



The Russian Perspective of “Friction” and “Wear” in Hybrid War

OE Watch Commentary: In their writings about hybrid war, the Russians never claim to be practitioners, only the victims of it. Instead, they describe their actions as “counter-hybrid” operations. In the article “‘Friction’ and ‘Wear’ of Hybrid Wars” by A. A. Bartosh, published in Russia’s military theory journal *Военная Мысль* (Military Thought), there are some insights into the Russian view of hybrid war and also an opportunity to view the doctrinal practice of Russian military science.

In his article, it is noteworthy that Bartosh defers to the definition of hybrid warfare attributed to the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies: “the use of military and non-military means in an integrated campaign aimed at creating a surprise effect, capturing initiative, and gaining psychological advantages to be used for diplomatic purposes; large scale and rapid informational, electronic, and cyber operations; covert and clandestine military and intelligence activities combined with economic pressure.” While accepting this definition, Bartosh also warns that this descriptor cannot be used officially, as it requires more scientific proof.

Bartosh breaks down the “friction” of hybrid war into five “peculiarities” that he claims augment Clausewitz’s “seven sources of general friction” in warfare. The first is that hybrid warfare “makes the adversary deal with several phases all at once.” The second is the difference in the military and political command structures with regard to how they would handle “the subject and objects of hybrid war” (This is key phraseology used in Russian military science to focus deliberate attention to emerging doctrinal concepts). The third is that an “altered balance of military and non-military means of warfare...creates a new form of transnational conflict.” Terrorism gets its own special category due to its complexity and unpredictability. Given that Russian military science strives to build thought structures to make things quantitatively predictable, terrorism is a kind of antithesis to such structure and a special kind of friction. The fifth characteristic is migration. Given Russia’s economic and demographic challenges, the issue of non-Russians migrating into the state, according to Bartosh, is of special strategic concern. The author is sweeping (and resonant in Russia) in his description of migrants as “poorly educated young men...under the influence of pseudo religious sects and criminal gangs,” who have combat experience, inferring that they are pre-disposed to being an armed threat to the state.

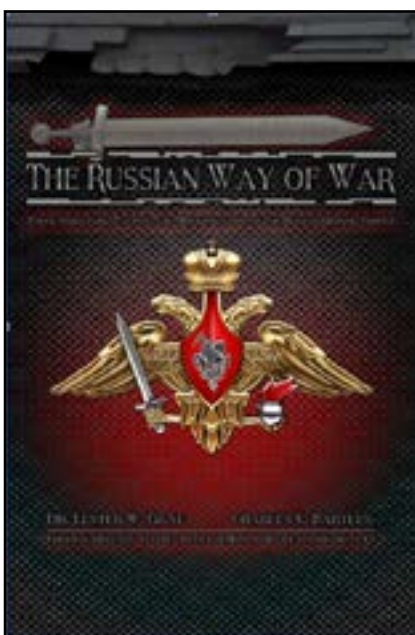
There are three factors of “wear” that Bartosh describes. The first is “technical” wear of things like weapons. The second is mental fatigue of combatants and civilians in war zones. The third is economic wear or a loss of resources through lost opportunity costs applied elsewhere in society. As presented, all these factors are described in a way for other Russian analysts to quantify in the Russian correlation of forces discipline and develop in a systems engineering approach.

The practice of Russian military science is structured and deliberate. So, this article suggests that the Russians have not yet fully settled on the needed unifying concept of hybrid war in their own military science practice. In this light, their practice of it can be thought of as concept experimentation: gradually becoming more developed, more structured, more deliberate. The chief inhibitor to an immediate resolution of this concept in Russian military minds is the “unpredictability stemming from unsustainable states and non-government agents...that require solutions beyond international norms and rules.” As Bartosh warns: “The state is losing monopoly over use of force.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm and Vainer)**

“The state is losing monopoly over use of force.”

Source: “Трение и Износ гибридной войны (Friction and Wear of Hybrid Wars),” *Военная Мысль* (Military Thought), No. 1 2018, pp. 5-12.

“The Russian model of countering hybrid warfare should be constructed taking into account the nonlinear forms and methods of the attacking forces and should reflect the following key objectives of national defense. One, ability to quickly and definitively respond.... two is to enable the country to promptly concentrate....efforts and resources...three is conduct continuous intelligence and [interagency coordination] and minimize friction and wear factors on the implementation of the chosen strategy...four is educating, training, and selecting high-quality personnel....”



THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR by LESTER W. GRAU and CHARLES K. BARTLES

At any given time, assessments of the Russian Armed Forces vary between the idea of an incompetent and corrupt conscript army manning decrepit Soviet equipment and relying solely on brute force, to the idea of an elite military filled with Special Operations Forces (SOF) who were the “polite people” or “little green men” seen on the streets in Crimea. This book will attempt to split the difference between these radically different ideas by shedding some light on what the Russian Ground Forces consist of, how they are structured, how they fight, and how they are modernizing.

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