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1. RUSSIAN OPERATIONAL ART IN THE FIFTH PERIOD: NORDIC AND ARCTIC APPLICATIONS

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Abstract

Showing a more strategic inclination in the current decade, Russian operational art has entered a new intellectual phase. A major finding presented in this article is that there is a line of military thought and planning that can be traced back to the first tenure and political leadership of President Putin, as expressed particularly in the 2003 White Paper. In this light, the 2010 Russian military doctrine and related military reform indicates continuity in how the conceptualization of modern warfare impacts operational art in Russia, rather than something new.

The applied perspective belongs to the field of war studies and focuses on aspects of fighting power, crucial to which are conceptual, moral, and physical components. It addresses the question about whether or not Russia currently has synchronized its perception of modern warfare with its concept of operational art. An effort is made to trace the contemporary Russian concept of modern war, how its introduction was accelerated by the 2008 Caucasian war and how it has impacted the evolving military discussion about Russian operational art. Last but not least, the article discusses some operational implications for the northern flank of the Western Military District, i.e. the Arctic and the European north.

Keywords:
Russian operational art, Modernization, northern Europe

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Introduction

For many a Western reader, the Russian way with regard to war and military affairs can sometimes appear introverted and strange. In the run-up to the 2012 presidential election, the incumbent Vladimir Putin pledged an allocation equivalent to approximately 500 billion Euros to achieve Russia's new military goals, disregarding many of the country's other economic and social needs.[1] This way nevertheless points to the importance of the military instrument as guarantor of the independence and survival of the Russian nation. Due to historical experience, issues of war and preparations for war are existential to Russian elites and, by extension, inextricably linked with how leaders and significant parts of the Russian people perceive of their role in the world. There is good reason to be careful in the analysis of Russia's current military development and to exercise caution in judging the development. Above all, it is important to note that contemporary Russia does not aspire to the status of global super power. Looking at its recent military development, however, it is clear that the country is modernizing its armed forces to at least maintain international military significance. Global security linkages, such as in the Arctic and the European north, are inevitable for geo-political reasons. As indicated by president re-elect Vladimir Putin in 2012, in his security address to the nation:

> "The world is changing, and the transformations underway could hide various risks, often unpredictable risks. In a world of economic and other upheaval, there is always the temptation to resolve one´s problems at another's expense, through pressure and force. It is no surprise that some are calling for resources of global significance to be freed from the exclusive sovereignty of a single nation, and that this issue will soon be raised as a "matter-of-course." There will be no possibility of this, even a hypothetical one, with respect to Russia. In other words, we should not tempt anyone by allowing ourselves to be weak. (…) It is not a question of militarizing Russia's budget. In effect, allocating these funds now means we are "paying our bills" for the years when the army and the navy were chronically underfunded, when we procured very few new weapons, while other countries were steadily building up their military might. (…) We need a response system for more than just current threats. We should learn to look "past the horizon", and estimate threats 30 or even 50 years away. This is a serious objective and requires mobilizing the resources of civilian and military science and reliable standards for long-term forecasting.(Putin, 2012)"

In this light, an important territory for Russian military attention is the Arctic and adjoining areas. The geopolitical significance of this area has been enhanced in later years, not least because it holds 25% of the world's currently known oil reserves and substantial mineral deposits. Rapid climate change has opened the North West Passage and continues to lay bare the mineral and rare earth deposits on Greenland and on other islands in the polar sea basin. Significantly, Russia is one of the few nations in the world

[1] Quoted in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 2012-02-20.

with a polar mainland of its own. Access to strategic minerals has also attracted a new stakeholder to the Arctic, namely China. China carries out hydrological and geological research in the Arctic and new patterns of economic and political interaction between China and the more traditional stakeholders, such as Russia and the Nordic countries, are emerging in the Arctic.

From the perspective of war studies, however, the question of political drivers and intentionality is just one side of the proverbial coin. Military capability, or fighting power, is the other side, crucial to which are the conceptual, moral, and physical components (Militärstrategisk Doktrin, 2011, p.43). As late as in March 2011, General of the Army Nikolaj Makarov, Chief of the Russian General Staff and Deputy Defence Minister said: "Twenty years since 1991 have been wasted… Russia's numerous active service military theoreticians don't provide Russia to effectively meet new threats and to develop new ideas, weapons and soldiers."[2] Pouring money over the Russian armed forces would seem futile, unless there was a coherent set of ideas about what kind of fighting power should be achieved. Does Russia in the second decade of the 21st century have operational concepts and an operational art to match its geopolitical ambitions?

Extracting strategic and operational concepts from Russian military sources and activities over the past decade is far from difficult.[3] Even at a cursory glance, an image emerges of focused and prioritized change toward modern military capabilities. High priority is given to nuclear forces (strategic and tactical), space and air defense, command and control systems, intelligence, information warfare, electronic warfare, unmanned aircraft, missile systems, improved individual protective gear, and the development of high-precision weapons. We would argue that three sources of ideas and experiences are crucial to an understanding of where Russian operational art and military theory stands today. First of all, Russian operational art has changed in accordance with those operational concepts drawn up in the 2003 White Paper, which was published by the Russian Ministry of Defense during President Putin's first term in office. Secondly, the 2008 Caucasian war provided Russian officers with first-hand knowledge about what it is like to go up against an advanced enemy and meeting state-of-the art high-tech weapons in the field without the military equipment to match. It is probably safe to say that the Caucasian war represents the end of Soviet military thought, and that the political and economic momentum of Russian military reform over the past five years, albeit forced and problematic, draws heavily on experiences from that war. On the whole, it seems that Russian operational art has entered a qualitatively new phase according to military-theoretical lines which were drawn already in the 2003 White Paper. Correctives in the 2010 Russian Military Doctrine seem to confirm this observation.

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[2] Quoted in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 8, no. 63.

[3] Following the analytical lead of David M. Glantz (1995, vol.I, p. ix), we see Russian military documents as "…historical in nature. They also ponder where operational art may go in the future. In that sense, they have relevance as a new beginning." See also Naveh, S. (1997) *In Pursuit of Military Exellence: The Evolution of Operational Theory*. London: Frank Cass.

The aim of this article is to synthesize and discuss some major findings from an ongoing research project at the Swedish National Defense College, titled *Regular Warfare* (Swe: *Reguljär krigföring*), which is focused upon the conceptual, moral, and physical aspects of ongoing military reform in Russia (Eklund and Mattsson, 2012). The research proceeds from a reading of the international literature in the field of war studies, which is compared and contrasted with Russian presentations, discussions, and debates on military theory and change in the original language.[4] This article begins by looking at the contemporary Russian concepts of modern war and military operations as specified in the 2003 White Paper and the 2010 Military Doctrine. Following that, a joint-operations analysis is made of the 2008 Caucasian war to illustrate some of the major operational lessons drawn by the Russian armed forces. In a penultimate section, the deeper intellectual roots of Russian operational art in the 21st century and the contemporary influences from the White Paper are described. The final discussion elaborates upon operational implications for the northern flank of the Russian Western Military District, i.e. the Arctic and the European north.

Russian operational concepts in the 21st century

The parallel processes of modernization and reformation in the Russian armed forces enter a qualitatively new phase after the publication of the so-called White Paper in 2003 (The Defence Ministry of the Russian Federation (DMRF), 2003). Albeit implementation lags, only to take a quantum leap after the 2008 Caucasian war, the White Paper provides a new design for Russian military thought which is also its guideline in the current decade. In effect, the White Paper can be seen as a *de facto* military doctrine, in which not only the reluctance and inability of the armed forces to snap out of Soviet-era strategic and operational models is openly problematized and criticized, but in which modern Russian military thought is also formulated. The White Paper conveys an image of a Russia threatened from all directions. The new military-strategic concept therefore prescribes and emphasizes that Russia must take the military-strategic initiative, which is based upon strategic defense and operational offensive. The struggle for strategic initiative is seen as a never-ending game, which is for the most part played out in times of (military) peace, which forces major powers such as Russia to evolve militarily (Kipp, 2011).

The White Paper is based on extensive and thorough analyses of modern wars between 1973 and 2003, with particular emphasis on operations by NATO and American forces. It concludes that not only the character of preparations for war but also its very

[4] As far as possible, and for the benefit of an international readership, references in this article have been made to translations and other sources written in the English language. For any observer with knowledge in the Russian language, however, a number of original sources on Russian military affairs other than books are readily available on the Internet today. News agencies, for example *Riia Novosti*, tend to report from an evolving and lively debate over problems of military reform in Russia. Military policy, guidelines and other documents including the periodical *Voennaya Mysl* (*Military Thought*) can be accessed via the homepage of the Russian Ministry of Defence.

nature has changed. The White Paper therefore argues that immediate steps need to be taken in reconditioning the Russian armed forces in terms of routines for planning, peacetime deployment, and acquisitions. The whole new outlook demanded by the White Paper is deftly summarized in eight major points about modern war: (1) Geographical zones of operations are transformed into functional zones of operations, (2) conventional and high precision munitions are replaced by smart weapons, for example smart ammunition and mines, (3) pre-deployment of troops on main sectors is replaced by dominating maneuver or concentration of efforts through maneuver, (4) close-in contact fighting and direct engagement of sides are replaced by in-depth strikes (selective and pinpoint) and long-range fire combat, (5) physical protection is replaced by information impact and protection, (6) large inventory of weapons and military equipment and logistic supplies are replaced by flexible and purposeful logistic supplies and "focused" deliveries, (7) the vertical chain of command is replaced by global communication networks, (8) predominantly separate strike and defense systems are replaced by combined strike and defense systems(DMRF, 2003, pp. 51-59).

From an international perspective, the White Paper is not innovative in terms of what it has to say about the nature of modern warfare and its prerequisites. It is nevertheless striking in the way it spells out how the Russian armed forces must reform and modernize not only because of deficient capability but significantly also because of outmoded military thought (Savkin, 2002, 1972). From the military-theoretical perspective, it is also in standing with the longer Russian tradition in which the comparative study of how wars are fought is continuous and systematic. Historically, such studies have had great influence on both strategic and operational military concepts (Pukhov, 2012).

Conceptually and already in 2003, the White Paper made it abundantly clear to the world that the Russian military would have to undergo significant change and that military reform would combine political steering in detail with high performance demands. Merit, including that of high-ranking officers and other staff, would be reevaluated on the basis of new military realities. The first three years of military reform after the 2000 Russian military doctrine were described as outright disappointing and the White Paper spelled out clearly that any military officer who could not see this problem was a part of it. Russia's relationship with the West and NATO was described in terms of regress (deHaas, 2011, cited in Blank, 2011, pp. 15-17). Indeed, the White Paper specified NATO as a potential threat, and did not exclude the possibility of conventional military conflict between Russia and Western countries in the near future. Political goals, both Russia's own and those of other military powers, were seen as drivers of military change and, looking at the nature of modern warfare, the White Paper sketched an operational concept built on the potential for armed conflict anywhere in the world without recourse to nuclear weapons (Savelyev, 2011, cited in Blank, 2011, pp. 153-179).

A real war was needed to accelerate military reform in Russia along the lines drawn in the 2003 White Paper, however. The 2008 Caucasian war was a catalyst in

Russian military reform, leading among other things to rediscovery and reconsideration of the relationship between the new operational concept and the long-standing Russian tradition of operational art. From the Caucasian war on, however, it became clear that the thoughts and images of modern warfare presented in the White Paper would sustain subsequent Russian military policy.

The 2008 Caucasian war — lessons from the end of a military epoch

On August 8, as the political leaders of the world were gathered to enjoy the inaugural ceremony of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, full-scale war suddenly broke out in the Caucasus. To the surprise of many Western observers, war broke out between Russia and Georgia. Hostilities lasted for all of five days, during which Georgia was thoroughly defeated. Russia not only achieved its military objectives, but proceeded to unilaterally recognize the independence of separatist republics Abchazia and South Ossetia. Only with hindsight did the EU come out and criticize Georgia for provoking the conflict. Russia on the other hand was accused of undue escalation and disproportionate acts of war (Svenska Dagbladet, 2009). The question about whether or not the Russian forces had modern capabilities came to a head already at the outset of war, when the Russian forces met with heavy Georgian resistance. Weapons systems and other materiel on the Georgian side were high-end and largely superior to those of the Russian forces. The overall Russian operation was successful particularly due to rapid deployment of air and ground forces. A significant element of the Russian operation was to put up a blockade in the Black Sea and to open up a second front via beachheads in Abchazia. But what operational principles did the Russians call up in the Caucasian war?

The Russian operation in the Caucasian war can be analyzed in terms of *Joint Operations* (Wade, 2009).[5] Such analysis will show to what extent and in what ways the operation was integrated and synchronized. It can also reveal the form and nature of any operational concepts at play (Friedman, 2008). In sum, a joint-operations analysis will show that the overall operational and strategic superiority of the Russian side was so significant as to make the tactical weaknesses and disadvantages of Russian ground forces insignificant. Georgian ground forces were generally better equipped with, for example, night vision technology, fire support systems, communications systems, and GPS. They also had better protective systems and armor for vehicles and personnel. However, although the Russian ground forces mostly followed old-school Soviet tactics, the Georgians were unable to thwart the onslaught. Russian forces simply pushed the Georgians back through strength in numbers, speed, simple battle tactics built on keeping their units together, heavy fire for support, and tactical air support. Importantly, on the political and strategic level of analysis, Russia also succeeded in isolating Georgia during the first days of the operation.

[5] The operative functions are Command and Control, Intelligence, Fires, Movement and Maneuver, Protection and Sustainment.

Russia combined its three arms in the Georgian operation, on the ground, in the air, and at sea. There is little or no evidence, however, that these were also successfully synchronized. There was no joint operational staff, but it seems as if the sheer speed with which Russian forces mounted their counter offensive put Georgian commanders psychologically on the defensive. Russian officers also had experience from a type of strategic and operational planning, which was lacking among Georgian officers. Initially, Georgian forces displayed tactical flexibility as opposed to Russian rigidity, but higher ranking officers in the Georgian forces were also missing practical experience from fighting on this scale, i.e. on the scale mounted by the Russians. Adding to that, Georgia simply did not have the required air and sea units to match Russian numbers. American colonel G.T. Donovan, an avid military observer of the Caucasus war, makes a more succinct observation, however (Donovan, 2009, pp. 8-9). He puts forth that Russia tried a mixture of new and old operational principles in this conflict. He describes how the old and tested operational principles based on sequencing and parallel in-depth and flanking operations were indeed visible on the Russian side. Completely new, however, was the integration of cyber attacks and information warfare. Donovan concludes that the Russian operation bore significant signs of a modern joint operation, which probably means that there was a joint command structure at play. Interestingly, his idea that there must have been a joint operational command is partly contradicted by the Russians themselves.

Operational lessons and sixth generation warfare

During the 2008 Caucasian war, Russian war rhetoric was bombastic and given the speed and success with which the operation was conducted there was little or no time for contradiction. Russia's political leadership was successful in creating an image before the rest of the world which involved an aggressive Georgia attacking the small breakaway republic of South Ossetia. Utilizing embedded journalism in the early stages of the conflict, Russia also convinced outside observers that Russians were subjected to oppression and even outright ethnic cleansing. This bought the Russian forces important time, and only after the full scale of Russian escalation became obvious did the EU and NATO countries react. Russian evaluations have pointed this out, and some media reported that, with hindsight, the success of the actual military operation was more or less a miracle (McDermott, 2011, p. 44).

The political attack on the Armed Forces in the aftermath of the war in Georgia was headed by Chief of General Staff of the Russian Federation and Deputy Minister of Defense, General Nikolaj Makarov. He decided that the war had clearly shown the ineptitude of Russian officers, the obsolescence of Russian materiel, and that the country's armed forces could at best be likened to a Potemkin village. His critique was directed against the whole Russian military system, leaving no stone unturned with regard to where immediate and encompassing modernization was necessary. The way Russian ground forces were still dependent upon a system of conscription, leaving him with

incompetent officers, incomplete units, and a gargantuan supply system spread out across the territory of this vast nation were all abominations to his eyes. Painful as it was, Makarov's conclusion was that the Russian armed forces were incapable of meeting the challenges of modern warfare, let alone fighting in a modern war (McDermott, 2011, pp. 30-47). In October 2008, General Makarov stated: "The Russian armed forces were incapable of performing a large number of assigned missions; they could not ensure the country's territorial integrity, or meet the challenges of a number of new missions." (McDermott, 2011, p. 47). In another communication on December 30 2008, General Makarov became emphatic: "We were forced to hand-pick colonels and generals from all over Russia, [men] who were able to command in battle; …the commanders of the 'paper divisions,' when they were given reinforcements of men and armaments … were confused and some [even] refused to obey orders." (Felgenhauer, n.d., cited in Cornell and Starr, 2009, p.166) Exasperated, General Makarov was wondering what to do with such armed forces?

Instead of celebrating victory, the Russian Armed Forces were called to muster. Both the Supreme Commander, at this point president Medvedev, and his Chief of General Staff, general Makarov evaluated experiences from the 2008 Caucasian war sternly (McDermott, 2011, pp. 32-34).[6] This was also the turning point in contemporary Russian military reform. Particular attention and priority was given to evaluations from the Center for Military-Strategic Research (McDermott, 2011, pp. 32-33). A series of radical cuts in the military economy were initiated and almost immediately met with resistance and complaints among military personnel (McDermott, 2011, pp. 14-16, 129-140). The political and military leadership nevertheless remained steadfast, reiterating their view that the Caucasian war had put blatant military shortcomings on display and that rapid reform was necessary to achieve even a reasonable level of modern military capability. By mid-September, approximately a month after hostilities had ceased in Georgia, the General Staff, the Ministry of Defense, the Military District Commanders, and the Service Arm Commanders-in-chief had all done their homework. The edge of their critique was directed toward the military system of education and training, which was unable to deliver competent officers and soldiers, and toward the obsolescence of weapons systems and materiel alongside insufficient resources for the military intelligence services (McDermott, 2011, pp. 35-39).

The 2008 Caucasian war obviated tactical and operational shortcomings to the Russians. Few, if any, of the operational concepts from the White Paper were visible in military action. Next time, so the argument went, the Russian armed forces might not be so lucky. After 2008, the military leadership went to work on a complete reset with regard to the strategic concept and operational capability based on the new concept of modern war. Following up on the 2003 White Paper, seven main priorities were set: to retain strategic deterrence, to increase the number of combat-ready units, to increase both the

[6] The Caucasian War was evaluated by a number of military and civilian research institutions.

efficiency and the quality of education and training, to improve upon recruitment and tasking, to speed up the introduction of new weapons systems and materiel, to raise the quality of military science and education, and to improve upon the social status, level of education, and morale of military personnel (DMRF, 2003, p.69). Since 2008, the effect upon Russian military reform has been visible among other things in how strategic and operational exercises have unfolded, for example, in 2009-2010: West (Zapad), South (Kavkaz), Northwest (Ladoga), and East (Vostok). In 2011, two strategic-operational maneuvers were completed in the central parts of Russia, i.e. Center (Tsentr) and Shield of the Union (Shtjit Soyuza). In 2012, the armed forces continued their large-scale training, gradually testing their way toward implementation of the new strategic and operational concepts.

Already in 2002, military theorist and Major-general Vladimir Slipchenko characterized modern war as follows. "Any future war will be a non-contact war. It will come from the air and space. Guidance and control will come from space, and the strike will be conducted from the air and from the seas using a large quantity of precision weaponry." (McDermott, 2011, p.239)[7] As pointed out by Roger McDermott (2011), "Slipchenko was clear that the coming conflict would be conducted by destroying military and economic targets, command and control, without engaging enemy forces in a traditional attack.". Manifest changes in how NATO and the US conducted its operations in Iraq were part and parcel of Russian strategic and operational analyses in the early 2000s, and a major source of inspiration for the White Paper. This development in Russian military theory coincided with open military-theoretical debates for example in such major sources as the journal *Military Thought* (*Voyennaya Mysl*). At the beginning of the 2000s, the discussion about modern warfare and new operational concepts had paved the way for major shifts also in Russian operational art. The Caucasian war, however, showed that any and all changes before 2008 had been theoretical at best. New concepts, such as Slipchenko's *sixth generation warfare* were part of a significant intellectual change in Russian military thinking. Analyzing the 2008 Caucasian war, however, the Russians were dismayed to discover that although there were some synergies and joint operational effects in the war, these were by and large the result of limited but crucial efforts at coordination between otherwise autonomous groups in battle. As a whole, the operation bore little if any sign at all of operational thought as prescribed by the White Paper. What had happened to the once-proud tradition of Russian operational art?

Evolving Soviet and Russian operational art

As indicated by some of the early Soviet writing from the 1920s and 1930s,

[7] Slipchenko's original thinking and his debate with General Makhmut Gareev can be found in the book: Slipchenko, V. & Gareev, M. (2005) *Buduschaya Voyna*, Moskva: OGI. For an English translation with an introduction by Jacob Kipp, see Gareev, M & Slipchenko, V. (2007) *Future War*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office.

operational art should be considered an intermediate analytical level in the study of war, wedged in between the determinants and goals of warfare on the one hand, and factors pertaining to separate battles on the other (Vego, 2009).[8] Early Soviet writers, such as Svechin (1927) or Isserson (1932, 1938) formulated a deep dissatisfaction with the classic dual concept and gave rich examples of mistakes in military action in 19th century European warfare, most particularly in the protraction and indecision of trench warfare in World War I. Throughout, Soviet and Russian operational art has represented an opportunity for intellectual reinvigoration, spawning new theory and new practices in military affairs. The longer tradition of Soviet and Russian operational art has distinct features: "Soviet army theorists emerged from this quest with what they felt were fundamental keys to understanding change: the shifting content of military strategy, the evolving nature of operations themselves, and the disaggregation of military structures. An important underlying assumption was that these developments owed much of their significance to the impact of changing technology over time." (Menning, 2010, cited in Krause, n.d., p.7)

Theoretically, Russian operational art is a field of recurrent intellectual vigor, adaptation and, in the words of David Glantz, new beginnings (Glantz, 1995). Looking at publications from the Russian Ministry of Defence's military-theoretical journal *Voyennaya Mysl* (*Military Thought*), however, it seems as if operational art in the first few years of the new millennium came to a difficult start. Around the year 2000, the words of General Makhmut Gareev still dominate the discussion, echoing his early military thinking: "Even in the most remote future it will be impossible to fight a war with only long-range systems. One way or another there will be troops on the battlefield, so the possibility of a collision between them is not excluded, although certainly in forms differing from previously existing ones. (…) But in reality war will go on as before, victories and defeats will occur as the Gulf War or the events in Caucasus and the Balkans have demonstrated. To think that to refuse to fight will stop a war, or to assert that the refusal of victory in war is the surest way to a safer world, means to completely depart from real life and to live in the world of wishful thinking and imagination (Garev, 1995, 2007, p.106).

General Gareev of course points to one of the central tenets of Soviet military thinking, to which heavily armored forces and deep-strike capability on the ground were key. He also mirrors some of the important conceptual work done by Western analysts and for whom Soviet military analysis and thought had been very important, particularly in building ideas about operational art around the central role of armored echelons and operations with the advancement of ground forces at the center (House, 2001). Looking at

[8] In a more modern interpretation, Vego writes: "The value of the theoretical aspects of operational art cannot be overrated…Theory should deal with each war and each era of warfare on its own terms and should always accommodate itself to change. (…) The field of theoretical study and practical application of operational art is too large and too diverse to be neatly arranged into a "system" of thinking. Nor is there any particular order or sequence in which these components should be studied or applied."

Russian operational art in the 1990s, it seems that the huge material and intellectual legacies of the Soviet Union were making the armed forces of the nation slow to adapt to new military realities. For all that was said about the need for joint operational thinking in earlier Soviet operational art and tactics, significant change still seemed a long way away around the year 2000 (Savkin, 1972, 2002, pp. 266-277, Eklund,2010). By and large, it seemed that Russian military thinkers were still loath to let go of Soviet operational principles.

To illustrate, a leading article in the September-October issue of *Voyennaya Mysl* in 2001 launched an attack on any and all proponents of modern, high-tech warfare. General Yuri Burkeyev headed up the issue with an article on the indispensable and tested role of ground forces, particularly mechanized infantry, in modern warfare. He lamented the fact that other military specialists had been allowed to express their technologically advanced visions on the pages of the journal before and, in particular, that they "have been mistaken". The debate, he mused, has gone completely wrong if and when military analysts begin to assume that ground forces will have a supplementary role to other, faster, technologically more advanced and territorially more encompassing military arms in future. He wrote: "By the power of their multi-functionality, the ground forces have been and will continue to be the fundamental military arm, capable of taking and defending its tasked regions with an eye to strengthening the achieved goals thus far and the ensuing defeat of the enemy. As different from other branches of the Armed Forces, which have increasingly become instruments of temporary implementations, they continue to be forces of territorial presence just like before." (Burkeyev, 2001).

Not all Russian analysts were as categorical in the ensuing years. The element of skepticism still held in 2007, nevertheless. Technological superiority was depicted as only one side of the proverbial coin. Seemingly conservative analysts, such as Vorobyev and Kiselyev for example, pointed to the *dukh sovremennogo boya* (the soul of contemporary warfare) in the Russian operational tradition and that actual battle is about tactics; *Taktika—eto tvorchestvo millionov* (Tactics—it is the art work of millions). Moreover, the dialectical/materialist philosophical tradition in Russian military thought was emphasized: "An understanding of the principles of tactical development and expansion in a deeper sense is made possible only by recourse to the general methodological basis of operational art, at the core of which lies philosophical categories—the laws and adherence to the laws of war (unity and the conflict between opposites, the mutual advance of quantitative and qualitative change, internal contradictions), and also the methods of materialist dialectics as the logical instrument of knowledge." (Vorobyev, 2007, p.2)

After 2008, however, the discussion about operational art in *Voyennaya Mysl* changes and becomes more unison. For all of their fervent backward-looking in 2007, Vorobyev and Kisleyev return to the pages of *Voyennaya Mysl* in 2011, saying that although the philosophical principles still hold true, there is an immediate need to infuse the Russian armed forces with a *scientifically guided new outlook* (Vorobyev, 2011, pp. 40-

48). Of major importance to this new outlook is the reconfiguration and reevaluation of Russian operational art due to the changing nature of modern war. Technological change reemerges center-stage.[9] New weapons systems and their effect upon the education and preparation of the Russian Armed Forces are also embraced by operational theorists. [10] In the face of new military realities, Russian operational art adapts and changes again. After 2008, there is a marked change in how operational art is discussed in *Voyennaya Mysl*. Soviet military thinking disappears, to be replaced by Vladimir Kopytko's theory of change in Russian operational art.

Russian operational art in the fifth period

In his seminal article on the history and status of Russian operational art, V.K. Kopytko defines the new operational principles (Kopytko, 2008). He defines the *first period* as that between 1920 and 1940, in which the Soviet armed forces focused upon "preparing and conducting front-scale and army-scale operations" (Kopytko, 2008, p.208). The *second period* begins with Soviet actions in 1941 and runs up to 1953, during which time the emphasis was on "increased activity and fire power, deeper echeloning, and improved engineering organization of defences." (Kopytko, 2008) The *third period* identified by Kopytko runs between 1954 and 1985, thus including the intellectual atrophy of the 1970s, generally defined by the ascendancy of nuclear arms and intercontinental ballistic missiles as the defining factors of warfare (Kopytko, 2008, p.209). The *fourth period,* Kopytko defines as that between 1985 and 2000, in which strategic arms limitations and global political change brought about a return of focus upon conventional arms but now in the light of high-precision weapons and defensibility against same. Kopytko's *fifth period* builds from both military and political ideas which try to incorporate the best of the historical intellectual tradition with perceptions of new military realities. In a definition of the current state or Russian operational art, which has become the dominant theme of subsequent articles in *Voyennaya Mysl*, (Smolovyi, 2012, pp. 21-24) Kopytko writes: "Currently we are in the next, fifth period in the development of the operational art. It is characterized by changed views on the nature of military threats facing the Russian Federation, an increased likelihood of local wars and armed conflicts, the adoption in the armies of the leading world states of long-range precision weapons and weapons based on new physical principles, the coming of new operational concepts and operation method used by the armed forces of foreign states, a grown role of information warfare, an experiment to improve the C&C system on the RF Armed Forces, and other factors.(...) There is no doubt that this has led and is going to lead in the future to new changes in the

[9] See for example Dulnev, P. & Korablin, V. (2012) "Metodologicheskyi Podkhod K Sozdanyio Systemyi Vooruzhenyia, Voyennoy I Spetsyalnoy Tekhniki Obschevoyskovogo Formirovaniya" in Voyennaya Mysl # 1, pp. 50-60.

[10] To this should be added the increasing number of analyses of modern warfare carried out by other institutions than the Russian military. One recent example is the encompassing analysis of NATO and American operations and their consequences for Russia by the Center for Strategic and Technological Analysis, see Pukhov, R. (ed.) (2012) Chuzhiye Voynyi. Moscow: Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies.

structure of operational art and will require further development of its theory and practice (Kopytko, 2008).[11]

The military-theoretical discussion and related definitions in *Voyennaya Mysl* can be readily compared to what the 2003 White Paper has to say about the consequences of new operational concepts for Russian operational art.[12] In a list of nine operational principles, it details what changes are of the essence for the armed forces. *First off*, the historically determined and battle proven model based on vast quantities of soldiers and materiel committed to battle must be substituted for massive fire power. Long-range weapons and systems should be prioritized, and troops committed only in the later stages of armed conflict and to limited, operationally vital territory. *Second*, organizational boundaries between the strategic, operational, and tactical elements of warfare must be further integrated with a view to rapid exploitation of strategic advantages. *Third*, defeating the enemy in battle should no longer be uniquely tasked to infantry and armor but increasingly to long-range weapons and systems.

According to the White Paper, a *fourth* significant change is to disregard the distinction between offensive and defensive. This is in part due to the fact that the operational principles and weapons systems of all military units will become more similar and more integrated over time, but in large part also because long-range and electronic weapons systems are envisaged as the decisive vehicles of modern battle. Importantly, the high mobility of tactical systems on land, at sea and in the air, will cause operational strategic effects. Consequently, a *fifth* required change concerns the tactical level. High-precision weapons should be prioritized for deep-strike battle and, consequently, defense against same on the enemy side must be equally prioritized. The *sixth* change is considered absolutely vital in the White Paper as it is aimed at the destruction of enemy control over economic and political functions as well as infrastructure. High priority targets are communications systems and military command and control functions, which involves large-scale annihilation of civil structures. *Seventh*, protection and deception within all air defense systems against cruise and ballistic missiles and stealth aircraft should be prioritized. Air defense should thereby focus wholly upon three main tasks, i.e. the strategic, the forward, and the protective tasks. The White Paper's *eighth* point is that the enemy should be expected to actively cover up his preparations for war and to misinform even his friends and neighbors. This is why, *ninth* and last, the White Paper concludes that the saddle point of modern operational art lies in the control and utilization of air space. Ground forces are still considered important, but in the 2003 White Paper a diminishing role for boots on the ground over the next 20-30 years is envisaged. Adding to that, the White Paper states that it is a sign of advanced statehood in modern warfare to utilize the ground forces of allied states while focusing on doing battle with high-

[11] The Russian original was published one year earlier, see Kopytko, V.K. (2007) "Evolutsiya operativnogo iskusstva" in *Voyennaya Mysl*, no. 12, pp. 60-67.

[12] *The Priority Tasks of the Development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation*. (2003) Moscow: The Defense Ministry of the Russian Federation, pp. 59-61; Kipp, J. (2011), pp. 11-112.

precision, deep-strike weapons, control of air space and massive means of electronic warfare.

Current Russian Military Thought: Nordic and Arctic Applications

Militarily, Russia increases its presence in the Arctic by land, sea, and air. The overarching military-strategic significance of the Arctic to Russia is guided by the need for early warning, detection, and targeting of ballistic and cruise missiles (both conventional and nuclear). Also significant is to uphold the territorial integrity and related Russian economic interests in the Polar region. Therefore, the required Russian military capabilities in the area are space and air defense, long-range aviation, under-water, amphibious, and rapid deployment.

On land, two new arctic brigades will be established by 2015. These are signified by high and rapid mobility, provided with state-of-the-art equipment. They will be trained and adapted to arctic conditions. Ongoing exercises indicate joint training between marine and air forces. Land forces will also be reinforced by surface-to-surface missile systems (inter alia Iskander SS-26) (Forss, 2012). Projected land-based air defense systems consist among other things of the long-range S-400 Giant and the medium-range Vitjaz. *At sea*, seven new ports and supply stations in the Arctic will be operational on the same time line. The navy is being reinforced by new conventional and nuclear submarines, new amphibious assault ships (Mistral class), upgraded cruisers and missile cruisers, new and upgraded navy aviation (inter alia SU-33, SU-34, SU-35). *In the air*, three new military air bases will be established no later than 2015. Long-range aviation will be upgraded (TU-95, TU-160). Concerning the MIG-31, it is going through an upgrade and will be forward based on Novaya Zemlya no later than 2013.

There is good reason to pay attention to the logical and temporal aspects of current military reform in Russia. What comes across is not simply run-of-the-mill lip service to Russian political hierarchy but rather, as argued in this paper, clarity with regard to the reasons for current military reform, its goals, demands, and time-line. Contemporary military reform in Russia rests on a solid bed of military science and an encompassing analysis of future military needs in the perspective of 2020-30. Three sources fundamental to this development are the 2003 White Paper, the 2010 Military Doctrine, and the experiences from the 2008 Caucasian war. Thorough study of modern warfare and the military theory, doctrine, and experiences of potential enemies has led Russian military leadership to distinct conclusions.

The type of war the Russian armed forces must be prepared for in the next decade at the latest has one rule and four distinct signifiers. The rule is that active planning and preparation will give the strategic initiative, and the strategic initiative will lead to victory. The signifiers are: 1) *Superiority via information operations*, 2) *Superiority in the air and in space,* 3) *Superiority at sea and on the ground via the ability to strike with precision,* and 4) *Consolidation of military success with diplomatic and other political means*.

This is the intellectual bedrock of Russian military reform, current and in the next decade. Reform is radical, with little or no room for old Soviet military principles, experiences, or actions. The goal is to achieve modern, mobile battle units on constant alert, and current priorities in the military build-up toward the year 2030 bear witness to the ambition. Procurement of top modern systems and materiel is being implemented, according to Russian and international sources. To these belong 400 modern land and sea based intercontinental ballistic missile systems, 8 strategic submarines with ballistic missile systems, 20 multifunctional submarines, 50 surface ships, 100 military installations in space, 600 modern fighter jets including fifth generation fighters, 1 000 helicopters, 28 combined S-400 air defense battalions, 38 'Vitjaz' surface-to-air air defence battalions, 10 'Iskander-M' brigades, 2 300 modern tanks, 2 000 self-propelled artillery units, and a total of 17 000 new other combat vehicles (Military Balance, 2011, 2012).[13] Russian media support such observations from the sidelines: "It is an open secret that air warfare now plays the key role in armed conflicts of modern times." (Balmasov, 2011). It is particularly interesting to note that the process of military reform and material modernization is taking place before open curtains. The investment programs are out in the global open and not only military but also civilian sources contribute with significant pieces to the information puzzle.[14]

The acceleration of military reform also involves social and mass-political factors. President Putin has openly declared more skilled and educated military personnel as crucial to eventual success. For example, military wage levels should correspond to those of other qualified professions in Russia. This should include social insurance, health care, rehabilitation opportunities, insurance, housing, and access to a reasonable system for old age pensions (Kroth, 20129. To modernize the military profession and, more generally, to make service in the Armed Forces more attractive, several new actions have been taken. Military wages have tripled since January 1, 2012, and all pensions have been raised by 60 percent. The goal is to guarantee a 2 percent increase in both wages and pensions on a yearly basis up until at least 2020. In addition, Russian schools have started implementing a program for military-patriotic education, to which the athletic component is key, not least to try to overcome the near and projected demographic changes in the Russian nation which have resulted in manning problems in the Russian armed forces.

[13] The scope of this armament trend is guided by security and military doctrines and, more generally, by the Russian armament program at least up to the year 2030.

[14] See for example Felitchev, O. at vpk.news.ru/print/articles/14865.

Concluding remarks

To judge whether or not popular support for Russian military reform up toward the 2020-30 period is forthcoming would demand a level of foresight denied to the authors of this paper. It is nevertheless obvious that the Russian leadership has set its goals and begun working toward those goals in stages (Kroth, 2012). It is anyone's guess whether or not the overall economic effects of growth in the military-industrial complex will be positive, but it is not unlikely that there will be opportunities for positive linkage between growth driven by the defense industry and upturns on the global markets for energy and raw materials. Military cutbacks and upgrades in line with the new strategic and operational thinking have also begun to take their toll on the military personnel, not least military scientists who have been hit hard by new priorities (Kroth, 2012). Military reform in Russia will probably wax and wane in the near future.

> "But a combination of grand scale and limited funds means that some branches of the armed services have to be prioritized over others. Nevertheless, when we say that Russia is lagging behind in military technology, it is important to define the terms of reference. The technology gap between Russia and the United States or the leading NATO powers is quite obvious. But compared to the armies of China, Turkey or the CIS nations, the Russian army does not look bad at all. For the next few years at least, in the event of a conflict with many of Russia's potential adversaries its army will be entirely adequate in terms of technology." (Karnaukhov, 2011)

In answer to the original question, however, current research shows that the Russian armed forces have put the intellectual and military-theoretical foundations for a new era in place. Ideas and policies from the 2003 White Paper have impacted both how the Russian armed forces perceive of the demands of modern war and how they conceptualize their operational art for the near future. The fact that operational concepts are discussed in terms of *sixth generation* warfare, and operational art as being in its *fifth period,* need not lead to military-theoretical confusion. To the contrary, the Russian armed forces as well as interested international observers now have the key to a better understanding of what kind of fighting power Russia is currently constructing.

By way of conclusion, the paradigmatic shift in Russia's strategic and operational military disposition was initiated under Vladimir Putin's first term of presidency. In the ensuing process, implementation has begun albeit slowly at first. Evaluations of the 2008 Caucasian war serve as boosters to military reform and, currently, implementation is geared up toward the singular goal to make Russia a big power in the global setting. Regionally and in comparison with other forces on its western and northwestern flanks, the country will look more like a super power. To call this an immediate threat to the operational freedom of other political and military powers in the Arctic and the European north is no longer about qualified guesswork. It is about military matters of fact.

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