Staff conversations, which included General Staff Chief Valery Gerasimov (second from left) and then General-Lieutenant Andrey Valerievich Kartapolov (second from right) were held 15 July 2015 at the Russian Ministry of Defense in Moscow with representatives of the Republic of Korea. The writings and published speeches by both men are widely regarded as reflecting dominant strategic concepts guiding development of the Russian military. (Photo courtesy of the Russian Ministry of Defense)

The Evolving Nature of Russia’s Way of War

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This article discusses the three Russian military articles about which most Western military analysts specializing in Russia have focused their attention over the past four years. Unlike other analyses of those articles, this one offers a different perspective in that it compares them side by side, examining the text of the original versions and not merely the press reports about them. New graphs and tables included in the original versions are named, and a few are discussed further, and one is included here. This article is intended to do four things in particular. First, it demonstrates that five elements of Russian military thought continue to dominate
the descriptions of conflict by military experts. Second, it demonstrates the Russian General Staff’s preference for the term “new-type” warfare over the term “new-generation warfare” (NGW) and the near total absence of the latter from Russian publications since 2013. Third, it highlights that there are also indications in the articles that Russia may have in mind yet another way to describe the contemporary way of war still in development. Lastly, the absence of the Russian military’s use of the term “hybrid” to describe its way of war is noteworthy.

Description of the Articles

For the past four years, Westerners have treated three articles in the Russian military press as the loci of contemporary Russian military thought. They are the transcript of General Staff Chief Valery Gerasimov’s early 2013 speech at the Academy of Military Science, retired General-Lieutenant S. A. Bogdanov and Reserve Colonel S. G. Chekinov’s article in late 2013 in Military Thought, and the transcript of then General-Lieutenant (now Colonel-General) Andrey V. Kartapolov’s early 2015 speech at the Academy of Military Science.

In these articles, Gerasimov discusses tendencies and new forms and methods of fighting; Bogdanov and Chekinov cover what they term “new-generation warfare,” an expression that has not appeared in Russian military publications ever since; and Kartapolov examines what is termed “new-type warfare” (NTW).

Of interest is that Western explanations of these articles have been incisive but also sometimes incorrect—in incise in that many of the main issues are highlighted but incorrect in that they offer no context or access to the original articles, which has conveyed some inaccuracies that have clouded accurate analysis. For example, the title of Gerasimov’s 2013 speech is “Basic Tendencies in the Development of Forms and Methods of Employing Armed Forces and Current Tasks of Military Science Regarding their Improvement” and not “The Value of Foresight,” which indicates that most analysts did not have access to the original article but rather read only how it was titled and stated in Russia’s Journal of the Military-Industrial Complex (VPK). The focus of this article is actually trends in warfare, and forms and methods of confronting them.

In addition—for Gerasimov and Kartapolov’s articles in particular—there were several graphs or tables that went with their speeches that were published in the Journal of the Academy of Military Science that do not appear to have been analyzed in discussions outside or inside of Russia thus far. Though only one graph is included in this article, each graph or table added much to one’s understanding of their speeches.

This paper will briefly examine the contents of these three works and will focus on the messages of each author when applied within the context of Russian military thought. It is important to keep in mind (as reflected in these three documents) that Russian military thought, in the opinion of this author, consists of five basic elements: trends in war’s changing character, forecasting, strategy and the correlation of forces along strategic axes, forms and methods of the means of struggle, and the use of past lessons. Each author’s discussion tends to emphasize many of these elements of military thought.

Finally, Russian military authors indicate that its military conducts NTW and not hybrid war. While no specific article is used to make this point, it is worth noting that Russia’s military makes the opposite assertion, that the west is using hybrid tactics against Russia (see discussion of the Kartapolov article below). For example, with regard to hybrid war, a Russian military journal article in 2015 stated the following:

“Hybrid warfare (gibridnaya voyna),” then, is not exactly the right term and is slightly at odds with the glossary used in this country’s military science. Essentially, these actions can be regarded as a form of confrontation between countries or, in a narrow sense, as a form in which

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forces and capabilities are used to assure national security.²

Further, Russian President Vladimir Putin (on 30 May 2017) stated in an interview with Le Figaro newspaper, There is no need to escalate anything, no need to think up mythical Russian threats, hybrid wars, and so on. These are your own fancy, and then you scare yourselves, and based on that formulate a policy prospect. Such a policy has no prospects.³

Gerasimov in Early 2013

General Staff Chief Gerasimov’s speech, transcribed and published in an article in Vestnik Akademii Voennykh Nauk (Journal of the Academy of Military Science) in 2013, is about trends, forms (which are military organizations), and methods (which include weapons and types of military art) for use by Russia’s armed forces.⁴ He begins his discussion with some of the trends he observed in war’s changing character. These trends include the assertions that

- wars are no longer declared,
- “color revolutions” (mass popular demonstrations conducted in conjunction with other popular efforts to undermine national governing institutions) can occur quickly;
- new-type wars are like regular wars (his mention of NTW precedes Kartapolov’s by two years, and Gerasimov never used the NGW term in any of his five annual speeches at the Academy of Military Science); and
- nonmilitary methods at times are more effective than military ones.

Gerasimov first asserts that a combination of nonmilitary methods, including the protest potential of the population, covert military measures, information operations, and special forces’ activities, are being implemented by some nations to control conflict. (Ironically, the formula he describes is reminiscent of Russia’s own activities associated with the annexation of Crimea.) He also notes that peacekeeping and what he terms “crisis regulation” operations can sometimes be used as open military employment of forces to achieve specific goals.⁵

Second, Gerasimov lists a set of developments that appear to describe how an actual contemporary war would be fought. He asserts that the principal tactic within this set of developments is noncontact or remote engagement, since information technology has greatly reduced the spatial and temporal distances between opponents. As a consequence, he notes, operational pauses are disappearing. He then describes how the levels of war and fighting (strategy, operations, tactics; offense and defense) have leveled off due to the existence of information technologies. Third, he specifies that the use of joint mobile forces operating in a reconnaissance and information environment is growing. Fourth, he describes the efficacy of no-fly zones, blockades, and the use of private military companies, observing that they are being used more often. Fifth, he describes the types of asymmetric methods of confronting an opponent that are under development. To further progress in these areas, Gerasimov requests during his speech that the Academy of Military Science help in developing new forms and methods of asymmetric use.

The 2013 issue of the Journal of the Academy of Military Science in which Valery V. Gerasimov’s article “Principal Trends in the Development of the Forms and Methods of Employing Armed Forces and Current Tasks of Military Science Regarding their Improvement” was published (page 24). (Image courtesy of the author)
Finally, he asserts that the use of precision-guided munitions, robotics, unmanned aerial vehicles, and weapons based on new physical principles will be the new main methods for engaging an enemy.6

Next, Gerasimov reviews and describes the forms and methods of fighting that Soviet forces used in Afghanistan, to include a table in the article listing them. He states that “a very important set of issues is associated with improving the forms and methods of employing force groupings.” And, in accordance with the title of the article, he goes on to describe a number of forms and methods needed by Russia’s military, such as those used for implementation outside of Russia’s borders; for Russia’s aerospace forces; and for rescue, humanitarian, special, evacuations, and other operations. Gerasimov also notes that forms (no mention of methods) are also needed for strategic operations and peacekeeping.7

This description of forms and methods is augmented with an assessment of how to improve Russia’s territorial defense concept. In furtherance of this objective, Gerasimov indicates that he is seeking a way to integrate civilian and military infrastructures so that, in case of conflict, everyone would fight in defense of Russia’s territory. This must be accomplished, Gerasimov then notes, with the cooperation of the state’s power structures and other state structures. One consequence of this need is the development of new ways to support decision making.8

In light of his comments naming territorial defense as a specified need, subsequent progress seems to have been made toward achieving this objective, since it appears that Russia’s National Defense Management Center (NDMC), during the Kavkaz–2016 exercise, accomplished the goal of improving territorial defense by taking charge of integrating military and civilian structures. Additionally, the NDMC, which was the focus of Gerasimov’s 2015 academy speech, reportedly also has instituted modeling and simulations to improve decision-making capabilities and has begun teaching civilians integration techniques with the military.

Gerasimov concludes his speech noting that changes in the nature of conflict require new support systems and new forms and methods for employing the means of struggle. He states that Russia must not copy foreign experience. Rather than follow, the requirement is to “outrun” adversaries and be in a leading position with regard to these means. To date, with its focus on developing new weapons of all types, from hypersonic to quantum, Russia’s Defense Ministry appears to be closely adhering to this advice. Further, he asserts that forecasting the types of war into which Russia could be drawn was very important. He closes by citing Alexander Svechin’s comments on strategic thought from years ago that “each conflict has a logic all its own.” He concludes by stating that he is counting on the Academy of Military Science to study various ways to approach different types of conflict and support his efforts in this regard.9

Gerasimov’s speech includes several diagrams or tables. One diagram highlighted the use of nonmilitary methods being used by a 4:1 ratio over military methods. There are three diagrams that focused on forms and methods of conflict (traditional, new, and those used in Afghanistan). Finally, there is a list of the principal tasks of military science, a diagram of U.S. robotics, and a list of ways to use Russia’s Armed Forces outside of Russia’s borders.10

Chekinov and Bogdanov in Late 2013

In the conclusion to their article in issue 10 of Voennaya Mysl’ (Military Thought) in 2013, retired General-Lieutenant S. A. Bogdanov and Reserve Colonel S. G. Chekinov state that “information superiority and
anticipatory operations will be the main ingredients of success in new-generation wars.” To understand this point of view, it is important to backtrack in the article and focus on what supporting evidence the authors offer for these two items.

A key assertion they make is that forecasting is perhaps a better way to understand “anticipatory operations.” The Russian translation actually is “the first to see will be the first to start decisive actions.” With regard to information superiority, the authors make two key points in their paper. The first point is that “no goal will be achieved in future wars unless one belligerent gains information superiority over the other.” Therefore, it will be necessary to obtain superiority in regard to information technology since new weapons have greater killing power, range, accuracy, and speed. Superior information technologies are needed to provide the intelligence, reconnaissance, control, communications, and information warfare capabilities with greater potential. Such weapons have “altered significantly the patterns of manpower employment and the conduct of military operations.” This requires a focus on new-generation weaponry in particular, such as robotics, unmanned aerial vehicles, quantum computing, precision-guided munitions, reconnaissance-strike complexes, and electronic warfare capabilities. These weapons are the result of technologies that both integrate capabilities at nanosecond speed and offer capabilities never before anticipated. For example, robotics can conduct reconnaissance, coordinate combat operations of different branches, repair weapons, build defenses, destroy enemy hardware, clear mines, and deactivate contaminated areas.

The second point the authors make is the need to establish what they refer to as “information and psychological warfare” superiority. This refers to control over information pressure that can be exerted against an adversary through the media, nongovernmental organizations, foreign grants, religious organizations, propaganda, and disinformation designed to stoke chaos in a society. Meanwhile, Russia will attempt to defend itself from similar threats and create a favorable setting for armed forces operations by countering the information-psychological warfare it believes is being waged against it through non-military and deterrence means. Non-military means include information, moral, psychological, ideological, diplomatic, economic, and others. Deterrence measures also include a demonstration of force readiness, a warning about the immediate use of the nuclear option, and the preparation and conduct of an information operation to mislead the enemy about Russia’s readiness to fight.

The authors’ discussion of the forecasting aspect of NGW’s ingredients for success is equally, if not more, interesting, since it focuses on the importance of the opening and closing periods of conflict, the identification of targets that ensure success, and the employment of measures that will ensure victory. The opening period of war (the authors had earlier written on the initial period of war) is forecasted as pivotal. They assert that it will include a targeted information operation, an electronic warfare operation, an aerospace operation, continuous air force harassment, the use of high-precision weapons launched from various platforms, long-range artillery, and weapons based on new physical principles. The closing period will be used to roll over or annihilate remaining units, primarily through the use of ground troops.
Targets that must be identified in the forecasting process and subsequently neutralized are critical government and military control centers, key military-industrial complex facilities, and the opposing armed force’s management system. Also of vital importance is the prevention of an orderly deployment of an opponent’s forces. Victory is assured if an opponent’s political and economic system is made ungovernable, its population demoralized, and its key military-industrial complexes destroyed or damaged beyond repair, according to the authors.22

The other key aspect of this article is a focus on the trends in the changing character of war that Russia sees developing, not the forecasted nature of how to defeat these trends as the opening and closing period forecasts suggest. Here three such trends are noted. First, the principal tactic of NGW is stated to be remote engagement, since information technology has greatly reduced the distance (physical, temporal, and informational) between opponents. Second, the levels of war and fighting (strategy, operations, and tactics; offense and defense) have leveled out due to the existence of information technologies. Third, the use of joint mobile forces operating in a reconnaissance and information environment is growing.23 Of note, these trends and a few others, almost word for word, appear lifted from Gerasimov’s earlier 2013 speech.

The authors go on to observe that new weapons and methods for using them have radically changed the character and content of armed struggle. New patterns of manpower employment and the conduct of military operations have changed in several ways. As a consequence, there are now no longer clear dividing lines between opponents; flanks are more exposed; orders of battle have gaps; attacker high-tech weapons offer overwhelming superiority; long-range high-precision weapons can be used on a mass scale; vital economic facilities and control centers can be destroyed as never before; reconnaissance, fire, electronic, and information warfare forces of different branches and arms are now integrated; and orbiting satellites are playing a role on a wide scale.24 Finally, asymmetric means, nonmilitary measures, and indirect means will be used more than before to offset an opponent’s superiority.

Thus, this article focuses on the necessity of gaining information superiority, forecasting war’s probable direction, and developing an appreciation for the changing character of armed conflict, such as an increased role for nonmilitary operations. In their writings after this article appeared, the authors resorted only to the use of NTW and not NGW. Of interest is that the NGW topic appears to have disappeared in Russian military journals since Chekinov and Bogdanov’s 2013 article. Moreover, the authors did not touch on NGW in the seven articles they have written since, which covered topics in Military Thought on futurology, the art of war, forecasting, military art, twenty-first century military security, strategy, and the concept of war. They only referred to NTW, indicating a preference for the General Staff’s terminology, as the next section demonstrates.

**Kartapolov in Early 2015**

General-Lieutenant Andrey V. Kartapolov was chief of the Main Operations Directorate of the Russian General Staff when he gave a speech at the Russian Academy of Military Science that covered the elements of NTW in early 2015. Regarding Russia’s armed forces, he noted, Nonstandard forms and methods are being developed for the employment of our Armed Forces, which will make it possible to level the enemy’s technological superiority. For this, the features of the preparation and conduct of new-type warfare are being fully used and “asymmetric” methods of confronting the enemy are being developed.25

He goes on to assert that the shift from large-scale operations to the use of precision-guided munitions has changed the character of warfare, since they are directed not just against force groupings of a state but also against critical infrastructure deep inside an opponent’s state. The United States and NATO, with new strategic missile defense systems, are attempting to offset other nations’ abilities to conduct such operations, thus undermining global stability and disrupting the developed correlation of forces in the nuclear missile sphere.26

Kartapolov then discusses many of the same elements of Russian military thought as Gerasimov, Chekinov, and Bogdanov. These include the need to develop new weapons, the forms and methods of their use, new changes in the nature of armed struggle, and the increasing use of nontraditional models of confrontation that use both direct and indirect actions. He then spends considerable ink on what he describes as America’s anti-Russian campaign and its attempts to remain the world’s sole superpower through the introduction of hybrid methods that include information-psychological effects. This involves
indirect actions that consist of covert activities directed toward igniting internal problems in an opponent’s population and the use of so-called “third forces.” Political campaigns run by the West, he notes, conduct hidden “information pressure” that accuses others of human rights violations, tyranny, development of weapons of mass destruction, and absence of democracy. Information confrontations are conducted using falsifications, replacements, or the distortion of information.²⁷ All of these, interestingly enough, sound exactly like the methods Russia used in Ukraine to seize Crimea.

Kartapolov then goes into a long discussion of color revolutions, which he says result in confusion among the West’s opponents over who is fighting and for what, what is truth, and what is a lie.²⁸ Again, this sounds very close to what Russia’s state-controlled media has excelled at in areas such as the Baltics, where they concoct their own reality and ignore the truth. He then states that the West’s use of NTW methods is violating humanitarian standards, is displacing populations, and is more like the conduct of genocide. The pretext for interference by force is conducted “under the guise of preventing a humanitarian catastrophe and stabilizing the situation.” He then asserts that NTW is 80–90 percent propaganda and 10–20 percent violence.²⁹

To combat these tendencies, direct action (such as offensive actions) must adhere to the principle of dynamism, as a passive operation will lead to a loss of command and control. Also, he asserts that armed resources must be improved, especially the capabilities of intelligence, command and control, and destruction means, with the capability to strike from great distances.³⁰

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**Methods and Ways of Conducting a New-Type of War**

Achieving goals in new-type warfare in combination with the employment of military force or without it. Set of indirect actions “hybrid methods”

**Pressuring the enemy politically, economically, informationally, and psychologically**

**Disorienting the political and military leadership of the state-victim.**

**Preparing armed opposition detachments and sending them to the conflict region**

**Intensifying diplomatic pressure and propaganda to the world community**

Covertly deploying and employing special operations forces, cyber attacks and software effects, conducting reconnaissance and subversive acts on a large scale, supporting the internal opposition, and employing new weapons systems

**Shifting to classical methods of waging war, using various types of weapons in combination with large-scale information effects**

**Seizing enemy territory with the simultaneous action against (destruction of) forces and targets to the entire depth of his territory**

**Employing precision weapons on a large scale, extensively using special operations forces, robotic complexes, and weapons based on new physical principles (NPP)**

**Liquidating centers of resistance with the help of artillery and air strikes, delivering precision weapons strikes, and landing of assault forces. Clearing out the territory using ground forces. Establishing full control over the state-victim.**

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(Graphic translated by Dr. Harold Orenstein)

It is thus a contradictory view of NTW that Kartapolov presents. He stresses several times how the West, and the United States in particular, uses the concept and does so in a ruthless manner. Then, at the end of his presentation, he clearly states that Russia is preparing to conduct NTW as well in conjunction with the development of asymmetric methods. The NTW diagram (graphic on page 40) Kartapolov uses to explain the concept is attached at the end of this presentation.\(^{31}\) Note that he equates indirect actions (a Russian focus) with hybrid ones (a U.S. focus). The importance of the diagram is that Kartapolov offers something no other Russian officer has attempted, a view on how future conflicts develop and are handled in phases.

Kartapolov notes at the end of his presentation that the development of asymmetric and indirect actions must be introduced into operational training. Further, he adds that new and improved resources and methods for conducting contemporary military conflicts are growing and are “capable of giving birth to other forms of warfare as well.”\(^{32}\) Thus, he implies that NGW and NTW methods may only be steps along the way to the development of new forms and methods of warfare.

Kartapolov’s presentation includes several graphics. They discuss the United States’ 2015 national security strategy, the development and escalation of military conflicts, basic differences between traditional wars and contemporary conflicts, classical forms of the conduct of armed warfare (here were cover photos of Russian military regulations), changes in the character of armed conflict, priority trends in the development and creation of contemporary combat capabilities of the Russian Armed Forces, and a chart with several types of asymmetric operations.\(^{33}\)

**Conclusions**

All three articles focus on developing trends in warfare, the changing character of conflict, and the need for new forms and methods of fighting. Owing to the prominence of the authors, they may be taken as representative of prevailing Russian military thought at the highest levels. Each presentation, however, also has a particular proclivity that is worthy of mention.

In Gerasimov’s article, it is the fact that Russia must try to outrun its potential opponents in weaponry and not just copy foreign experience. For this reason, the West must expect Russia’s modernization example to continue unabated until, from Putin’s point of view, Russia surpasses the West in competency on modernized equipment and preeminence in asymmetric insights and capabilities.

Gerasimov’s speech is also the first to express the observation that in contemporary conflict, nonmilitary methods are being used at a ratio of 4:1 relative to military methods. Finally, he focuses on improving Russia’s territorial defense concept, which gives the country defense in depth by integrating civilian structures with military ones. This objective seems to have been accomplished with Russia’s development of the NDMC.

For Bogdanov and Chekinov, their explanation of NGW as a topic seems to have disappeared. Whether this is because discussion of the concept has now entered classified channels in Russia or if it has simply lost its utility and has been replaced by other concepts is unknown. Irrespective, the discussion of new generation weapons
has continued. Almost daily in the Russian press, there is mention of weaponry’s new generational impact, whether it be weapons based on new physical principles or, as one author noted, weapons that cannot be discussed in the press at this time. The authors further stress that new patterns of manpower employment have evolved and the conduct of military operations has changed.

Kartapolov’s article is the most controversial in that he spends an inordinate amount of attention on Western methods of fighting, asserting that hybrid methods were used by the United States and NATO for the past twenty years. He describes the characteristics of NTW and offers a diagram illustrating how NTW might proceed. Then, at the end of his article, he notes that Russia will be implementing NTW and improving it with asymmetric and indirect methods. Perhaps of greatest interest is his statement that new and improved resources and methods for conducting contemporary military conflicts are growing and are “capable of giving birth to other forms of warfare as well.”

Meanwhile, U.S. military centers around the country continue to focus on NGW concepts. Undoubtedly, there is value in this, and the effort should continue. But, leaders also need to be made aware of the fact that this concept, a “one off,” has disappeared from Russian writings. It is time that an equal amount of focus be placed on NTW, the concept of recent emphasis, which even the authors of the new-generation article appear to have adopted. It is very important to continue to follow what these and other prominent Russian military authors have to say in the future. Their insights on the changing character of warfare, in particular, help all nations obtain another perspective on the path that humanity is taking in accordance with the development of new weaponry. The path is not an optimistic one, as it is littered with potential risks for unintended and perhaps tragic consequences for most nations if many of the concepts—use of hypersonic, nuclear, quantum, etc.—are ever used, especially by rogue nations.

Notes

5. Ibid., 24.
6. Ibid., 24, 26.
7. Ibid., 26–27.
8. Ibid., 28.
9. Ibid., 29.
12. Ibid., 24.
13. Ibid., 14.
15. Ibid., 17.
16. Ibid., 21–22.
17. Ibid., 20.
18. Ibid., 22.
19. Ibid., 17–18.
20. Ibid., 20, 24.
21. Ibid., 23.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 13.
24. Ibid., 16–17.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 29.
29. Ibid., 33.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid., 28.
32. Ibid., 36.
33. Ibid., 27–28, 30–32, and 34–35.