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Russian Military Strategy in Historical Perspective

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November 1994

Man steps into the future still carrying the baggage of the past. This past leaves its mark on the social structure of society, on science, on manufacturing, and on the way people think, including the way military people think.

But experience is not an obstacle in the path of evolution. As Alexander Svechin, the outstanding Russian military philosopher, noted: "Historical experience equips minds in the best possible way for making strategic decisions...."

It is from these standpoints that I would like to examine the problem of the influence of social experiments and technological breakthroughs in the 20th century on military thinking in general, and on Soviet and Russian military strategy and organization in particular.

In this context the following issues are of interest:

- a) the general tendencies and specific results of the development of military theory and practice in the last half-century;
- b) what major decisions must the world community and its individual members be prepared to make in the battle for national and international security at the end of the 20th century, and;
- c) what problems are arising for Russian military science and military strategy in particular.

The "Great" Social Experiment, the Scientific-Technical Revolution and Blind Alleys in Military Thinking

Today it is absolutely clear that the second half of the 20th century delivered a harsh sentence on the idea of a world-wide socialist revolution, an idea which arose on the soil of the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. As is well known, the standard of the communist model for restructuring the world was unlimited force.

In the early days after the creation of nuclear weapons, it seemed to the creators of the plans for the victory of communism that Lenin's longed-for dreams would come true. A policy which had always lacked the military means to realize its goals at last had wings. This meant an end to the adventurism of strategic planning.

I call this brief stage in the development of nuclear strategy the "romantic" stage. I myself contributed to this error as a co-author and compiler of the book *Military Strategy*, which saw three editions in the Soviet Union and was translated into all the major languages of the world.

At the time, it seemed to the communist leaders and military theorists that the aggressive genetic code which had originally been implanted in Soviet military science could finally be realized. Let us recall even just one formula, Nikita Khrushchev's: in any war, he who pursues just goals will win.

Some strategic analysts, both in the East and in the West, say that this now by-gone period was the most convenient one for strategic planning purposes. It was not necessary to undertake the difficult task of defining the scope of national values and priorities or the nature and direction of external threats--all of this was clear.

Military Strategy contained the statement: "The war of the future will most probably be a world-wide nuclear missile war." The enemies in this war were to be the Warsaw Pact countries and NATO. This was to be the decisive clash between the worlds of socialism and capitalism.

The basic form of strategic actions in such a war was considered to be the nuclear missile strikes of the offensive forces and the actions of the anti-air and anti-missile defense in deflecting these strikes.

Strategic offensive operations in ground theaters of military actions were planned as the way to exploit the nuclear strikes of strategic forces.

The war would be lightning fast, according to our forecasts, although the possibility of a protracted war was not excluded if the reserves of nuclear weapons were exhausted. At that time these nuclear reserves numbered in the dozens of weapons. I recall that the Minister of Defense at the time, Marshal Malinovskiy, said: "The 'Blitzkrieg' strategy failed because the material means for its realization were lacking, but now we have those means--nuclear weapons."

It must be said that all these plans and forecasts were vindicated--and with good reason--by the development in the USA of the theory and practical aspects of "massive nuclear retaliation", a concept also based on the conviction that it could be successfully implemented without retaliation. And so, we are forced to share equally this romanticism of the easy nuclear victory.

At the end of the 1960's, when Soviet and American nuclear parity had clearly taken shape, the two sides began to feel the full weight of the burden they had taken upon themselves, as well as the illusion of the hopes of solving the problem of national security by means of a nuclear arms race. Let us recall that it was precisely at this time (1969) that the Soviet-American negotiations on limiting strategic weapons got underway.

Thus, the accursed issue which both sides were striving to solve by becoming intoxicated with power and by achieving military-technical superiority, was resolved in a paradoxical way. It became clear to everyone that in the weapons of armed battle, unless limited by policy, lay the potential for mutual destruction. The model of unlimited nuclear war had become disadvantageous.

Military technology had dictated the code of behavior and defined the limits not only of policy but also of strategy. It would be more accurate to say that military thinking had entered a blind alley.

In fact, if military art is the theory and practice of preparing for and conducting war, then there is no escaping the fact that each side considers victory to be the ultimate goal. But what does victory mean in the classic sense? First, it is the total defeat of the enemy's armed force as the main objective of destruction. Second, it is the undermining of the enemy's economic power. Third, it is the destruction of the political system and the replacement of the government which started the war, and, then, peace enforcement.

As we know, it is difficult to achieve all these goals without ultimately entering and occupying enemy territory. But occupation which is achieved as a result of nuclear destruction does not bring prospects for victory, since it threatens to worsen the strategic situation as compared to the initial situation. Second, it would be absurd to speak of some sort of economic gain as a result of nuclear war. A captured wasteland with a suffering and dying population will not strengthen the victor materially.

An understanding of all these imperatives of nuclear war nevertheless arose under conditions of the bitter "cold war." The two sides which were doing ideological battle with each other remained implacable. Even the seemingly salutary catchword "peaceful coexistence" was interpreted as a form of continuing the class struggle on a world-wide scale. Therefore, in the mid-60's, Soviet military science began its search for acceptable forms for the use of military force. And, according to our assessments, this quest began even earlier in the United States.

I am perhaps dwelling too much on historical detail, but I do so in order to show more clearly the mechanism and nature of the mutual influence which policy, military technology and military thinking (military strategy) all had on one another in the first stage of post-war international relations.

New Forms of Armed Battle, Unchanged Policy Goals and the Transformation of Technology

The lengthy period of the opposition between two social systems after the second world war is related to the cultivation of limited, local forms of military force.

I also had a part in clarifying the provisions of Soviet military doctrine pertaining to limited and local wars. Many books were written, some public, some restricted-access.

From the standpoint of the inter-relationship of communist ideology and military science, this was the stage which saw an intensive search for new forms of military force, given the unchanged nature of policy goals.

In American military strategy this period, as is well known, involved such theoreticians as Maxwell, Taylor, Bernard Brodie and Henry Kissinger.

Neither side's concept of limited and local wars excluded a global confrontation; instead, it only expanded the arsenal of forms of battle and allowed freedom of choice in strategic planning. The national liberation movement, in whose zone mostly local wars were being waged, was considered in Soviet policy to be one of the branches of the worldwide revolutionary process, a reserve in the battle with world imperialism. Therefore, even though only small, peripheral countries were the combatants in these wars, from a political standpoint the wars remained an indicator of the acute struggle between the worlds of socialism and capitalism. In every individual case there were large powers standing behind these small countries. It is sufficient to recall Vietnam, the Arab-Israeli wars, Afghanistan (and, earlier, Korea and Cuba).

From a military-technical standpoint, the essence of this stage in the development of the forms and methods of armed battle was fairly easy to explain. As long as there were some physical limits on the capabilities of the weapons of destruction, i.e., limits in range, in striking power or power of destruction, the question of placing limits on the use of military power never arose for the military-political leadership. But once the weapons themselves contained the potential for unlimited destruction, it became quite logical to limit warfare in means, space and time. Thus arose the conflict between the two sources of military thinking--the traditional-conservative and the radical.

The initial steps in the mutual understanding between these two approaches in the international arena should be attributed to the period of disarmament. But for a long time, until the very late 1980's, both the Russians and the Americans believed they could outplay one another in a giant game using small bites.

The first encouraging sign that the illusive nature of these hopes was being recognized came with the halting of the Arab-Israeli war in 1973 based on a joint Soviet-American resolution in the UN Security Council. It was just prior to this that the first strategic arms limitation treaty had been signed. The year 1975 saw the conclusion of the negotiations on security and cooperation in Europe. In a word, there was now a rapidly growing distrust for the politics of force; people began to grasp the full burden of the rival nations' military expenditures and the low level of their cost-effectiveness, and; the limitations of the effectiveness of military force were becoming increasingly obvious.

All these phenomena and off-shoots of the new thinking became the pre-assumptions of Gorbachev's perestroika. It is impossible to separate perestroika from the processes taking place in the military sphere. I am deeply convinced of this fact.

Several factors made for an eventful beginning to this new stage in the development of Russian thinking, and in American thinking, i.e., the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the collapse of the

Soviet Union and a radical shift in the scale of social values of peoples and nations east of the Elbe. In that part of Europe a new social jolt occurred which was related to the failure of the "great" social experiment begun by the October Revolution.

The Contemporary Stage in the Military-Political Situation and Russian Military Science

Even though the likelihood of world war is now greatly reduced, and local wars as they were formerly understood have become a thing of the past, the world is characterized by instability.

The causes are obvious. It has been the case in the past that when empires and military coalitions collapsed, the collapse was often accompanied by a huge regrouping of forces and by a redistribution of territory and spheres of influence between states and the religious-ethnic groups within them. Something similar is taking place since the collapse of the Communist empire as well.

Secondly, mankind has now been living without world war for nearly half a century. That has led strategic analysts to the conviction that the "lock" of nuclear deterrence, because of a realization of the suicidal consequences of war, will deter regional aggressors and those who violate peace. But this does not work with such instigators of discord as Saddam Hussein or the Bosnian nationalists.

With the end of the cold war, religious fanaticism and bellicose nationalism acquire new characteristics. If in the past these did not have clearly defined local characteristics but instead were ideologized as the movement of countries developing and fighting to break free from the yoke of world imperialism, then today they wear many faces. In addition to territorial/ethnic disputes, nationalism and religious fanaticism give rise to international terrorism, hostage taking, ethnic cleansing, and a struggle of ethnic groups for sovereignty in their "homeland", which is particularly characteristic of the CIS.

The geography of armed conflict has changed as well. Hot spots are to be found mainly in the southern hemisphere or in the southern part of the northern hemisphere. First, this fact attests to a radical change in the geographical axis of confrontation, and second, to the dangerously unstable situation in southern, multi-national areas. Because of this, in order to preserve international stability, northern nations are now confronted with the prospect of joining forces for peacekeeping actions, either on a multi-national basis, or through the United Nations.

The third source of the unstable world situation, in the author's opinion, is that world society, having finished with the cold war, is now confronted with a completely new problem, one which it lacks sufficient experience to solve. It would have been difficult to imagine that peacekeeping operations would take on such a broad scope or require such forces and resources. No international mechanisms had been put in place for this. National and regional organizations are now faced with entirely new challenges, as are the armed forces. In the author's opinion, the growing conflict in the traditional regions and the appearance of new conflict regions, where internal tensions are mounting, are largely due to a lack of preparation and to the failure of many peacekeeping operations of the UN, the CSCE, NATO and the CIS.

Let us now turn to the factual side of the issue. According to our data, from the moment of the break-up of the Warsaw Pact, the fall of the USSR, the transformation of the strategy of the national-liberation movement, 68 hot spots have been identified in the world, all of which to a greater or lesser degree pose a threat to regional and international stability. Armed conflict, rebellions and clashes are occurring in 18 countries. Twenty-two areas may be classified as zones of potential conflict and growing tension.

The situation in Europe deserves particular mention. I cite the numbers in our book which was published at the General Staff Academy. Between 1975 and 1985 not a single military conflict was identified, disregarding periodic flare-ups in Ulster. Over the past five years there have been 15 local wars and hotbeds of tension. In this respect Europe has moved into first place among the other regions of the world.

Admittedly, not one of these violations of the peace went without attention and some form of action on the part of international and regional organizations responsible to the world community and for peacekeeping. Peacekeeping operations of varying scale are currently underway in 16 hot spots around the world. They are diverse in form: observer missions, monitoring of separation zones, delivering humanitarian aid, etc. It is not uncommon for peacekeeping operations to take the form of "high-intensity" operations or of armed peace enforcement. And this tendency has been increasing in recent times. The reason is that at all levels in the majority of the world's hot spots there is a bankruptcy of political, diplomatic, and sometimes even economic, sanctions.

The number of successful peacekeeping actions and operations over the last 5 years is not great. These are Somalia, West Africa and Cambodia. In the CIS they are the Ossetian-Ingush conflict and Georgia-Southern Ossetia.

The peacemaking operation in the Persian Gulf conducted by a multi-national armed force with the approval of Russia ended successfully. But it must be mentioned that this operation falls outside the general order of contemporary peacekeeping operations.

I would like to present here my personal view on this operation as someone who has devoted a great deal of time to the study of regional wars.

In comparison with the local conflicts touched upon previously, Iraq's aggression against Kuwait contained elements of the geopolitical contradictions between the north and the south discussed above. That there has been a change in the geographical axis of confrontation is borne out, in this instance, by the fact that part of the Western European forces deployed against Iraq had at one time had been intended for war with the Warsaw Pact countries.

From a military-technical standpoint, during the Persian Gulf war there emerged clearly new tendencies on whose threshold the military world now stands and which will make themselves felt at the beginning of the 21st century. Essentially, Desert Storm demonstrated a new technical turn in the development of conventional weapons.

If the 1973 Arab-Israeli war is called the war of guided missiles and rockets, then in Desert Storm one may speak of a totality of technological phenomena, i.e., the appearance in all spheres

of military actions--on land, sea, air and in space--of the latest forms of highly accurate smart weapons.

I am speaking of various classes of weapons systems: smart bombs, rockets and missiles of the Air Force and anti-air defense, about the Navy's cruise missiles, about electronic warfare and about night vision instruments.

Much has been written on this subject in military-technical literature, but the effect of mass use of the new weapons in the Persian Gulf was demonstrated on a "live range."

The results of this war make it possible to forecast the nature of the wars of the 21st century, which mankind will no doubt learn to prevent, or be forced to learn to prevent. But in terms of the hypothetical potential of the weapons of destruction, preference will be given to systems which are based on a combination of the technology of intelligence and detection, guidance systems for strikes, and the ability to receive data on the combat results of the strike.

Based on the experience of the first stage of the Persian Gulf war--prior to the land action--this Future War will be a non-contact war and not one of mass armies but rather of a limited contingent of engineering-technical specialists.

All these exercises in forecasting are a topic for a separate discussion, and I do not wish to dwell on them here. Our task is to discover the real threats to international and national security today and to recommend possible paths and methods for countering them. I am speaking of wars and conflicts that were not prevented, or more accurately, wars and conflicts that are not being prevented.

What problems are arising for the world community and for individual states in the difficult time of peacekeeping?

The first major problem is the lack of a common view on a mutual task at hand, a common peacekeeping strategy. Not all members of the UN or regional organizations share a common view on the need to join human and national interests in the conduct of peacekeeping operations. A number of nations have laws forbidding the participation of their armed forces in operations outside their own national borders. They point out that Article 42 of the UN Charter, which calls for forceful "high-intensity" peacekeeping operations, pertains only to a permanent UN peacekeeping force which has not yet been created.

Far from all UN member nations have brought their laws into line with international law and UN principles as far as peacekeeping is concerned. For example, in the US and Russia, special regulations and guidance have been adopted which regulate the activity of military and other large formations used for peacekeeping in areas of international tension. It is my understanding that in the USA, FM 100-23 has now been published. In Russia, in addition to special guidance on troop actions in states-of-emergency, military doctrine also contains the following: Russian Federation armed forces must be prepared to "conduct peacekeeping operations based on a decision of the UN Security Council or in accordance with international circumstances...."

Until such legal measures are adopted in most countries of the world, the problem of enlisting nations for joint peacekeeping operations will remain a difficult one.

The next problem is related to the development of a common peacekeeping strategy. Some analysts believe that it is not possible to develop a single strategy in this area. They cite the uniqueness of local conditions in each individual hot spot. Therefore, they say that even in the best case a regional approach is required, one which considers the unique aspects of each bed of tension, i.e., the forces and scope of the conflict, the sources and historical preconditions, the weapons involved, external lobbying, etc.

In my opinion, taking local conditions and the particular features of a conflict into account does not preclude summing up the experience and identifying general characteristics which unite all conflicts of this kind.

The chief difficulty in resolving peacekeeping challenges is, in my opinion, a moral-psychological one. This problem interferes in a unique way, every time, with those who must implement a decision to apply force hastily. The guiding principle is usually a desire to establish peace with firing a single shot, by the mere insertion and presence of neutral military units. But when these efforts prove unsuccessful, difficult questions arise: if weapons are to be used, what type--individual or crew-served, or some other strike power, and in what order--in response to fire, or should they take the initiative? The moral paradox rests in the fact that while pursuing goals of peacemaking, the peacekeeping forces themselves are compelled to use force which is accompanied by bloodshed. According to data from UN headquarters between January 1, 1993, and August 1, 1994, 247 members of UN peacekeeping forces were lost, not counting the wounded.

Nonetheless, people very experienced in conducting UN peacekeeping operations are convinced that the main reason for the failure of the peacekeeping process is indecisiveness in the use of force in those cases where other solutions do not bring success. The former commander of UN troops in Yugoslavia, the French General Jean Cot concluded: "As long as UN troops do not begin to use decisive and effective force against those who violate the agreement and armistice, the war in the Balkans will continue."

The general spoke out in favor of inserting into Bosnia and Hercegovina a 50,000-man force, and he preferred that a Russian contingent be involved.

Peacekeeping operations experience points up another problem, i.e., one which is related to the inadequate mechanism for leadership. This causes problems in coordinating and synchronizing the actions of the "blue helmets" when troops of diverse national allegiance are operating in the same conflict zone.

It must be said that the UN security mechanism is not coping well with the task of managing peacekeeping operations.

In our opinion, this is due, first, to the fact that the UN forces are dispersed throughout the entire world. Second, the majority of Security Council members (permanent and temporary) are non-

European countries. For them, events in Europe are like a fire on the other side of the river. Third, recently many people have been pinning their hopes for peacekeeping in Europe on the activities of the NATO mechanism. But this bloc was never intended for that purpose. It was created as a tool for conducting war and was in no way intended for peacekeeping tasks, just as the CIS was not created for peacekeeping purposes. NATO does not fit into the structure of the CSCE, and it has only 16 members, while the CSCE has 53.

This gives rise to the question of creating a common European security mechanism, one which would include common management of CSCE peacekeeping activities. This would be a sort of a European Security Council made up of 4-5 permanent members with veto power and several annually rotating temporary members from Eastern and Western European nations. A military staff committee could be placed under the European Security Council, and it would, of course, not replace NATO organs.

The following could be among the functions of the Security Council:

1. forecasting conflict on European and contiguous territories;
2. forming and training a force (joint peacekeeping exercises) created for carrying out specific missions in specific areas;
3. planning and managing the actions of peacekeeping forces, and;
4. creating a budget and determining expenditures for peacekeeping.

The idea of creating a European Security Council is not new. It has long been discussed in the European press, among analysts and among officials of the inter-parliamentary union, but so far it remains only a topic for discussion.

It would be incorrect to regard this issue as an example of the emergence of a European separatism. Peacekeeping is a common concern. The leading nations of the world bear particular responsibility, i.e., the permanent members of the UN Security Council. It is they who possess an international authority and military potential unrivaled by the combatants in any local conflict.

I will touch on a few principles of Russian military science at its contemporary stage of development. In this regard I will mention a few new provisions of Russia's recently adopted military doctrine.

I offer one preliminary remark. Critics of this recently passed doctrine, both inside the country and outside, point out that the doctrine's introduction says it is "a document for a period of transition." Can it be taken seriously if it is subject to change at any moment?

I will respond to this question. In the traditions of Russian military thought, military doctrine is a system of views which reflects the realities of the day, the country's economic capabilities and the military-technical equipment level of the army in the given period. No doctrine, particularly a military doctrine, should be signed to remain in effect for a century. A doctrine does not evolve in the way military science (a system of knowledge) evolves. Instead, it is constantly clarified or replaced by a new doctrine in accordance with changing, objective conditions and subjective evaluations of these conditions.

If modern Russian military doctrine is compared with past expositions of the fundamentals of military policy, at least three basically new principles may be found. First, the solemn obligation not to be the first to use nuclear weapons is omitted; second, the army is permitted, in the capacity of assisting other force structures, to participate in resolving internal political conflicts, and; third, a willingness to actively participate in peacekeeping operations near and far from Russia's borders is particularly emphasized.

All the aforementioned points flow from the definition of the new architecture of international and national security and the resultant missions for the armed forces: to prevent a nuclear catastrophe, to be prepared to respond to the challenges of the technological threats of the new age, and to actively participate in peacekeeping operations under the aegis of the UN, the CSCE, the CIS, and on Russian territory.

Based on this value orientation, the structure of Russia's armed forces must include three basic elements: strategic nuclear forces and an engineer-technical corps; the forces and assets of the Air Force, the Anti-Air Defense, the Navy and electronic warfare and the systems for their command and control, and; an operational-strategic rapid deployment and reaction corps consisting of mobile forces from all branches.

From the armed forces elements listed above, it seems to me that the greatest difficulties in the forming, equipping and training of forces are faced by the third group, from which peacekeeping forces are formed.

In addition, the Russian armed forces come up against a series of general problems. The first problem, in the traditions of the Soviet army, which are not easily overcome in the minds of the officer corps in particular, is the tradition of non-involvement in internal conflicts within the state. The previous regulation stated that from the standpoint of domestic conditions the Soviet Union needed no army. Using the military in Russian and CIS "hot spots" causes a negative reaction in the people and fuels the flames of anti-military feelings and, on the territory of the former Soviet republics, anti-Russian attitudes as well.

While these problems do not arise with Russian peacekeeping operations abroad, another issue does. It must be noted that Russia has great historical experience in the international peacekeeping process. As early as the mid-19th century the Russian army was handling a difficult peacekeeping mission in the Balkans, and, later, spent a long time trying to reconcile the peoples of the Caucasus. In modern times, and very recently, Russia has taken part in the peaceful initiatives of the world community and has itself often come forward as the author of peace plans.

No one can deny that the new Russia is continuing these historical traditions. But at the same time, international organizations do not always look favorably upon Russia's heightened interest in firm peacekeeping in the Near Abroad or the peacekeeping operations of the Russian army in the Northern Caucasus, in the Trans-Caucasus and in Tajikistan. At the same time, everyone except the Russian army declines any physical participation in peacekeeping in these areas.

The professional problems related to armed forces participation in the peacekeeping process are apparently the same for all countries. The armed forces drawn into peacekeeping and peacemaking operations must perform functions which are not characteristic for them: sweeping an area, conducting round-ups, searching buildings and people, catching the instigators of bloodshed. The army is forced to carry out these police activities jointly with domestic forces and special operations units. All this requires specialized knowledge and even equipment and a linking of missions and methods of action between various forces agencies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In general, in accordance with Articles 77 and 78 of Russia's present constitution, the armed forces may be placed on alert and deployed for action only in the event of an external threat. This provision was put forth in the State Duma as an argument in support of a proposal to create special peacekeeping units subordinate to the Ministry for Emergency Situations. That proposal did not pass, and the Russian armed forces continue to serve as a "fire department" when unexpected peacekeeping tasks arise. In order to stay on top of missions as they arise, the armed forces are currently conducting intensive exercises which exceed by several times the percentage of exercises [which train] for the repelling of external attacks. Recently there has been a sharp increase in the number of peacekeeping exercises conducted jointly with foreign armies, including that of the USA.

In conclusion it should be said that peacekeeping, for the world as a whole, for its regional security organizations and for individual states, is becoming a distinctive feature of our time and not just a temporary, episodic affair. It appears that the beginning of the next century holds prospects for unrest in a whole series of potential conflict areas.

There is only one path for peacekeeping at this level--peacekeeping as a political method which is backed by the threat that force will be used to make the peace. Rejecting this method of action would mean passively observing the process of the world's self-destruction. Assuring the success of this one and only correct, but difficult, path to peace will mean developing an anticipatory, preventive and adequate reaction to possible events.

This calls for a clearly formulated and coordinated peacekeeping strategy. This strategy would rest on the common human concept of peacekeeping and international security and would have to be based on the following elements:

1. on a permanent, analytical forecasting of areas of possible conflict and hotbeds of tension in the UN Security Council, in regional bodies, national security centers, and on their classification according to degree of danger;
2. on permanent, international, regional and national peacekeeping forces and the appropriate command and control mechanism, and;
3. on legislative reinforcement in all UN member nations as well as a willingness to participate in peacekeeping operations in the appropriate form.

Thus, in characterizing the current stage of development of military theory and practice, one may conclude that the strategy of peacekeeping is replacing conventional/limited and local wars,

which were imperatives at various stages in the post-war development of the strategy of nuclear war.

On a practical level, steps are being taken to organize the international cooperation and interaction of nations at various levels in order to implement the tasks of maintaining the peace. In a word, a difficult time of peacekeeping lies ahead.