



(AP Photo by RIA Novosti, Alexei Nikolsky, of the Russian Presidential Press Service)

Russian President Vladimir Putin and General of the Army Valery Gerasimov, chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation Armed Forces, observe military exercises 17 July 2013 near Baikal Lake in Russia. The military maneuvers were the largest since Soviet times, involving about 160,000 troops and 5,000 tanks across Siberia and the far eastern region of Russia.

The Value of Science Is in the Foresight

New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations

General of the Army Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the
Russian Federation Armed Forces

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This article is provided to acquaint our readers with the perspectives of senior Russian military leaders on the subject of future war and should not be construed as an effort to promote their views.

In the twenty-first century we have seen a tendency toward blurring the lines between the states of war and peace. Wars are no longer declared and, having begun, proceed according to an unfamiliar template.

The experience of military conflicts—including those connected with the so-called color revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East—confirms that a perfectly thriving state can, in a matter of months and even days, be transformed into an arena of fierce armed conflict, become a victim of foreign intervention, and sink into a web of chaos, humanitarian catastrophe, and civil war.²

The Lessons of the Arab Spring

Of course, it would be easiest of all to say that the events of the “Arab Spring” are not war, and so there are no lessons for us—military men—to learn. But maybe the opposite is true—that precisely these events are typical of warfare in the twenty-first century.

In terms of the scale of the casualties and destruction, the catastrophic social, economic, and political consequences, such new-type conflicts are comparable with the consequences of any real war.

The very “rules of war” have changed. The role of nonmilitary means of achieving political and strategic goals has grown, and, in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness [see figure 1].

The focus of applied methods of conflict has altered in the direction of the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other nonmilitary measures—applied in coordination with the protest potential of the population.

All this is supplemented by military means of a concealed character, including carrying out actions of

informational conflict and the actions of special operations forces. The open use of forces—often under the guise of peacekeeping and crisis regulation—is resorted to only at a certain stage, primarily for the achievement of final success in the conflict.

From this proceed logical questions: What is modern war? What should the army be prepared for? How

should it be armed? Only after answering these questions can we determine the directions of the construction and development of the armed forces over the long term. To do this, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the forms and methods of the application of force.

These days, together with traditional devices, nonstandard ones are being developed. The role of mobile, mixed-type groups of forces, acting in a single intelligence-information space because of the use of the new possibilities of com-

mand-and-control systems, has been strengthened. Military actions are becoming more dynamic, active, and fruitful. Tactical and operational pauses that the enemy could exploit are disappearing. New information technologies have enabled significant reductions in the spatial, temporal, and informational gaps between forces and control organs. Frontal engagements of large formations of forces at the strategic and operational level are gradually becoming a thing of the past. Long-distance, contactless actions against the enemy are becoming the main means of achieving combat and operational goals. The defeat of the enemy’s objects [objectives] is conducted throughout the entire depth of his territory. The differences between strategic, operational, and tactical levels, as well as between offensive and defensive operations, are being erased. The application of high-precision weaponry is taking on a mass character. Weapons based

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Change in the Character of Warfare

Achievement of Political Goals

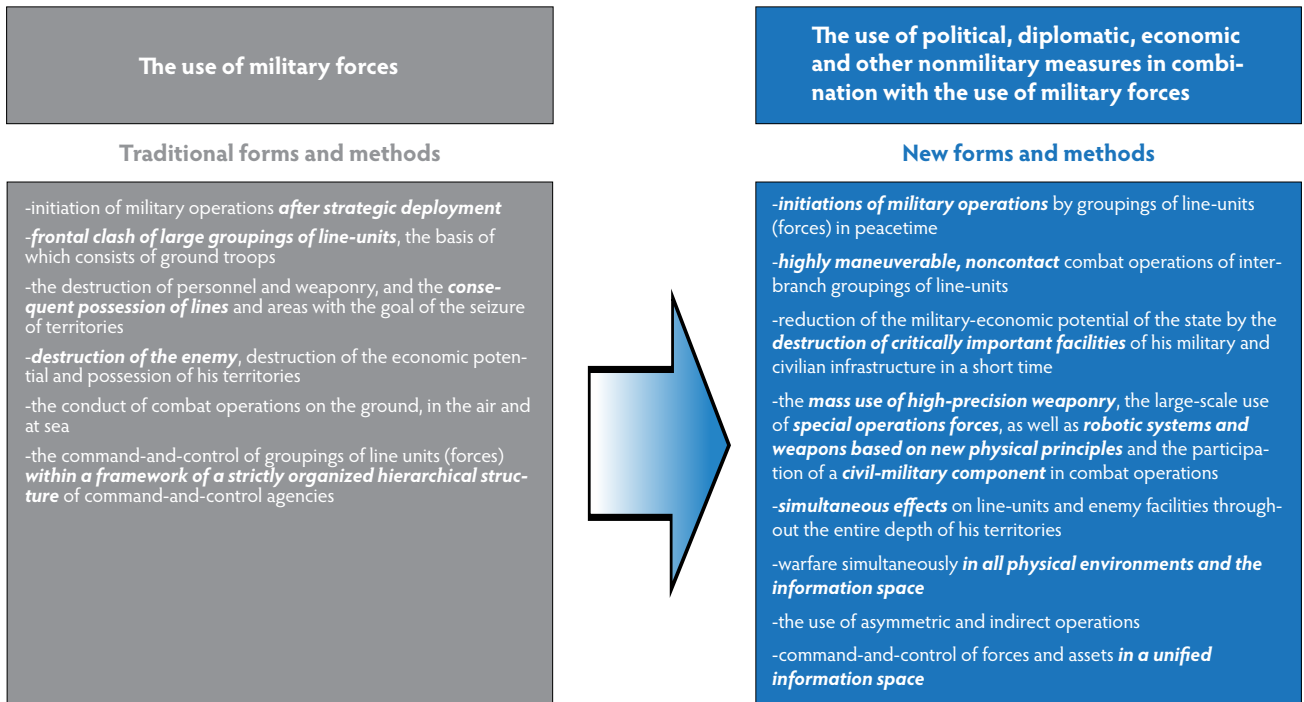


Figure 1. Graphic from Gerasimov article in *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kurier*, 26 February 2013, translated by Charles Bartles

on new physical principles and automatized systems are being actively incorporated into military activity.

Asymmetrical actions have come into widespread use, enabling the nullification of an enemy’s advantages in armed conflict. Among such actions are the use of special operations forces and internal opposition to create a permanently operating front through the entire territory of the enemy state, as well as informational actions, devices, and means that are constantly being perfected.

These ongoing changes are reflected in the doctrinal views of the world’s leading states and are being used in military conflicts.

Already in 1991, during Operation Desert Storm in Iraq, the U.S. military realized the concept of “global sweep [global reach], global power” and “air-ground operations.” In 2003 during Operation Iraqi Freedom, military operations were conducted in accordance with the so-called Single Perspective 2020 [Joint Vision 2020].

Now, the concepts of “global strike” and “global missile defense” have been worked out, which foresee the defeat of enemy objects [objectives] and forces in a matter of

hours from almost any point on the globe, while at the same time ensuring the prevention of unacceptable harm from an enemy counterstrike. The United States is also enacting the principles of the doctrine of global integration of operations aimed at creating—in a very short time—highly mobile, mixed-type groups of forces.

In recent conflicts, new means of conducting military operations have appeared that cannot be considered purely military. An example of this is the operation in Libya, where a no-fly zone was created, a sea blockade imposed, and private military contractors were widely used in close interaction with armed formations of the opposition.

We must acknowledge that, while we understand the essence of traditional military actions carried out by regular armed forces, we have only a superficial understanding of asymmetrical forms and means. In this connection, the importance of military science, which must create a comprehensive theory of such actions, is growing. The work and research of the Academy of Military Sciences can help with this.



(Photo by Mstyslav Chernov, Unframe)

Protesters throw Molotov cocktails in the direction of troop positions 19 January 2014 during the Dynamivska Street "Euromaidan" (Euro Square) protests in Kiev, Ukraine. The protests led to the ousting of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich and his pro-Russian government on 23 February 2014.

The Tasks of Military Science

In a discussion of the forms and means of military conflict, we must not forget about our own experience. I mean the use of partisan units during the Great Patriotic War and the fight against irregular formations in Afghanistan and the North Caucasus.

I would emphasize that during the Afghanistan War, specific forms and means of conducting military operations were worked out. At their heart lay speed, quick movements, the smart use of tactical paratroops [paratroopers] and encircling forces, which all together enabled the interruption of the enemy's plans and brought him significant losses.

Another factor influencing the essence of modern means of armed conflict is the use of modern automated complexes of military equipment and research in the area of artificial intelligence. While today we have flying drones, tomorrow's battlefields will be filled with walking, crawling, jumping, and flying robots. In the near future it is possible a fully robotized

unit will be created, capable of independently conducting military operations.

How shall we fight under such conditions? What forms and means should be used against a robotized enemy? What sort of robots do we need and how can they be developed? Already today our military minds must be thinking about these questions.

The most important set of problems, requiring intense attention, is connected with perfecting the forms and means of applying groups of forces. It is necessary to rethink the content of the strategic activities of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Already now questions are arising: Is such a number of strategic operations necessary? Which ones and how many of them will we need in the future? So far, there are no answers.

There are also other problems that we are encountering in our daily activities.

We are currently in the final phase of the formation of a system of air-space defense (*Voyska Vozdushno-Kosmicheskoy Oborony*, or VKO). Because

of this, the question of the development of forms and means of action using VKO forces and tools has become actual. The General Staff is already working on this. I propose that the Academy of Military Sciences also take active part.

The information space opens wide asymmetrical possibilities for reducing the fighting potential of the enemy. In North Africa, we witnessed the use of technologies for influencing state structures and the population with the help of information networks. It is necessary to perfect activities in the information space, including the defense of our own objects [objectives].

The operation to force Georgia to peace exposed the absence of unified approaches to the use of formations of the Armed Forces outside of the Russian Federation. The September 2012 attack on the U.S. consulate in the Libyan city of Benghazi, the activation of piracy activities, the recent hostage taking in Algeria, all confirm the importance of creating a system of armed defense of the interests of the state outside the borders of its territory.

Although the additions to the federal law “On Defense” adopted in 2009 allow the operational use of the Armed Forces of Russia outside of its borders, the forms and means of their activity are not defined. In addition, matters of facilitating their operational use have not been settled on the interministerial level. This includes simplifying the procedure for crossing state borders, the use of the airspace and territorial waters of foreign states, the procedures for interacting with the authorities of the state of destination, and so on.

It is necessary to coordinate the joint work of the research organizations of the pertinent ministries and agencies on such matters.

One of the forms of the use of military force outside the country is peacekeeping. In addition to traditional tasks, their activity could include more specific tasks such as specialized, humanitarian, rescue, evacuation, sanitation, and other tasks. At present, their classification, essence, and content have not been defined.

Moreover, the complex and multifarious tasks of peacekeeping that, possibly, regular troops will have to carry out, presume the creation of a fundamentally new system for preparing them. After all, the task of a peacekeeping force is to disengage conflicting sides, protect and save the civilian population, cooperate in reducing potential violence, and reestablish peaceful life. All this demands academic preparation [see figure 2].

Controlling Territory

It is becoming increasingly important in modern conflicts to be capable of defending one’s population, objects [objectives], and communications from the activity of special operations forces, in view of their increasing use. Resolving this problem envisions the organization and introduction of territorial defense.

Before 2008, when the army at wartime numbered more than 4.5 million men, these tasks were handled exclusively by the armed forces. But conditions have changed. Now, countering diversionary-reconnaissance and terroristic forces can only be organized by the complex involvement of all the security and law-enforcement forces of the country.

The General Staff has begun this work. It is based on defining the approaches to the organization of territorial defense that were reflected in the changes to the federal law “On Defense.” Since the adoption of that law, it is necessary to define the system of managing territorial defense and to legally enforce the role and location in it of other forces, military formations, and the organs of other state structures.

We need well-grounded recommendations on the use of interagency forces and means for the fulfillment of territorial defense; methods for combating the terrorist and diversionary forces of the enemy under modern conditions.

The experience of conducting military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq has shown the necessity of working out—together with the research bodies of other ministries and agencies of the Russian Federation—the role and extent of participation of the armed forces in postconflict regulation, working out the priority of tasks, the methods for activation of forces, and establishing the limits of the use of armed force.

Developing a scientific and methodological apparatus for decision making that takes into account the multifarious character of military groupings (forces) is an important matter. It is necessary to research the integrated capabilities and combined potential of all the component troops and forces of these groupings. The problem here is that existing models of operations and military conduct do not support this. New models are needed.

Changes in the character of military conflicts, the development of the means of armed engagement and of

The Role of Nonmilitary Methods in the Resolution of Interstate Conflicts

The primary phases (stages) of conflict development

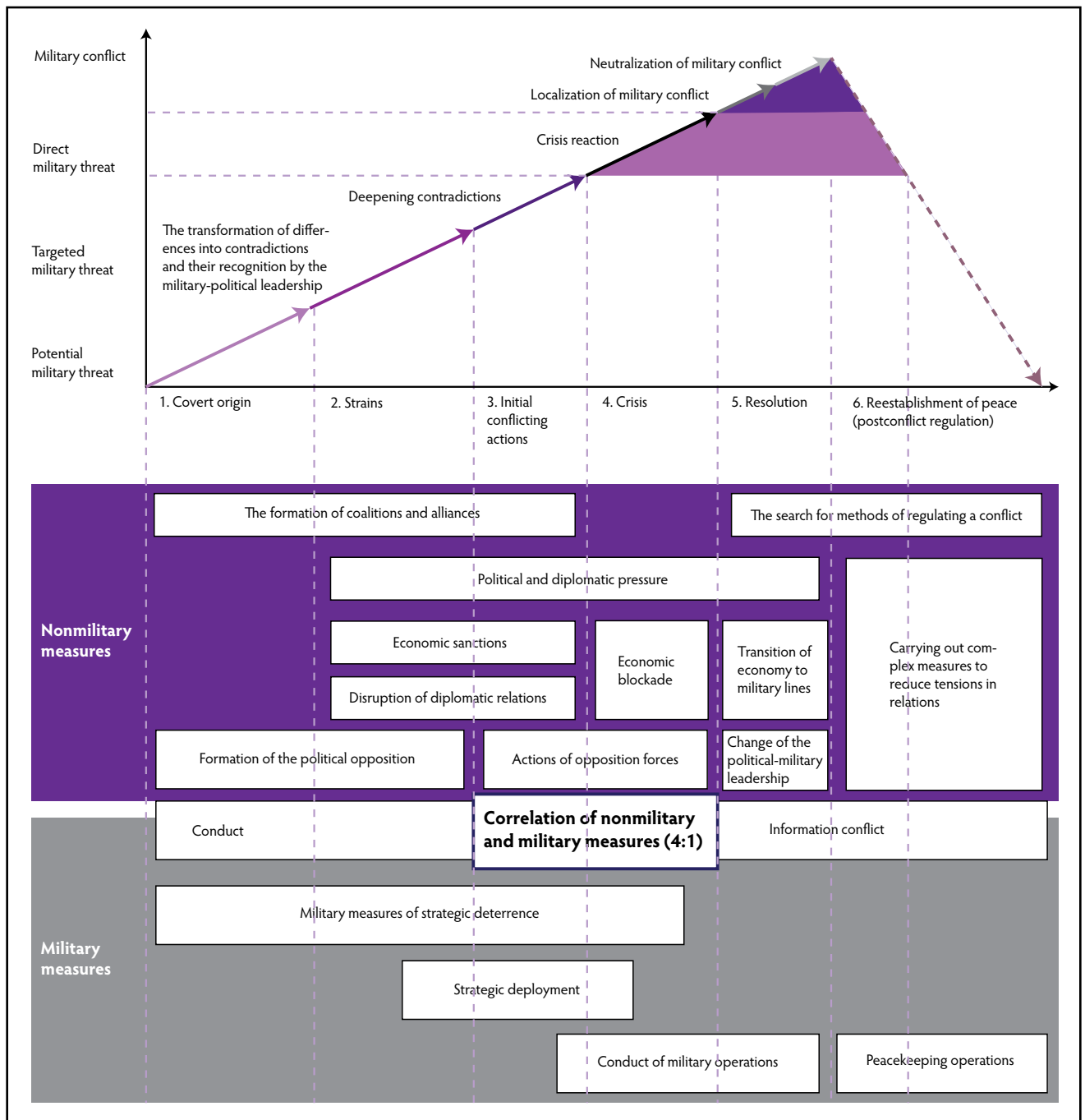


Figure 2. Graphic from Gerasimov article in *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 26 February 2013, translated by Charles Bartles

the forms and methods of applying them, have created new demands for multifaceted support systems. This is yet one more direction for scholarly activity that must not be overlooked.

You Cannot Generate Ideas on Command

The state of Russian military science today cannot be compared with the flowering of military-theoretical

thought in our country on the eve of World War II.

Of course, there are objective and subjective reasons for this, and it is not possible to blame anyone in particular for it. I am not the one who said it is not possible to generate ideas on command.

I agree with that, but I also must acknowledge something else: at that time, there were no people with higher degrees and there were no academic schools or departments. There were extraordinary personalities with brilliant ideas. I would call them fanatics in the best sense of the word. Maybe we just do not have enough people like that today.

People like, for instance, Georgy Isserson, who, despite the views he formed in the prewar years, published the book *New Forms of Combat*. In it, this Soviet military theoretician predicted, “War in general is not declared. It simply begins with already developed military forces. Mobilization and concentration are not part of the period after the onset of the state of war as was the case in 1914 but rather, unnoticed, proceed long before that.” The fate of this “prophet of the Fatherland” unfolded tragically. Our country paid in great quantities of blood for not listening to the conclusions of this professor of the General Staff Academy.

What can we conclude from this? A scornful attitude toward new ideas, to nonstandard approaches, to other points of view is unacceptable in military science. And it is even more unacceptable for practitioners to have this attitude toward science.

In conclusion, I would like to say that no matter what forces the enemy has, no matter how well-developed his

forces and means of armed conflict may be, forms and methods for overcoming them can be found. He will always have vulnerabilities, and that means that adequate means of opposing him exist.

We must not copy foreign experience and chase after leading countries, but we must outstrip them and occupy leading positions ourselves. This is where military science takes on a crucial role. The outstanding Soviet military scholar Aleksandr Svechin wrote, “It is extraordinarily hard to predict the conditions of war. For each war it is necessary to work out a particular line for its strategic conduct. Each war is a unique case, demanding the establishment of a particular logic and not the application of some template.”

This approach continues to be correct. Each war does present itself as a unique case, demanding the comprehension of its particular logic, its uniqueness. That is why the character of a war that Russia or its allies might be drawn into is very hard to predict. Nonetheless, we must. Any academic pronouncements in military science are worthless if military theory is not backed by the function of prediction.

To address the numerous problems confronting military science today, the General Staff is counting on the support of the Academy of Military Sciences, which concentrates the leading military scholars and most authoritative specialists.

I am confident that the close ties between the Academy of Military Sciences and the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation will in the future be expanded and perfected. ■

General of the Army Valery Gerasimov is the chief of the General Staff of the Russian Federation Armed Forces and first deputy defense minister. He is a graduate of the Kazan Higher Tank Command School, the Malinovsky Military Academy of Armored Forces, and the Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia. He served in a wide variety of command and staff positions before his current assignment, including commanding the 58th Army during combat operations in Chechnya.

Notes

1. Valery Gerasimov, “The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations,” trans. Robert Coalson, *Military-Industrial Kurier*, 27 February 2013, accessed 27 October 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/10/complex-academic-writing/412255/>.

2. The term “color revolutions” refers to the bright colors used as symbols of rebellion by protesting groups employing generally nonviolent civil disobedience as a means to overthrow a government.