

A RUSSIAN VIEW ON LANDPOWER

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This Letort Paper consists of a paper on the role and importance of Landpower written by a Russian general and military academic, and a commentary on it by a leading British authority on the Russian Armed Forces. The author, Major General Aleksandr Rogovoy, is a professor at the Russian General Staff Academy with a substantial record of academic and operational experience, and a direct contributor to the drafting of Russia's 2014 *Military Doctrine*. The commentary has been provided by British expert Mr. Keir Giles, who gives the context and background for Rogovoy's paper, and highlights key areas of importance to a Western readership. This includes explaining some of the fundamental assumptions guiding Russian thought on the use of land forces.

Some of these assumptions will be familiar to Western military readers, but others will be entirely unrecognizable. This underlines the importance of studying Russian views on security, stability and the use of force, in order to prevent actions like the seizure of Crimea coming as a surprise in the future. Operations in Crimea and eastern Ukraine in early-2014 demonstrated the results of processes that had been ongoing in the Russian military and in Russian security thinking for almost a decade, as Moscow continues to place primary importance on conventional military force, with the direct intention of growing capability in order to challenge U.S. power. Views differ on the precise extent of improvements in Russian military capability, a result of the unprecedented program of transformation since 2008. But transformation of the Russian armed forces and declarations on the new Russian way of war—call it “hybrid,” “nonlin-

ear,” “ambiguous,” or any other of the recently coined epithets—have done little to shift assumptions in Moscow on the primacy of nuclear or conventional brute force in safeguarding Russia's interests.

In marked contrast to the declaratory policy of the United States and other Western militaries, there is strong emphasis on the enduring and central role of numerous conventional land forces. “Wars are fought for territory and resources. There is only one way of defending these two things, and that is the physical presence of ground forces,” Rogovoy states. Therefore, “All Russian forces operate solely in support of ground forces. They are not independent arms, merely facilitators.”

It should be ensured that plans to reduce the role and relevance of conventional land forces within the U.S. military take this divergent point of view from a major Landpower into account. Given both recent and more distant history, and the existential threat to Europe inherent in Russian military adventurism, the importance of closely examining the Russian view of the role of land forces in the modern military should be clear.

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