

# DETERMINATIONS OF THE STRATEGIC MILITARY ACTIONS ON ECONOMIC ACTIONS IN THE CONDITIONS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND NONLINEAR WARFARE

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**Abstract:** *In this article, we refer to the impact of strategic military actions on the economic domain, in the context of nonlinear warfare, hybrid warfare, and the use of information technology, focused and based on the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, triggered in February 2022. Initially, the war seemed to be a blitzkrieg strategy, but in reality, the special military operation of the Russian Federation was a secondary component of the generalized economic warfare led by the BRICS countries against Western economies. Thus, the military action is essentially attrition-based with limited military objectives and more spatial conquests in the critical infrastructure zones of maritime and energy transport. It interesting and represents a novelty the comparison between the classical theory of war of the Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz and the doctrine of nonlinear warfare of the Russian general Valery Gerasimov, which highlights the transition from classical and conventional kinetic warfare to other modern forms of unconventional conflict (economic, political, diplomatic, psychological). The concept of fourth-generation warfare emphasizes the use of technique and technology, promoting flexibility and adaptability on a large scale, while the fifth-generation war, currently ongoing between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, is a continuation at another level and focuses on indirect actions and strategic economic objectives, expanding the battlefield much more into the virtual and psychological space. The article offers a comprehensive analysis of how modern warfare combines different domains to achieve strategic objectives in an increasingly interdependent world and provides an integrated perspective on its evolution, emphasizing the need for complex and multidimensional approaches.*

**Keywords:** economic warfare, Gerasimov doctrine, information technology, strategic objectives, virtual space

## 1. Introduction

The war initiated by the Russian Federation against Ukraine in February 2022 from a Clausewitzian perspective is a classic one, of attrition, with many characteristic elements of military action specific to the First and Second World Wars. In their analysis, the vast majority of military analysts consider that the initial strategy of this war was a blitzkrieg type, through which the strategic objectives of the

Russian Federation were supposed to be achieved in a very short time, but due to the fierce resistance of the Ukrainian armed forces, this war quickly became one of maneuver, and then one of positions (trenches) of defense interspersed with short and ineffective tactical offensive reactions. The most representative operational and tactical offensive military actions were: the battle for Mariupol, the Ukrainian counteroffensive, and the battle

for Bahmut. Although these were successful for the winning parties, from a strategic perspective, the war remained unchanged, and the initiative remains on Russia's side. In this sense, we propose to make a holistic, realistic analysis from the perspective of nonlinear, hybrid warfare, theoretically grounded by the Military Science Academy of the Russian Federation and expressed through the speeches, scientific articles, and research reports of General Valery Gerasimov. Additionally, we aim to make a comparison between Gerasimov's doctrine and Clausewitz's theory of war and armed conflict and to identify the elements of novelty of this new type of warfare.

## **2. The Classical Theory of War by Clausewitz**

Carl von Clausewitz considers war as “a continuation of politics by other means” Through the use of violent means, military action is the primary way political objectives are achieved. The political objective is the fundamental reason for a war. “Here the question which we had laid aside forces itself again into consideration, viz., the political object of the War” [1].

Armed conflict fluctuates in intensity depending on the geographical evolution of the belligerent forces and remains a decisive form in achieving political objectives. Maximum intensity is achieved through decisive strategic operations planned and conducted by politico-military echelons. *“Thus, therefore, the political object, as the original motive of the War, will be the standard for determining both the aim of the military force and also the amount of effort to be made”* [2].

Therefore, from a Clausewitzian perspective, war is an instrument and implicitly an important modality in achieving foreign policy objectives. The evolution and outcome of the war depend on: the political instrument (government and parliament), the military instrument (army and force structures), and the

population (the instrument of material and moral-volitional support).

Thus, the suspension, postponement, or cessation of military hostilities are a consequence of the political decision, determined by the military instrument which, from the analysis of military realities and from the perspective of the laws and principles of armed combat, generates the optimal behavior in such a way that success is ensured.

In essence, Clausewitz argues that the fundamental reason for a war is a political one, which implicitly determines the amount of armed forces engaged, the scale, intensity, and end of the action.

## **3. Gerasimov's Theory on Nonlinear Warfare**

The Gerasimov Doctrine is more like a cinematic title than a coherent scientific concept. The spread of the concept of nonlinear or hybrid warfare is more the work of Russia's adversaries than its own.

It is named after the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia, General Valery Gerasimov, who presented a research report at a military scientific conference as the president of the Russian Academy of Military Sciences. This report was published in a journal called the Military-Industrial Courier. Although it is not a coherent war plan, it is nonetheless a very well-structured manual of combined military operations with psychological, economic, political, and diplomatic actions. Gerasimov's theory does not invent anything new compared to Clausewitzian theory but merely rewrites it in relation to the current technological society. Thus, the blurring of the boundaries between peace and war is the central element of this theory.

The role of non-military means (economic, political, diplomatic, psychological, imagological, etc.) is paramount in achieving the strategic objectives of war. The military power of the offensive forces

is complementary to the non-military effort, hence the term nonlinear warfare.

*“According to experts, informational superiority lies in gaining an advantage in the psychological sphere and information technology. A state that has the concept of conducting informational warfare with modern information technologies and a developed informational infrastructure initially has informational superiority. In situations where it is impossible to achieve a favorable balance of forces and means against the enemy, it is advisable to use asymmetric actions, which include various methods of influencing decision-makers and public consciousness” [3].*

#### **4. The Concept of Fourth-Generation Warfare**

It is well known that the conventional, classic Clausewitzian warfare has disappeared, and its place has been taken by another type that, although it essentially respects the theory of political determination, is nonetheless different. Conceptually, this type of warfare is still at an empirical level of understanding, leading us to consider that the term “fourth-generation warfare” paves the way for the warfare of the future.

*“The notion of 4GW first appeared in the late 1980s as a vague sort of 'out of the box' thinking. The idea was itself an open box of sorts into which every conjecture about future warfare was thrown. As its inaugural essay shows, it was nothing more than a series of 'what-ifs,' albeit severely limited by a ground-oriented bias. In its earliest stages, 4GW amounted to an accumulation of speculative rhapsodies that blended a maneuver-theorist's misunderstanding of the nature of terrorism with a futurist's infatuation with 'high technology'” [4].*

Scientific and journalistic sources describe the warfare conducted by Russia in Ukraine in 2014 and in Syria in 2015 as hybrid, meaning an efficient combination of conventional military actions with unconventional military actions, as well as

political, economic, psychological, and imagological actions.

Thus, at the tactical military level, the actions are of a conventional type, adapted to the technological level of a knowledge-based society and information technology. At the operational level, although conventional military actions predominate, a significant percentage, over 20-30%, is represented by unconventional actions, primarily false flag operations, psychological, and imagological actions targeting both the military and the civilian population.

At the strategic level, hybrid warfare no longer contains clearly defined strategic military operations over extensive strategic areas with precise and long-term objectives. In this sense, our opinion is that hybrid warfare at the strategic level contains an extensive number of economic, psychological, and imagological actions, perfectly combined or complementary to political and diplomatic actions.

If in conventional warfare, the battlefield was integrated and cybernetic at all levels of the military art, this characteristic in hybrid warfare is maintained only partially at the tactical level. At the operational and strategic levels, it becomes fluid, dynamic, and adaptable to diplomatic, political, and geostrategic developments.

In classical military science theories, fourth-generation warfare was seen more as a war between state and non-state actors or as a war in which the state loses its monopoly.

Fourth-generation military action is characterized by systemic action in extensive and complex, adaptable, flexible networks, obviously supported by knowledge. We consider that current and future fourth-generation warfare clearly differs from conventional warfare in that:

- It is much more flexible in both action and especially in the reformulation of strategic, operational, and tactical objectives.

- It is specific to the era of the globalized society, making it possible to control the adversary's economy in such a way as to gain the support of its population.

- The adversary's economy, through techniques specific to the era of globalization, as well as that of other allied or non-allied states, becomes the main supporter of its own war effort.

- Capital flows, bank interest rates, inflation rates, critical infrastructures, and global logistics networks are essential strategic objectives in military operations.

- High-precision (surgical) military actions become secondary, while the massiveness of military power becomes an essential element at the tactical level to cause material and human losses, but also to engage significant amounts of capital and energy in the war effort, thereby aiming more at the economic bankruptcy of the state rather than its physical destruction.

If in the last 500 years military science and practice aimed for armies to be efficient political instruments to operationalize political goals, the Western model of warfare was based on technology and knowledge and was a scientific model. However, the globalization of capital markets and transcontinental and transoceanic logistics lines led to the loss of the monopoly of technology-based warfare and the emergence of a new model.

If at the beginning of the current fourth-generation warfare, terrorism took the place of technology, and the battlefield became society itself, today warfare is experiencing a redefinition.

In this sense, we can affirm that the dimension of the battlefield remains the same, namely the adversary's society, but not the physical dimension of the individual, rather their psychological dimension. The mind of the adversary's population constitutes the strategic objective, and the methods, techniques, and procedures of combat are increasingly sophisticated and based on social networks

and data transmission and processing networks.

## 5. Strategic Economic Actions in Fifth-Generation Knowledge-Based Warfare

Warfare, as an objective social phenomenon, has adapted to technological and social transformations. Traditionally, war was characterized by direct military engagement between the armies of belligerent states, with military action being essentially kinetic in nature. The beginning of the 21st century is marked by rapid technological development in the fields of communications and information technology, which shapes the concept of fifth-generation warfare.

This paradigm shift represents a major challenge for the theory and practice of strategic leadership and action. Fifth-generation warfare is characterized by:

- **Asymmetry**
- **Predominance of non-kinetic actions** such as cyber, psychological, and electronic warfare
- **Military action losing its primary role**, becoming complementary or supportive of economic, political, and diplomatic actions
- **Indirect actions through proxy actors** replacing direct confrontation between major economic and military powers
- **Economic objectives becoming the main strategic goals**, focusing on controlling critical energy and financial infrastructures
- **The battlefield extending into virtual and psychological domains**, becoming a multi-domain combat space
- **Psychological-economic warfare**, with control of masses, propaganda, disinformation, and manipulation as new weapons [5].

Economic warfare, although not an entirely new concept, has been reinvented in the current era and has become the primary form of direct action against adversaries. Economic warfare can be found even within

military and political alliances. Classic economic warfare, expressed through trade embargoes, boycotts, sanctions, tariff discrimination, asset freezes, aid suspensions, investment bans, and expropriation, complements military action and primarily targets the adversary's ability to conduct military actions.

The new variant of economic warfare includes direct or indirect actions against the economies of undeclared adversaries, who can even be military or political allies. Thus, fifth-generation economic warfare can be characterized by:

- **Globalization and multinational control** of capital and technology flows making classic economic warfare actions less effective and potentially harmful even to the economies imposing them, necessitating limited and well-founded use.

- **Control of transnational or globalized critical infrastructures** (e.g., logistic lines, GPS systems, transport networks) becoming the most important strategic objective.

- **Control of product markets** potentially causing fifth-generation economic wars that could escalate into direct or proxy armed conflicts.

- **Control of energy and raw material resources** being achieved through specific economic mechanisms rather than direct management and exploitation.

- **Control of basic agricultural product prices and raw materials** representing a major direction for global, regional, or local population control and creating economic and political dependencies.

- **Armed conflict becoming complementary** in achieving strategic economic goals, attracting the adversary's economy and capital into the war machinery.

- **Control of the arms and ammunition market**, including that of the adversary, being an important factor in fifth-generation economic warfare.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of fifth-generation economic warfare depends on a series of political, diplomatic, economic, and military factors, including the adversary's ability to correctly identify and respond to such actions.

## 6. Conclusions

The war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine marks a significant stage in the evolution of modern conflicts, exemplifying the complexity and multidimensionality of fifth-generation warfare. This type of conflict does not limit itself to conventional military actions but includes a variety of methods and techniques reflecting the technological and social changes of the 21st century. In this context, hybrid and non-linear warfare become essential components of war strategies, where cyber, economic, psychological, and disinformation actions play a crucial role.

Economic warfare has become a principal tool in modern conflicts, reflecting how globalization and economic interdependence have transformed the battlefield. Compared to classic war theory, where direct military force was the primary means of achieving political objectives, economic warfare focuses on destabilizing and controlling the adversary's economies. Actions such as embargoes, sanctions, trade boycotts, and control of critical resources are used to weaken the enemy from within, affecting their ability to sustain military efforts and maintain internal stability.

General Valery Gerasimov's non-linear doctrine emphasizes the role of non-military means, including economic ones, in achieving strategic objectives. This reflects a fundamental shift in conflict thinking, where economic attacks are integrated into broader strategies that also include military, psychological, and cyber components. Informational superiority and the ability to influence financial and energy markets become critical for long-term success.

Fifth-generation warfare, currently unfolding, extends these concepts, placing even greater emphasis on economic warfare. Controlling critical infrastructures, manipulating financial markets and energy resources, and influencing basic product prices are essential components of this type of conflict. In this sense, economic warfare is not just a component of modern warfare but a central one, capable of deciding the outcome of conflicts without requiring direct military engagements.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict perfectly exemplifies these trends, demonstrating how economic actions can destabilize and weaken the enemy more effectively than traditional military confrontations. For example, international economic sanctions

imposed on Russia aimed at weakening its economy and reducing its ability to finance the war effort, illustrating the power and importance of economic warfare in the current context.

In conclusion, economic warfare has become an essential and predominant component of modern conflicts. Success in this type of warfare depends on the ability to integrate economic, technological, and political measures into a coherent and flexible strategy. Understanding this new type of warfare requires innovative approaches that involve global interdependence and appropriate means to achieve strategic objectives in an increasingly interconnected world.

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