



Advancing Hybrid Warfare in Russian Doctrine Discussions

OE Watch Commentary: The images of Russia’s “Polite, Green Men” during the takeover of Crimea in 2014 are globally recognized icons of Russian hybrid warfare. Yet according to Russian official-dom, and especially the military, this is not the case, as hybrid war is almost exclusively a Western weapon aimed against Russia. Along these lines, the term “hybrid war” has not been accepted into Russian military doctrine, causing them to make only propagandistic references and indirect self-assessments on the topic in their doctrinal debates. In fact, the Russian general staff, which is built for deliberative processes with enduring doctrinal outcomes, has had to contort itself in its writings to avoid describing their own employment of hybrid warfare. It could be that non-military events and unanticipated conditions have temporarily overwhelmed and outpaced the military’s capacity to turn this into the broader, more open requirements of doctrine development. Whatever the reason, things may be changing. As articles from *Voennaya Mysl’* (*Military Thought*) and in *Vestnik* (*The Bulletin of the Academy of Military Science*) seem to indicate, there is broader advocacy supporting change to hybrid warfare’s status.

In the first article, A.A. Bartosh, a senior source of strategic foresight, lays out an argument to model hybrid warfare. In it, he uses the acronym “HW” as a kind of surrogate for the missing doctrinal term. His advocacy takes an approach inherent in Russian military science that allows relevant factors to ultimately be framed in calculable terms. Bartosh’s work, therefore, is a bridge from the first parts of Russian military science—forecasting, historical, and trends analyses—to the other disciplines, such as development of forms and methods as well as calculations of correlation of forces. His article’s authority comes from its dogmatic extension from previous general staff work by restating things like “political means have gradually pushed war to the margins of the historical process” and “the essence and content of wars in today’s conditions are undergoing substantial change: they are assuming a hybrid nature.” However, Bartosh wants to connect non-military factors more solidly into military decision-making. He tells us that “One of the methods that can somewhat dispel the fog of HW [hybrid warfare], lifting the uncertainty in making forecasts, estimating resources, developing strategies and counterstrategies... is the employment of modern instrumental means of decision-support, modeling included.” His article’s purpose, it turns out, is a plea for a more sophisticated approach for the military’s calculations of social, economic, political, cultural, and psychological factors in addition to military factors related to hybrid warfare. This insight reveals that the general staff has been challenged by its own practice of hybrid war, no doubt because so many events, conditions, and factors have been beyond the established resource and control of the Russian Armed Forces. His argument to have an HW model is not just for counter-strategies but also for Russia to develop strategies. This signals a departure from the position that HW is something that only happens to Russia and to a position in military science that allows them to build the doctrine to institute the art.

In the accompanying *Vestnik* article, the authors, I.A. Chiharev, D.C. Poluyak, B.U. Brovko, also discuss the challenge of hybrid warfare to Russian military planners. They note, “The irregularity of hybrid warfare disavows established military strategies,” and warn “It is clear that the security institutions, as well as government strategies, find themselves largely unprepared for this type of conflict [hybrid warfare].” As part of their argument, the authors’ note that the unintended effects and impacts of private, non-state actions on nation-state affairs can even instigate unanticipated conflicts. This is chaos and anathema to the Russian security mindset; it is the “uncertainty” that Bartosh warns against. To remedy and mitigate this unpredictable and unacceptable factor, the authors advocate a “return” to state control of international affairs, including by means of enhanced technology such as state-run surveillance, network control, and use of information resources and other influencing activities. At this point in the article, they are not describing hybrid warfare as a weapon used against them but something that the Russian Armed Forces must master for themselves in doctrine.

In the third article, the authors A.S. Brychkov, V.L. Dorokhov, G.A. Nikonorov, are more direct in their urging for the doctrinal development of Russian hybrid warfare by stating “It is expedient...to pay particular attention to creating within our military structure flexible, multi-purpose forces capable of acting in the unique circumstances of any particular conflict, including a hybrid war.”

While reflecting on the challenge of the Russian military’s integration with aspects of non-military Russian actions and actors in hybrid warfare, what these three articles indicate more than anything is that there is growing advocacy for Russian military doctrine to catch up with its practice. The goal will be to make hybrid warfare more calculable for the military — more capable to defend against it or better plan it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm)**



Emblem of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces.

Source: w:Генеральный штаб Вооружённых сил Российской Федерации via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_emblem_of_the_General_Staff_of_the_Russian_Armed_Forces.svg, Public Domain



Continued: Advancing Hybrid Warfare in Russian Doctrine Discussions

“The irregularity of hybrid warfare disavows established military strategies...”

Source: А.А. Бартош, “Модель гибридной войны,” *Военная Мысль*, No. 5. 2019, с. 6-23. (A.A. Bartosh, “A Model of Hybrid Warfare,” *Military Thought*, No. 5, 2019, pp. 6-23)

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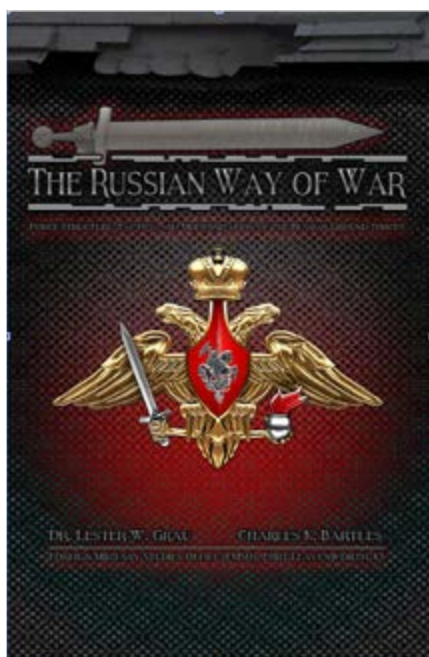
Source: И.А. Чихарев, Д.С. Полулях, В.Ю. Бровко, “Гибридная война: реконструкция против деконструкции,” *Вестник Академии Военных Наук*, 4 (65) 2018, с. 58-66. (I.A. Chiharev, D.C. Poluyak, B.U. Brovko, “Hybrid war: reconstructivism vs. deconstructivism,” *Vestnik (The Bulletin of the Academy of Military Science)*, 4 (65) 2018, pp. 58-66.)

The irregularity of hybrid warfare disavows established military strategies...

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Source: A.S. Brychkov, V.L. Dorokhov, G.A. Nikonorov, “The Hybrid Nature of Future Wars and Armed Conflicts,” *Military Thought in English*, Vol.28, No. 2, 2019, pp.20-32.

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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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