

Russian General Staff's Military Thought on "Color Revolutions" and the Changing Nature of War

OE Watch Commentary: In the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian General Staff identified Western democracy and civil society building programs as part of the threat assessment in their practice of military science. In the current volume of the Russian General Staff Academy's journal, *Vestnik*, the accompanying article analyzes the "Color Revolutions" of Ukraine (Orange), Georgia (Rose), and Kyrgyz (Tulip) in the context of the current Russian military thought paradigm.

The authors A.S. Brychkov and G.A. Nikonorov begin their article with a critique of the Clausewitzian dictum that "war [is] an extension of politics by violent means" and they question "whether we have reached a point of never going to war again or [whether] wars will still be there but will change their nature rather than substance." Following the General Staff's discipline of historical analysis, the Cold War is poignantly summed up as: "The adversary that defeated us did so without resorting to combat." The authors raise the comparison of WMDs and the experience via the Soviet Union in losing against this sort of threat, and they posit that Russia "will need to revise the emphasis previously placed on armed conflicts." This is in support of current Russian thought that describes a perpetual state of war. The article proceeds to define the threat aspects of "Color Revolutions" in this light.

One of the article's main purposes is to associate the phenomenon of "grand-scale social transformations" with economic development through a military science prism. This rejects any indigenous desires for Western-style democracy or social assistance by the Russian populace and correlates national and individual economic stress to the threat. The article catalogs an extensive list of US and Western governmental and non-governmental organizations and programs that "create an appearance of grand-scale social transformations that were allegedly in consort with hopes of the peoples." The authors state that "there will always be a traitor who will open the city gates." The article associates national economic degradation with the goals of these organizations and programs and their activity to lure average Russians into becoming such "traitors." This subjective-into-objective reality aligns with the Russian military science factor of "psychological preparation" of the population for support of the forces.

Interestingly, Brychkov and Nikonorov also outline the strategy and tactics of Color Revolutions in "defeating a geopolitical adversary." They list weakening the opponent, changing the political course from 'Our nation comes first' to pro-Western, and gaining control over the country's resources by using 'controlled chaos' technologies that ultimately will reduce and degrade the Russian population and place "their national resources under control of transnational corporations."

From the Russian perspective, their argument is not really one of pro- or anti- democracy. Rather, it is one of forecasting the changing nature of war in the fashion of current General Staff thinking. Brychkov and Nikonorov conclude by stating that "Miscalculations in the internal politics cannot be solved by any kind of special forces, nor by the patriotically minded part of the population who are not interested in a coup. War and chaos caused is not by force but by weakness of the intendent object thereof." **End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm, Vainer)**

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Ukrainian protesters, Orange Revolution, Kiev, November 2004.

Source: Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joetsjsjenko_Marion_Kiev_2004.jpg CCA-SA 3.0.

Source: А. С. Брычков и Г.А. Никоноров, Вестник, "Цветные революции в России: возможность и действительность," Вестник, 3 (60), 2017, стр. 4-9 (A.S. Brychkov and G.A. Nikonorov, "Color Revolutions in Russia: Possibility and Reality)," *Vestnik*, 3 (60) 2017, pp. 4-9).

The adversary that defeated us did so without resorting to combat. We, on the other hand, were investing everything in the military component of national security and waited for shots to be fired. The Soviet Union was defeated by a non-military strategy without old-fashioned combat intervention...

Initiating social action, that result in regime change in specific countries became known as color revolution because during this process the opposition used different colors for identification. Regime change in these countries did not signify a radical shift in the form of governance, political or social institutions. We have to treat these social experiments as ordinary coup d'état, since only the top leadership changed. However, politologists wanted to create an appearance of grand-scale social transformations that were allegedly in consort with hopes of the peoples of these nations and thus called them 'revolutions'...

The United States is the principal instigator and financier of "reformatting" the global geopolitical map, which is consistent with the role this country has been playing as the world policeman and fundraiser for the transnational capital...