NET-CENTRIC WARFARE TACTICS IN MODERN ARMED CONFLICTS

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Abstract: *This article analyzes the changes in tactics of conducting armed conflicts at the modern stage, the resulting emergence of net-centric operations, and its main structural components.*

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In the centuries-old history of military art, the transition from one form and method of conducting combat operations to another has been observed several times.

Regarding the modern stage, such a transition is distinguished by the integration of three main structural components: strategy, operational art, and tactics, more so than in previous periods. Recent achievements in the fields of information technology and nanotechnology; the steady trend of the increasing role of high-precision strike weapons; the increased efficiency of reconnaissance assets and comprehensive combat support; the rapid introduction of automated systems along with the strengthening of space-based clusters for troop command and control, the computerization of these systems, and the introduction of artificial intelligence into the military sphere-all create the conditions for a fundamental review of the entire system of views on the nature of future operations and combat actions.

As in the past, the role of tactics in modern combat is manifested in the implementation of operational-strategic ideas at the level of net-centric operations. In this context, the interaction is as follows: strategy defines the new direction of development for military art, while tactics define its content. In these circumstances, these structural components of military art do not fit into the previously established methodological frameworks.

Until now, many articles have been published in military literature, including military journals, regarding the essence of net-centric operations in armed struggle. However, they mainly discuss issues at the operational-strategic level and, to a lesser extent, issues related to tactics. In this article, we have attempted to fill a certain void in military theory.

It should be noted that by studying the tactics of net-centric operations, we are considering its development in countering a potential enemy that possesses high technology and is operating actively in the future. Our reflections consist of research-based hypotheses involving further discussion and debate.

We accept the modern tactics characteristic of the Russian Armed Forces which we conditionally term “interactive”, including its inherent positive and negative aspects-as the initial basis for our research.

This tactic laid the foundation for the development of combat methods by Soviet troops during World War II, as well as in the post-war period. However, over the last 20 years, this branch of military art stopped developing; as a result, it did not demonstrate its superiority in local conflicts (Afghanistan and the second Chechen campaign), even when fighting irregular armed formations.

Currently, the state of national tactical theory indicates the necessity of raising and developing the methods of preparing and conducting combat operations to a new level, similar to the armies of developed nations. This requires special attention to this direction.

In foreign literature, the new tactics are named variously as “swarm tactics”, “anthill tactics”, “combat group tactics” or “hornet's nest tactics” and are collectively referred to as **net-centric warfare tactics**.

The theoretical foundations of net-centric operations show us the necessity of developing this tactic by adapting it to the environment, using the example of the RF Armed Forces. Accordingly, this involves changing tactical thinking in the views of the command staff-specifically, moving from the traditional positional confrontation, volumetric-linear, and methodical action forms of past battles to actions in different space-time dimensions. In this, the battlefield, time, space, front and rear, mobility, and the structure of combat deployment acquire new significance, and the following new principles emerge: net-centricity, asymmetry, strike-fire maneuver, integration of combat efforts in the information-communication space, “shock state”, structural protection, and the development of command and control of troops and weapons.

The essence of the **net-centric principle** consists of moving away from frontal confrontation to:

- Identifying weaknesses in the enemy's methods of combat and armament.
- Concentrating forces in directions where it is possible to identify the key link in the enemy's command and combat deployment systems.
- Distributing combat intensity across time and space in all directions.
- Ensuring the volumetric and multifaceted nature of the impact delivered to the enemy.
- Using various types of troops and branches of the Armed Forces in a coordinated manner.

The goal of troop movement is to disorient the enemy. This differs from the “en masse” principle by concentrating the combat intensity of troops on short front sections with a dense formation structure.

In net-centric warfare tactics, the decisive actions of troops are not localized to specific directions but are activated simultaneously across the entire combat space where the enemy is located. From a certain perspective, the battlefield is turned into an “anthill” and “swarm strikes” are delivered against the opposing side in unexpected ways.

A synergetic effect (“shock effect”) is achieved by applying various tactical methods to the enemy, primarily those that are unknown to them. In these conditions, the outcome of combat operations is determined by the combat potential of combined arms formations and

units: the destruction assets in their arsenal, their firing capabilities, maneuverability, the energy capacity of the weapons, and simultaneously the level of information technology development, characterized by the use of troop and weapon command systems far more advanced than those of the present.

Based on the nature of net-centric operations, the future model of information-based, electronic-robotic warfare requires a new perspective from a technological standpoint-foreseeing the development of weaponry and military equipment-as well as a new look at the human factor and the moral-psychological qualities of personnel who must overcome increasing physical and mental loads.

Currently, high-precision weapons (HPW) have a significant impact on the development of combat methods. Drawing from the experience of local conflicts involving the US Armed Forces (e.g., Operation "Shock and Awe" in Iraq, 2003), HPW accounts for a 85% level of fire damage to the enemy. However, the concept of net-centric operations is not limited to HPW; it must be forward-looking. Specifically, in the near future, the possibility of equipping troops with **directed-energy weapons**, including laser, radio-frequency, and beam (accelerator) weapons, must be considered.

- **Laser Weapons:** Characterized by generating and delivering the power of long-wave gamma electromagnetic, X-ray, ultraviolet, visible, or infrared radiation to the target.
- **Radio-frequency Weapons:** Characterized by generating and delivering electromagnetic radiation power (ultra-high frequency and infrasonic weapons) to the target.
- **Beam (Accelerator) Weapons:** Characterized by generating and delivering high-energy beams of charged or neutral particles accelerated to near the speed of light to the target.

The use of directed-energy weapons allows for greater target selectivity and reduced physical dimensions of systems, thereby increasing the efficiency of destroying the enemy from long distances. This fits organically into the net-centric warfare concept, where the main priority is understood as maximizing the range of combat impact on the enemy across all dimensions.

The Evolution of Tactical Thinking

In the context of net-centric operations, information technology provides the capability to seize the initiative through weaponry and equipment, achieve information-fire superiority, and operate within networks that allow for control of the combat space at least at the tactical level.

As an objective reality, the tactics of net-centric operations possess their own conditional system of studying combat reality through intuition and imagination. However, today, the complexity of developing new tactics is evident in the fact that our scientific experimental base-in the form of field training grounds-has been disrupted.

Following the laws of dialectical materialism, humans move from subjective ideas toward objective truth. In this case, the development of a new model of info-robotic warfare is realized after navigating many contradictions: the essence of the battle versus its

manifestation, form versus content, reality versus perception, and set goals versus limited research data.

History shows that new tactics always establish their path with great difficulty. This has been true in all eras. For example, linear tactics replaced phalanx tactics, which in turn resisted the move toward dispersed formations for a long time. Understanding advanced "interactive tactics" must rely on net-centric warfare tactics that encompass the achievements of cybernetics, mathematics, and other related sciences. In this process, the timeline of the conflict-its beginning, phases, and final goal-is viewed not as a linear path, but as a complexly structured system of interconnections.

The transition from modern tactics to net-centric warfare tactics is the initial impetus for replacing obsolete orientations and searching for new solutions. The trend shows that tactics, as a military art, are becoming freer from rigid norms and blueprints.

Integrated Management and Conclusion

Improving combat methods requires the wide use of the rich methodological arsenals of military systems analysis, as well as physical, mathematical, gaming, situational, and heuristic modeling. New perspectives must also evaluate traditional types of combat-defense and offense-which are losing their distinctiveness and blurring in terms of movement methods.

Modern confrontation remains, first and foremost, intellectual, info-reconnaissance, and navigational. **Troop command** takes the form of **battle management**, implying the reflexive control of enemy actions. The traditional description of a command system as a collection of governing bodies and tools does not reflect the complexities faced by commanders in maintaining firm, continuous control under modern conditions.

The new principle of **integrated troop and weapon management** is defined by radical changes in information technology. Superiority is achieved through the commander’s unified, deep understanding of a dynamically developing situation, rapid response, sound decision-making, and the swift delivery of tasks to performers. Potential “networks” and “nodes” in the management system represent a new vision of the information space.

In conclusion, principles reflect the level of tactical development. They are the link between the past, present, and future. From a philosophical perspective, a principle manifests the integration of necessity and freedom. Depending on their application, they can be the source of either victory or defeat.

The use of net-centric warfare tactics in modern conflicts clearly demonstrates a significant advantage over traditional tactical principles in areas such as concentration of forces, combat activity, cooperation, maneuver, surprise, and protection. This, in turn, urges opposing sides to use unconventional combat methods, leading to changes in the classification of war itself. Experience in modern warfare confirms that success is achieved by the side that successfully employs net-centric warfare tactics.

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