

EVOLUTION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THEORY AND STRATEGY OF DETERRENCE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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Abstract: *The paper analyzes the evolution and features of the Russian deterrence theory and strategy. The paper states that the Russian approach to deterrence differs from the Western conceptualization of this term. Deterrence from the point of view of Russian military theory is much broader than the meaning that Western experts have in mind. It advocates the use of threats to maintain the status quo, to change the current strategic situation, as well as to prevent escalation or de-escalation. The term is used to describe activities before and during military conflict, but is also applied during all phases of war. The current concept of strategic deterrence, which represents the third phase of the evolution of Russian theory and practice of deterrence, unequivocally indicates the increased importance of non-military and within them informational deterrence measures, which, together with military measures, represent an integrated and holistic concept for shaping the adversary's decision-making.*

Key words: *strategy, deterrence, coercion, non-military measures, informational operations*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian deterrence theory has evolved through various schools of strategic thought in the Russian Federation. The current Russian approach to deterrence is much broader than the meaning Western experts attach to the term deterrence. In a word, deterrence from the Russian point of view means the use of threats, sometimes accompanied by limited use of force, with the aim of a) maintaining the status quo ("deterrence" in the Western language), b) changing the status quo ("coercing" in the Western language), c) shaping strategic environment within the framework of mutual interaction with other strategic factors, and g) preventing escalation or leading to de-escalation (Adamsky, 2020). The term is used to describe activities both before and during a military conflict, and

includes all phases of war. As such, the Russian interpretation of deterrence is closer to the Western conceptualization of "coercion", in its pre-war period and within wartime forms.

2. CONCEPT AND CONTENT OF STRATEGIC DETERRENCE

Strategic deterrence, in the sense used by Russian military theory, is a holistic concept that envisages the integration of non-military and military measures to shape an adversary's decision-making. This concept integrates the state's non-military instruments of national power and identifies specific military capabilities that are "strategic" because of the expected effects when used for deterrence purposes. In Russia's view, strategic deterrence is a concept that is adaptable, as it can be applied to managing contingencies ranging from local wars with one state, through regional conflicts against coalitions, to large-scale wars against nuclear-armed global powers (Kofman et al, 2020).

The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation from 2015 gives us a detailed description of the measures applied within the concept of strategic deterrence, stating that strategic deterrence consists of a series of interrelated political, military, military-technical, diplomatic, economic and informational measures aimed at preventing the use of force against Russia, the defense of sovereignty and the preservation of territorial integrity (Указ Президента Российской Федерации, 2015). Similarly, the official dictionary of military terms of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation defines strategic deterrence as "a system of violent (military) and non-violent (non-military) measures aimed at restraining the other side from using force against the Russian Federation, especially on a strategic scale." In terms of the time period of their application, strategic measures of deterrence are used continuously in peacetime not only for deterrence but also for containment, and in war for the purpose of managing the escalation of conflicts (Энциклопедия Министерства Обороны РФ).

Although it may seem that the concept of strategic deterrence relies too much on the application of non-military measures, which would be in line with the modern trends of military thought in the Russian Federation, it leans heavily towards the military or violent, especially in the armed phase of the conflict, as can be seen from the positions of the highest Russian military leaders, but also in numerous texts in Russian military magazines. In this regard, it can be specified that, despite the demonstrated interest of Russian military theorists in non-military means, the management of escalation or the concept of deterrence within war is consistently positioned as based on force measures, relying on force without which other approaches prove impotent or ineffective (Стерлин et al, 2019).

3. TERMINOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE WITH THE WESTERN CONCEPT OF DETERRENCE

Before continuing with the analysis of the concept, it is important to note the terminological specificity of the Russian concept. To begin with, it should be emphasized that deterrence from the Russian point of view is similar to its Western counterpart in the sense that the essence of the action is aimed at shaping the strategic calculation, strategic choices and strategic behavior of the opponent. However, apart from that, the Russian approach also shows certain differences and dissimilarities in relation to the Western concept. Theorists point to three important differences, in terms of the etymology and logic of the term, as well as its scope.

First, Russian concepts of deterrence have not been properly translated into the Western lexicon, which usually speaks of two types of coercion strategies: deterrence and coercion. The most commonly used Russian term for deterrence (russian: сдерживание) is closer to what is understood in the West as "restraint". The more specific Russian term, "forceful deterrence" (russian: силовое сдерживание), is better understood as deterrence through the

limited use of military force. Meanwhile, deterrence by causing fear or intimidation (russian: *устрашение*) explicitly means deterrence through coercion, and the intended effect is discouragement through fear of consequences. Finally, another Russian term (russian: *принуждение*), expresses coercion in the form of coercion to change the opponent's behavior, rather than deterrence (Туркин et al, 2008).

Second, in terms of internal logic, the interpretation of this term in the Russian strategic lexicon is much broader than the meaning that Western experts have in mind. Deterrence from the Russian point of view means the use of threats, sometimes accompanied by limited use of force, a) to preserve, maintain the *status quo* ("deterrence" in the Western language), b) to bring about a change in the *status quo* ("coerce" in the Western language) , c) to shape the strategic environment within the interaction with other strategic factors, and g) to prevent escalation and lead to de-escalation. In Western usage, the term "deterrence" implies a more reactive *modus operandi*, while the term "compellence", i.e. compulsion in Serbian, has a more proactive connotation (Adamsky, 2020).

Finally, in terms of the scope of this activity in strategic interaction, the term is used to describe activities before and during military conflict, and includes all phases of war. Therefore, this term in the Russian discourse includes several types of deterrence at once: not only to prevent hostilities in general (broad deterrence), but also to prevent specific moves within hostile activities, or *narrow deterrence* (Paul, 2009). As such, the Russian interpretation of deterrence is closer to the Western conceptualization of "coercion" in its pre-war and intra-war form (Adamsky, 2020).

4. EVOLUTION OF THE RUSSIAN THEORY AND DOCTRINE OF DETERRENCE

The first phase in the theory's development lasted from the collapse of the Soviet Union until roughly the early 2000s, and focused on the notion of deterring potential aggression by nuclear means, strategic and non-strategic, in regional conventional warfare. In developing deterrence theory, they adapted terminology and strategic theory from the US, and introduced doctrinal innovations that mimicked theoretical postulates from the international relations literature on limited nuclear war (Arbatov et al, 2011). The nuclear dimension of deterrence, at that time, was the only viable option in Russian military practice. The consensus was that military non-nuclear forms of strategic influence were beyond Russia's capabilities and therefore any discussion of them would be somewhat premature (Gerasimov, 2013).

The second phase in the theory's development dealt with non-nuclear deterrence. It started in the mid-2000s, coinciding with the military modernization of the conventional armed forces, mostly after 2008. Theoretical development has progressed in two main directions: the direction of "pre-nuclear" or conventional deterrence (*до - ядерное сдерживание*) and the direction of informational (cyber) deterrence, which branches into cognitive-psychological and digital-technological aspects of informational deterrence (Adamsky, 2017a, b). Conventional or "pre-nuclear" deterrence was considered as a prelude to nuclear use. The concept suggests "improving credibility by increasing the level of escalation, through the threat of launching long-range conventional weapons and strikes with high-precision weapons of high destructive power." Selective damage to military and civilian infrastructure should signal the last warning before the limited use of lower-level nuclear weapons." However, given the slow acquisition of advanced conventional munitions at the time, experts predicted that this type of deterrence was far-fetched and saw no non-nuclear alternative to deter conventional aggression.

The third and current stage of theory development is related to the concept of "strategic deterrence". It started around 2014 and led to the merging of the above two concepts into an integrated whole - the general theory of "strategic deterrence" (Sterlin et al, 2019, Ponomarev et al, 2019). The emergence of this theory coincided with the further evolution of ideas about the current character of war, i.e. new generation of warfare (russian: *новое поколение войны*). Emphasizing a systemic mix of military and non-military forms of strategic activity in several domains, referred to by the West as the "Gerasimov doctrine," Russian strategic deterrence is a repertoire of interrelated influence efforts in all domains consistent with Russia's current understanding of the nature of war. In all these cases, this is not a brute force strategy, but coercion aimed at manipulating the opponent's perception and influencing his strategic behavior.

In short, the current Russian military theory of deterrence is an integrated complex of non-nuclear, information and nuclear types of influence contained in a single multi-domain program. Strategic deterrence has aligned nuclear capability, without diminishing its role, with other means of coercion, particularly within the non-nuclear and information (cyber) domains.

5. NON-MILITARY MEANS WITHIN THE CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC DETERRENCE

As noted, the Russian concept of "strategic deterrence" classifies approaches to shaping adversary decision-making into violent and nonviolent categories (Буренок, 2011). Non-military means broadly include political, informational (psychological and technical), diplomatic, economic, legal, spiritual/moral, and humanitarian measures (Chekinov, Bogdanov, 2011, Gerasimov, 2013a). Common examples include, but are not limited to, implementing economic sanctions, imposing economic blockades, forming coalitions and unions, severing diplomatic relations, and waging information warfare. (Gerasimov, Feb 2013b).

Theorist Kondakov further notes that the use of non-military means varies depending on capabilities, the political situation at a given time, and the current position in the conflict spectrum (Kondakov - 2004). According to authors Chekinov and Bogdanov, non-military measures offer a number of advantages in peacetime conditions including deterring armed conflicts, stabilizing the international system, strengthening relations between states and eliminating possible threats from adversaries. In the midst of a political-military conflict, non-military measures act to reinforce military actions by acting as a force multiplier, serving to weaken and reduce the strength and capabilities of the adversary, and even eliminate the military threat altogether. Russian officials and analysts also often state that achieving a military objective may depend on coordination between military and non-military assets (Chekinov, Bogdanov, 2010).

From the perspective of Russian military strategy, states mainly use non-military means and indirect approaches to achieve political goals. Russian military writings also reveal two broad categories of activity in the evolution of contemporary regional or large-scale conflict: the pre-conflict period involving non-military means, psychological warfare, subversion, and the like; and an intense initial period of war characterized by the use of advanced military technology in the air/space, at sea, on the ground and, most importantly, across the information spectrum (Serzhantov et al, 2019). Hence, the Russian military seeks to offer answers to what the state perceives as forms of undeclared warfare, containment and coercion. However, the nature of war is understood as one in which non-military means are effective because they are supported by technologically advanced military capabilities.

Russian military strategy is about the integration of non-military, conventional and nuclear means in the conduct of war in search of effective strategic deterrence. Strategy connects and unifies strategic operations, which are considered the highest form of operational art, with the political goals of war. A strategic operation, a series of operations linked by common purpose and organization is the highest form of operational art in the Russian army. Military strategy directly directs strategic operations, which include coordinated tasks, strikes, operations and combat actions that are carried out according to a unique scheme and plan to achieve strategic goals. The concept of "strategic operations" became the focal point of Soviet and then Russian military planning.

It can be stated that the Russian articulation of the deterrence strategy continues to evolve. There is a strong desire to shape the cognitive space, emphasizing psychological rather than just material means of warfare. Therefore, the Russian military places an emphasis on military cunning, technical means to shape the opponent's decisions according to the desired actions, and the functional defeat of the opponent's information systems. The psychological aspect is also an important aid in the war effort. Military strategy remains the highest form of military theory, while strategic operations is the highest method of operational art. Numerous trends, especially the mass application of information and communication technology in conflicts, continue to influence the development of military theory and strategy in the Russian armed forces. Russian military strategy posits that deterrence should be based on shaping the adversary's perception of costs and convincing them that the cost of aggression would exceed any desired gains. The emphasis is on the application of non-military means and the strategy of indirect actions, especially during periods of peace and crisis. In the initial period of the war, Russian military strategy continues to place a strong emphasis on informational confrontation and combat. In war, the goal is to secure a decisive victory in the initial period of the war and convince the opponent that further conflict will result in costly losses.

6. CONCLUSION

The current concept of strategic deterrence, which represents the third phase of the evolution of Russian theory and practice of deterrence, unequivocally indicates the increased importance of non-military and within them informational deterrence measures, which, together with military measures, represent an integrated and holistic concept for shaping the adversary's decision-making. Believing that non-nuclear weapons (precision weapons, ballistic and cruise missiles) and information (cyber) capabilities create battlefield and deterrence effects compatible with nuclear weapons, Russian experts have increasingly emphasized deterrence as a function of non-nuclear, hard and soft military capacities and weapons. The 2014 doctrine ultimately codified ideas then established in Russian military and scientific discourse. As discussed, current Russian military deterrence theory is an integrated complex of non-nuclear, informational, and nuclear types of influence contained within a single, multi-domain program. Strategic deterrence has aligned nuclear capability, without diminishing its role, with other means of coercion, particularly within the non-nuclear and information (cyber) domains. Although it may seem that the concept of strategic deterrence relies too much on the application of non-military measures, which would be in line with the modern trends of military thought in the Russian Federation, it leans heavily towards the military or violent, especially in the armed phase of the conflict, as can be seen from the positions of the highest Russian military leaders, but also in numerous texts in Russian military magazines. In this regard, it can be specified that, despite the demonstrated interest of Russian military theorists in non-military means, the management of escalation or the concept of deterrence within war is consistently positioned as based on force measures, relying on force without which other approaches prove impotent or ineffective. On the other hand, the Russian theory states that the phase of strategic deterrence before the outbreak of an armed conflict should significantly rely

on the application of non-military and informational deterrence measures, which will further influence the development of the concept of strategic deterrence.

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