and internal oppositions, economic pressure and deception – have been part of Russian or Soviet strategies for a long time. As stated by general Gareev:

*All the time the international confrontation was implemented through the use of different forces and methods such as intelligence, counterintelligence, deception, manipulation, disinformation and others. Only some of our philosophers think that all these non-military tools appeared today...*<sup>129</sup>

Of course, Russian/Soviet strategists have been more or less successful in their implementation of these elements and making them work together. The crisis in Ukraine in general, especially the takeover of Crimea shows an increase in abilities and capabilities to implement the doctrinal views first written down by General Gareev in 1995.<sup>130</sup>

Chekinov and Bogdanov divide the new-generation war into two phases – an opening and a closing period. The opening phase starts with an intensive and centrally coordinated non-military campaign against a target country. The campaign includes diplomatic, economic, ideological, psychological, and information measures. In addition, a heavy propaganda campaign is conducted to depress the enemy population, to disrupt the government and to demoralise the enemy's armed forces. The actions also include the deception and bribing of governmental officials and members of the armed forces.<sup>131</sup> In addition to a large-scale intelligence and information gathering, different covert operations to create chaos and instability are launched. By the authors, the enemy would have the main governmental and military command centres destroyed, critical infrastructure heavily damaged to the extent of non-governance. The second or the closing phase consists of the open entrance of occupying forces into the country and destruction of remaining points of

<sup>129</sup> **Гареев, М.** 2013. Война и военная наука на современном этапе. – Военно-Промышленный Курьер 13 (481), 3– 5 апреля 2013.

<sup>130</sup> **Gareev, M.** 1998. *If War Comes Tomorrow? The Contours of Future Armed Conflict.* Translated by Yakov Vladimirovich Fomenko. Abington: Routledge.

<sup>131</sup> **Чекинов, Богданов** 2013, pp. 20–21.

resistance.<sup>132</sup> Chekinov and Bogdanov consider the first phase of operation more critical and important than the concluding part. This supports Gerasimov's view that non-military means play the main role in future conflicts.

Information operations have the key role in future conflicts. According to the Russian theorists, the war will be conducted in the two domains: in physical and informational realms. The decisive battle is to be fought in the latter one. Interestingly, according to Gerasimov, information means are not clearly identified as military or non-military means.<sup>133</sup>

Even if the new Russian military doctrine seems to resemble a revolutionary approach to warfighting, it is still old wine in a new bottle. The Russian military thinking has always been more close to Sun Tzu's military thinking rather than to the Western understanding of conducting wars. The key difference today is the Russian increased ability to carry out their doctrinal principles successfully as it was seen in Crimea. In previous post-Cold War conflicts, Russia employed its traditional doctrine and was not impressively successful. Thus, Crimea may either be an exception to the norm – or a new norm for the West to reckon with.

What can we conclude from this analysis of the new military doctrine and Gerasimov's views?

First, the Russian military maintains its traditional role as defender of the homeland. Second, the key role in future conflicts has been assigned to the Security Services and Special Forces. This was apparent in Crimea and has been apparent in Eastern Ukraine where Russian military units have been assigned a supportive, secondary role to the GRU/FSB.

Third, all branches of Russian government, especially the executive branch, is even more heavily involved in the war effort than on previous occasions. Their role is to provide the political conditions for the forces in fight. It has to be noted, though, that while fulfilling this role today, different branches of the Russian government have strayed of the traditional paths of their colleagues in other countries. In support of the information warfare campaign, it now appears that especially the executive branch has clearly crossed the fine line between classic diplomatic ambiguity and lying.

Fourth, the term 'hybrid warfare' is as misleading for Western audiences as it does not mean the same thing as the Russian term 'new generation warfare'. The word 'hybrid' derives from Latin '*hybridae*' which means 'a mongrel, half breed'. Hence, hybrid warfare should be the offspring of 1)

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>133</sup> Герасимов 2013, pp. 2–3.

warfare as an act of execution or implementation and 2) some concept or idea from a particular realm or sphere of life (economy, social affairs, information etc.). In order to achieve goals or implement national interests via the aforementioned spheres, a country may decide to utilise the ways and means of warfare within these realms.

Perhaps one of the earliest academic uses of the term ‘hybrid warfare’ was in 2002 by William J. Nemeth in an unpublished Naval Postgraduate School’s master’s thesis titled ‘Future war and Chechnya: a case for hybrid warfare’<sup>134</sup>, which did not reach wider audiences.

The term ‘hybrid warfare’ became more public in academic literature in 2005 after an article by LtGen James N. Mattis and Frank Hoffman, ‘Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Warfare’<sup>135</sup> 131. The term did not spread until the conflict between Lebanon and the Hezbollah in 2006, which was somewhat mistakenly labelled as a ‘hybrid conflict’. After that conflict, ‘hybrid warfare’ was used to describe activities similar to those of unconventional warfare as defined by the US and NATO with one clear distinction – there was no obvious state power behind it. With the annexation of Crimea and subsequent invasion of Eastern Ukraine, the comprehension of ‘hybrid warfare’ changed and it was used to refer to a comprehensive approach of using military, non-military, and non-official means to wage warfare.

There was now a clearly identified state power behind the events. When we compare the phases of Russian new generation warfare to the phases of US unconventional warfare, we can see many similarities (see Figure 1).

Despite apparent differences in the titles of the phases, the contents of the Russian and US approaches are quite similar. Specifically:

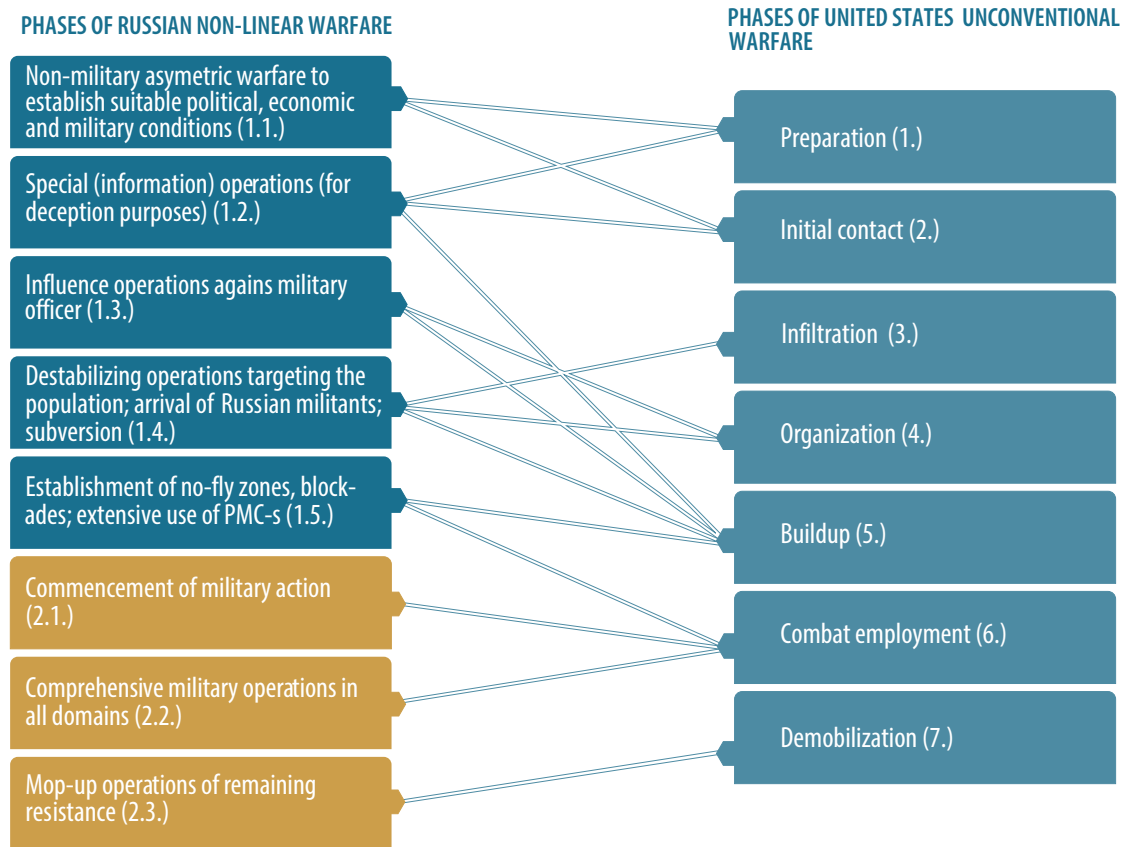
- Russian subphases 1.1 and 1.2 match several activities in the US phases 1 and 2.
- Russian subphases 1.2 and 1.3 serve the same purpose as the conduct of PsyOps in US phase 2.
- Russian subphases 1.3 and 1.4 are comparable to the PsyOps efforts of US phase 4.

<sup>134</sup> **Nemeth, W. J.** 2002. Future war and Chechnya: a case for hybrid warfare. Unpublished master’s thesis. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA.

<[http://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/5865/02Jun\\_Nemeth.pdf](http://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/5865/02Jun_Nemeth.pdf)>.

<sup>135</sup> LtGen **Mattis, J. N.; Hoffman, F.** 2005. Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Warfare. Naval Institute Proceedings, Nov 2005, pp 30–32. For a more thorough review see **Hoffman, F.** 2007. Conflict in the 21st century: the rise of hybrid wars. <[http://www.potomac-institute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac\\_hybridwar\\_0108.pdf](http://www.potomac-institute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac_hybridwar_0108.pdf)>.





**Figure 1.** Comparison of the phases and sub-phases of the Russian new generation warfare and US phases of unconventional warfare.<sup>136</sup>

- The build-up described in the US phase 5 occurs during the Russian sub-phases 1.2 to 1.5.
- The Russian subphase 1.5 makes the conflict and the actual forces behind it open to the public as is the case of the US phase 6.
- The Russian subphases 2.1 and 2.2 match US phase 6.
- Mop-up operations of the Russian subphase 2.3 are one of the measures undertaken in the US phase 7.

Despite differences in timing and sequencing, the ways, means, and ends of the Russian and US approaches are largely similar for such operations. Perhaps the only major difference we can identify is that events in the first phase may occur simultaneously with those in the second phase according to Chekinov and Bogdanov. The US field manual stipulates that the phases

<sup>136</sup> Чекинов, Богданов 2013, pp. 15–22. For US doctrine, see **FM 3-05.201**: Special Forces Unconventional Warfare Operations, April 2003. Headquarters, Department of the Army, paragraph 1–12.

should ideally occur sequentially, even though one or more may be skipped if conditions permit.

Hence we should stop using the term ‘hybrid warfare’ and refer to the Russian campaign in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine as unconventional warfare, at least in Western terms of reference. The most notable difference between Russian and US conduct of unconventional warfare is the Russia’s heavy emphasis on information operations. When we compare Russian Special Forces with those of the US and the vast difference in capabilities and experience between them, this makes sense. The sudden increased in focus and reliance on information operations in the Russian military doctrine is an indicator that Russia is well aware of the developing situation and has found alternate ways and means of conducting unconventional warfare.