Chapter 9

Leadership from the Kremlin's military and ideological strategy: the Russian-Ukrainian conflict

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Abstract: The Russian incursion into Ukraine has exposed Russia's foreign policy tactics worldwide, forged from an ideological and military approach. These tactics highlight the leadership qualities of key figures such as Valery Gerasimov and Alexander Dugin, both pillars in strategy and support for Vladimir Putin. This chapter will address how these military and ideological strategies align with the Kremlin's territorial ambitions. It will begin by examining the different leadership styles and their evolution, followed by how these strategic figures have established themselves as leadership models not only in Russia, but also globally. Finally, your skills for strategic execution in a crisis that has captured international attention and affects conflict dynamics in the 21st century will be detailed..

Palabras clave: conflict, ideology, leadership, Russia, Ukraine.

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Introduction

Leadership is presented as a fundamental factor for the development of military operations. In fact, strategies must be led by an exceptional leader, who manages to lead any military force to success. Leaders are not only responsible for making extreme decisions that depend on life or death, but they are responsible for structuring a total vision of the panorama to achieve greater control over the operational climate and the quality of life of subordinates. The leader will be able to influence people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization they lead (Roberts, 2018).

In this sense, leadership will have to be directed by a person capable of influencing a context of tension, as their ability to make correct decisions that reduce the success gap before structured goals is key. In contexts such as the one currently arising between nations such as Russia and Ukraine, it is possible to perceive individuals with great leadership skills. These capacities, positive or not, have managed to insistently guide the conditions of expansionism outlined by Vladimir Putin.

The first of the leaders to emerge in the context described is Valery Vasilyevich Gerasimov, Russian general and current chief of staff of the Russian Armed Forces and first deputy minister of defense. General Gerasimov has managed to position his military thinking from a strategic vision, in which it is possible to make visible the new dynamics of the war from Russia to the countries of the Middle East. A series of political analysts have given him the name of "military genius", on the understanding that he managed to build Gerasimov's famous concept of war. It focuses on "guiding its General Staff to initiate the tasks of planning the evolution of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation" (Calderón, 2020). His leadership is based on an ideological concept based on strategies, in addition to the recognition

of military actions that have managed to position Gerasimov as one of the most influential leaders of the moment.

On the other hand, by taking as a reference the role that General Gerasimov has built, it is possible to take into account the second leader identified. This is Russian historian and philosopher Alexander Dugin, responsible for the idea of Russian expansionism after President Vladimir Putin came to power. Dugin has been considered an influential figure in goals such as renewed *Eurasianism*, linked to Russian national interests in the region (Redondo, 2018).

In accordance with the above, the following lines will contain a description of leadership from the military strategy of Valery Gerasimov with respect to the structured direction under the ideas of Alexander Dugin towards the development of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Therefore, first of all, an approach will be made to the concept of leadership, its types, and its various schemes. Secondly, it is necessary to describe the selected leader, Valery Gerasimov, analyzing the establishment of his strategies and ideas that have led him to position himself as a global leader. Finally, a case study focused on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict will be presented, in which it is possible to observe how Russia's foreign policy has been structured taking into account what was established by Dugin and the strategies led by Gerasimov, in order to make visible which are the centers of conflict that seek to strengthen and how this Russian-Ukrainian expansion develops.

The leadership of Russian General Valery Gerasimov and that of Alexander Dugin have managed to strengthen Russian foreign policy and its race towards control of the territory of interest. These leaders have managed to considerably influence Russian politics in recent years, from its traditionalist components to the strategies that channel the desired territorial purpose: *Eurasianism*.

Before analyzing the behaviors of Valery Gerasimov and the ideas of Alexander Dugin focused on the establishment of Russian leadership. It is important to understand how leadership develops, how it manages to influence conflict scenarios, what its elements and characteristics are and what its main schools are, in order to specify the point of integration of Russian military actions. In this, the trajectory and evolution of Russian intentions from Gerasimov's strategies to the ideological support formed by Dugin will be taken into account, so that an integration of points directed towards the analysis of the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict can be presented, from the description of the leader.

Leadership from the analysis of a war

In simple terms, leadership consists of the ability to influence people in order to achieve an important objective for the leader, the group, or the organization. In this sense, the human characteristic or factor is taken into account, which seeks to guide, motivate and inspire, and to do so, especially during times of crisis, conflict, chaos and complexity, since directives, political statements and communiqués have little effect on the development of conflict. By doing so, establishing strong leadership encourages subordinates to work beyond the obligation to obey. In fact, it rather manages to connect with the commitment to the mission in a way that maximizes the potential of said subordinates (Walker & Horn, 2008).

Leadership can occur in a multiplicity of settings. However, crisis situations encourage people to make use of their skills and abilities to demonstrate characteristics of leaders in the midst of a conflict situation, taking into account that it is necessary to seek a prompt solution to the problem. In this sense, Baran and Scott (2010) argue that leadership in chaotic environments becomes a collective process of creating meaning, which works to reduce the inherent ambiguity of the environment and, at the same time, promotes resilience in the face of danger. As a consequence, leadership is constituted from coordinated reciprocal interactions during the conflict situation.

Taking this idea into account, it is possible to argue why the actions of Russian General Valery Gerasimov are taken as a reference, understanding his abilities as an excellent organizer and driver (Calderón, 2020). Leadership is built on the *theory of the great man,* which is known as a way to identify the key characteristics of successful leaders. This approach was common in the Army and is still used as a study to identify leadership characteristics such as technical skill, application to task, group or organizational task support, social skill, emotional control, administrative skill, general charisma, and intelligence (Bolden et al., 2003). Therefore, it is necessary to identify the elements and characteristics that are part of leadership, focusing on the construction of tactics and strategies aimed at a pre-established goal.

Elements and Characteristics of Leadership

Despite the multiplicity of research around leadership, there does not seem to be a guaranteed consensus of what makes a leader effective. Leaders usually establish a balance between their traits, ability, behaviors, sources of power and aspects of

the situation, which will be the main factors to influence a given population, as is the case of Russia on Ukraine. In this sense, any member of the organization or group could assume the leadership role; however, it is necessary to recognize what is the differential element that makes him a significant leader. The most effective measure of a leader and their competencies is the degree to which the organization achieves its objectives and how long they last over time (Vojta, 2010). A leader will be able to take a phrase and bring it to life.

Leadership will then be the core of any organization, as it leads to the establishment of a strategic plan that considers the probability of failure that the group could have in combat; even so, the success of the organization will depend on a superior team that supports each of its practices. In this case, as with the close link between General Gerasimov and Russian President Vladimir Putin, and in which the need to identify and meet the needs and expectations of projects that protect national security and expand Russian power is recognized (Caporicci, 2013).

The effectiveness of the leader is composed of distinctive characteristics, which will serve as a focus in a chaotic scenario in which it is required to demonstrate leadership skills to the fullest. The list of qualities that are part of leadership is virtually endless, so military members are expected to consider six vital traits that strengthen them not only from the individual level, but also from the collective environment.

Among this list, it is important to recognize the factor of integrity for the development of strategic leadership actions; without integrity, the moral pillars of the Armed Forces -among them, public confidence, and self-esteem- fade. Consecutively, a three-dimensional trait is taken into account: *loyalty.* And from this it is necessary to maintain an attitude of *loyalty* to superiors, colleagues, and subordinates, hoping to generate close links that make it possible to implement the objectives. Finally, *commitment* is taken into consideration, in the name of which it is essential to have a complete devotion to duty: leaders must demonstrate a total dedication to their country (Jeanne, 2019).

Over time, many emperors, kings and warriors, among others, have benefited from the elements of leadership, which have been presented since the organization of civilizations. Little by little, these characteristics contributed to the construction of a hierarchical structure that allowed societies to be governed in a more controlled, direct and stable way. While kingdoms and populations were strengthened and expanded, leadership also did so. That is why leaders evolved and the ways in which society was administered improved, which is why the academics of the time

managed to affirm that leaders were born, and not made (Giraldo & Naranjo, 2014), referring to the *theory of traits,* which states that "leadership is something innate; you are born a leader" (Digital Library of the University of Alcalá, n.d.). From this idea, it is possible to make visible the construction of leadership taking into account the theories shown in figure 1.

Figure 1. *Evolution of leadership theories.*
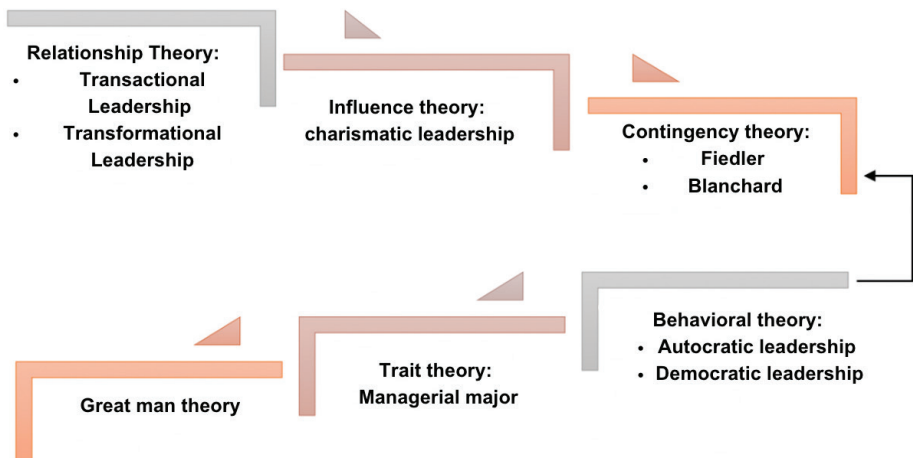
Source: Giraldo and Naranjo (2014).

Each of the theories that connect with the leadership structure has management and direction as its characteristics. On the one hand, *management* refers to the ability to manage a set of elements that drive the efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity of organizations. On the other hand, *management* is the result of administration. It is seen as an activity carried out by each individual who guides and manages a group of people. At this point it is key that leadership is involved to achieve a more enjoyable and positive relationship of influence (Giraldo & Naranjo, 2014). Both characteristics are part of a constant construction process that must be coordinated by a leader, in order to reflect the achievement of the objectives; the leader must be able to transmit a proactive attitude to the people involved in the development processes. And in this sense, it will be key for the leader to consider each of the characteristics shown in figure 2, in order to present a comprehensive leadership.

Figure 2. *Components of leadership.*

Now, before starting the description of each theory, it is necessary to recognize that a leader is different from a boss. The *boss* is responsible for assigning functions, does not have much interaction with the people in charge, gives few moments of feedback, his work becomes monotonous, his vision is short-term, and his focus is on managing, maintaining and controlling. For his part, the *leader* is responsible for instilling teamwork, creating a highly stimulating scenario, generating spaces for constant feedback, encouraging creative work, his vision focuses on the long term, and is responsible for innovating, developing and inspiring (Giraldo & Naranjo, 2014).

Leadership theories

Introducing the development of theories contributes to the gradual approach to understanding the actions of a leader like the Russian general Gerasimov; these actions are intended, in turn, for other actions that are not always positive for the global vision, but for their strategies, objectives and goals. In this sense, the tour begins with the *theory of the great man,* the first to evolve along with the history that surrounds the world. This theory is characterized by recognizing that human

beings are born with certain traits that contribute to their identification of leaders, who have the ability to express their power and influence before other human beings (Daft, 2006). In this theory, leaders such as Alexander the Great stand out, who ruled his country and, at the same time, led great warrior expeditions, being one of the pioneers in developing interaction activities, through shared qualities that led him to success. (Mejía, 2007).

Secondly, the *theory of traits is developed,* which evolved by the 1920s, this is derived from the theory of the great man and suggests that the characteristics of leadership are called *traits;* that is, traits that allow differentiating between a true leader and who is not. In this sense, it is possible to highlight the differential traits taking into account the various personalities of the population and recognizing the following list to identify the leader. He has high levels of energy, his intelligence is superior, and he has the ability to predict and persuade more easily (Castro & Lupano, 2007).

However, Rallph Stodgill affirms, after an investigation of this type of leadership, that there are no unique characteristics to define who is a leader and who is not, so he concludes that leadership is formed and determined from specific situations (Giraldo & Naranjo, 2014). On the other hand, it is important to analyze a new level of behavior within the evolution of leadership. *Behavior theory* presents a new approach, as analysts do not focus on studying the qualities that are part of the leader, but, rather, observe how the leader acts with respect to his followers. In this approach, leadership is learned through behaviors, so at this point it is possible to affirm that the leader is built from a training, through which he gradually strengthens the learning of certain behaviors. In this sense, it is important to note that trait theory focused on two factors: traits and attributes, while behavior theory proposes a generalized change of approach, by putting it in the *behaviors* and *behaviors* of the leader (Sánchez, 2022).

Consequently, *the contingency theory* is presented, which is based on the effectiveness of leadership and the context in which it is developed, so here it is key to know the scenario where the leader develops, to know his reaction and to know whether or not he meets the necessary characteristics to be one. However, in this theory it is mentioned that when the situation presents a wide variability, the type of leadership tends to vary (Daft, 2006). In this way, it is possible to recognize that this theory focuses on the determination of three variables: the r*elationship between the leader and his followers,* the *structuring of the tasks* and the *power that the leader exercises* (Giraldo & Naranjo, 2014).

This theory mentions that the motivation of the activity or relationship of the leader is measured by resorting to the *scale of the least preferred partner,* by means of which leaders are asked to remember a co-worker with whom they least work well, and to characterize this individual with qualifications in a series of adjectives (distant, cold, etc.). This, in order to take into account external perceptions (Encyclopedia of Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, n.d.), which would motivate people to have increasingly harmonious interpersonal relationships, as would be done in a theatrical space.

Figure 3 shows how theories on leadership have evolved, which, in their entirety, allow us to establish traits and characteristics of an integral leader.

Figure 3. *Evolution of theories about leadership.*
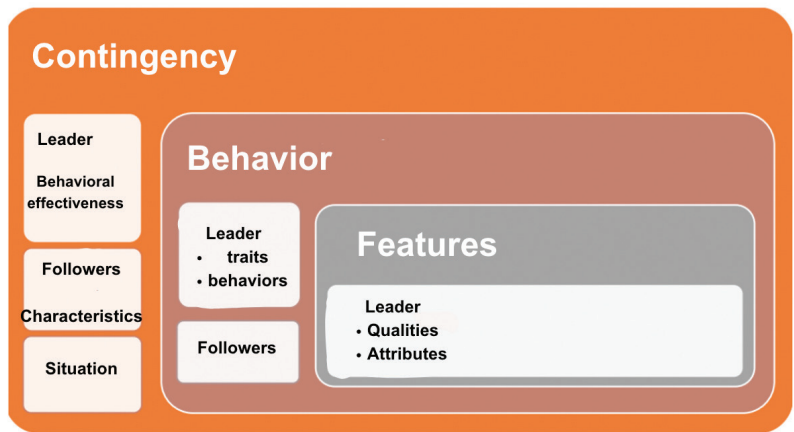
Source: Giraldo and Naranjo (2014).

Continuing with the theoretical evolution, there is the *theory of influence,* which is based on *charismatic leadership.* This new leadership bases its ideas on the qualities and personality of charisma that the leader has. A charismatic leader will be one who has total confidence in himself, as he will be able to build a clear vision about the goals and will structure a strong commitment to meet them. A particular factor is that this type of leader has atypical behavior, which changes constantly, according to his environment (Rada, 2018).

Likewise, this theory is based on a constant cycle of *learning,* which allows the leader to create new knowledge and present himself to his followers as a key actor, in order to always put them at the service of the organization (Sánchez, 2022). In

turn, the influence aspect in this type of theory takes into account the analysis of *social identity,* which explains leadership as a phenomenon of social influence, so it can be configured and focused from organizational and management contexts (Hogg et al., 2012).

In this way, a scheme is presented where it is important to recognize the characteristics of a charismatic leader, with the aim of identifying what characteristics the selected leaders possess, as shown in figure 4.

Figure 4. *Qualities of the charismatic leader.*

Source: Giraldo & Naranjo (2014).

Sometimes, the factor of doing good, mentioned in figure 4, can be diffuse, since it will depend, for example, on the objectives and perspectives of each nation and on the way in which it is applied. There are leaders who act in their interests by affirming that their actions are correct. However, from an overview, it is not possible for such actions to be recognized as lawful or to be seen well, so a dilemma is created within an endless cycle, in which it is possible to recognize leadership characteristics, but not always good behavior.

Finally, the final evolution of leadership theories is presented from the *theory of relationships.* At this point, two new types of leadership are recognized: t*ransactional*

and *transformational.* The first one refers to the *transaction,* or exchange made between the leader and his followers (Giraldo & Naranjo, 2014). In turn, transactional leadership is responsible for generating a *contingent reward,* which offers a benefit for the followers in charge of achieving the goals and achieving the objectives. Also, a *direction by exception,* a scenario in which it is possible to generate negative feedback, sanctions, and corrections for not achieving the objectives or achieving the goals (Fernández & Quintero, 2017).

For its part, *transformational leadership* is responsible for generating an intellectual stimulus for the worker, taking into account their ideas, motivating them, and generating interest so that they can participate in the results of the organization (Arévalo & Tikhomirova, 2015). This theory considers the vision of the ideal future. This factor does not take into account rewards or punishments. It rather promotes the development of followers with the aim of generating greater contributions to the group (Giraldo & Naranjo, 2014).

In this way it is possible to consider particular attributes taken from the theoretical review, and which will be key to analyze the behavior of the leader and the construction of his strategies towards a military direction. First, there would be the attitude of being a charismatic person based on values. From this point of view, the leader will be a visionary, inspiring, willing to self-sacrifice. This is seen from their integrity, their decision, and their orientation to performance. Secondly, the orientation towards teamwork is considered. Here we seek to create a group that is collaborative, cohesive and diplomatic, but that can also have a malevolent cunning, all while maintaining administrative competence. (Gutterman, 2017).

In addition, the leader could adopt a position of self-protection, focusing on his own well-being and demonstrating an acute awareness of his status, which makes him capable of generating conflicts and elaborating procedural strategies. Alternatively, you could project a participatory image, but act in an autocratic and non-inclusive way, overlooking qualities such as humility and orientation towards others. Finally, it is considered an element of autonomy, in which the leader is distinguished as an individualistic, independent, and unique figure. (Gutterman, 2017).

Institutionalism

Before connecting each of the ideas with the case study, one last factor that connects with leadership is presented: *institutionalism. Institutional theory* takes into account a number of methodological approaches that emphasize the importance

of institutions, understood as the regularities, structures, and context that influence policy outcomes and shape behaviors (Schmidt, 2014). The impact of institutionalism has positioned institutions from economic levels, with the aim of reducing market uncertainty since the establishment of regulations, conventions and practices that manage to regulate atypical scenarios.

Institutionalism is responsible for examining the adaptations and conformations on the part of organizations, taking into account the various pressures generated from the institutional environment, with the aim of achieving legitimacy. Institutions also go hand in hand with evolving environments, which vary according to the situations that arise. The context presented from this factor will be determined from the opportunities that organizations build to explore the construction of theories and applied methods (Vargas-Hernández, 2008).

In this sense, institutions must prepare to face any scenario and make timely decisions that achieve each of the pre-established objectives. In the specific case of the military sector, institutionalism reinforces its administrative structure and strengthens combat, service and support units, thus achieving a stronger structuring of the Ministry of Defense (Bodnieks, 2020).

Russian-Ukrainian Conflict: Leadership Structure in the Midst of a Crisis

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has developed since the emergence of several internal and external challenges. Such as institutional changes, changes in land use, climate change, and global economic trends, all of which have significantly affected their agricultural future. In addition, Russian foreign policy attempts to preserve its own hegemony in both regions through diplomacy and confrontation, making use of Russian and Western military technologies, which continue to compete in the region (Nasir et al., 2022).

From the recognition of the different dynamics, Vladimir Putin, Russian president, mobilized, on May 9, 2022, the support of the country's citizens for their eleven-week war against Ukraine, mentioning that Moscow must defend itself from an imminent attack. This, considering that Russia has shifted its military efforts towards the east and southeast of Ukraine, and has focused on the bombing of critical infrastructure, after failing to take Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. In addition, Russia has initiated non-military strategies since the cut-off of gas supplies to

Bulgaria and Poland, and this escalated the conflict with the European Union (EU) (Grajewski, 2022).

This conflict has become the most violent in the world since the second invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. Russia has made some progress in the eastern part of Donbass and Luhansk and has also taken control of almost all state media, thus becoming a conflictive actor on the international scene that represses and uses illegal means of action (Nagy & Beng, 2022).

However, each of its strategies has achieved its objectives, led by General Valery Gerasimov, who has adopted his doctrine on Ukrainian territory to win this war through the use of hybrid warfare through unconventional weapons. In this way, it is necessary to identify its leadership characteristics during the construction of this war, which has made use of non-military, political, economic, informational, and other factors, which have been called *new hybrid methods*.

Valery Gerasimov - Russia's Strategic Military Leader

Understanding each of the concepts focused on the recognition of the characteristics that a leader must have, the actions and ideas that General Gerasimov has developed since his condition of power are considered. In 2014, a new perspective of military conflict on the European continent, between Russia and Ukraine, is presented on a global scale. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea and the ensuing conflict in eastern Ukraine's Donbass region, security analysts around the world have begun to review the approach being taken to Russia's foreign policy, which had allowed for an illegal annexation of the neighboring country. It was stated that due to the success of the operation by Russia, that country had implemented a new theoretical strategic framework (Giles, 2020).

In this sense, it is possible to identify how General Gerasimov's participation has been found behind each military security strategy through the Gerasimov doctrine and the idea in which Russia uses hybrid warfare against its adversaries. This concept of hybrid warfare was discovered from the article "The value of science is in foresight", presented by General Gerasimov before taking up his current position in the Russian Armed Forces (Calderón, 2020). In the article, the general was in charge of exposing a new tactic, which has become one of the modern weapons of contemporary warfare: "hacker, unauthorized access to computers, networks or

computer systems, or their data. Perform this action against the enemy to generate an environment of permanent restlessness and conflict. This is how propaganda 2.0 was born " (Ruedas, 2019).

Regarding this new type of propaganda, Raquel Montenegro (2022) explains that this type of strategy is being used through the implementation of false information, or *fake news,* which has become a key factor in the new politics and the rise of populism on a global scale. These actions were known as the famous *junk information,* which was used to confuse citizens in the middle of an election. Thus, it is possible to observe how Gerasimov's strategy develops from the use of a manipulation tool, so that the use of the internet has become a new weapon and ammunition of the so-called *digital war* (Ruedas, 2019).

In turn, the military strategy on the part of the leader is built gradually. In fact, military action begins by groups of troops in peacetime, taking into account actions such as: non-contact confrontations between interspecific combat groups Annihilation of the adversary's military and economic power by means of precise and short-lived attacks on strategic military and civilian infrastructure. Massive use of high-precision and special operations weapons, robotics and weapons that make use of new physical principles (direct energy weapons, lasers, short-wave radiation, among others). Use of armed civilians (four civilians by one military); simultaneous attack on the adversary's units and facilities throughout the territory, and simultaneous combat on land, in the air, at sea and in information space (Jaeski, 2014).

In this sense, it is possible to identify how the intervention towards the development of the war is structured from the minimum to the maximum attacks. In fact, General Gerasimov stated: "wars are no longer declared and once initiated, proceed according to an unknown template" (Gerasimov, 2016). In turn, it points out that it is necessary to consider the appearance of mobile groups and mixed force groups, which make use of intelligence and sophisticated command and control systems to avoid frontal clashes. Gerasimov mentions that asymmetric actions have become widespread, which allow to nullify the advantages of the enemy in the armed conflict, so these asymmetric forces must be integrated with global attack capabilities from the information space (Duncan, 2017).

In fact, the use of this information space is key in the thought of this leader, because, from his perspective, this scenario opens wide asymmetric possibilities to reduce the enemy's fighting potential. Likewise, it complements his idea by mentioning that it is necessary to generate greater control of the territory, highlighting

the importance of generating a "whole-of-government" approach, and in which the Russian Federation Armed Forces are integrated. with other departments and agencies of the Russian Government to counter forces of distraction, reconciliation, and terrorists (Gerasimov, 2016).

At this point it is key to highlight that, as a leader, the Russian general has chosen to characterize himself from a cooperative and resilient environment. The cooperation between military and diplomatic, informational, and economic instruments of national power creates a space of correlation of non-military matters with the military, in which it is possible to obtain more complete strategies about how to face the adversary from a global scene. In this way, it is possible to recognize the possibility of applying everything from economic sanctions to military conduct operations (Duncan, 2017).

It is possible to analyze that General Gerasimov has built his strategy from a vision of a leader who adheres to the theory of leadership relationships, because, as mentioned from transformational leadership, the leader is responsible for generating an intellectual stimulus for the worker:

In this context, the other government institutions that contribute to the formulation of the strategy are considered by the leader. He will value their contributions and maintain a sustained interest in ensuring their participation in the results achieved by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Even so, it should be noted that Valery Gerasimov considers the importance of institutionalism to achieve the desired objectives in favor of success, given that, from his ideas, "armed conflicts are no longer and cannot only be faced by military actors exclusively. Currently, the battlefield is multidimensional" (Calderón, 2020).

General Gerasimov employs discursive techniques to emphasize that it is not simply a matter of imitating foreign experiences or following leading countries. Instead, he advocates overcoming them and taking on leadership roles of their own (Gerasimov, 2016). With this, he presents an inspiring vision that seeks to mobilize various organizations to work in accordance with their strategy or doctrine. In figure 5 it is possible to observe how the conflict is structured from the ideas of Valery Gerasimov from a minimum to a maximum level of attack, up to a process of restoration of peace.

Figure 5. *Non-linear warfare.*
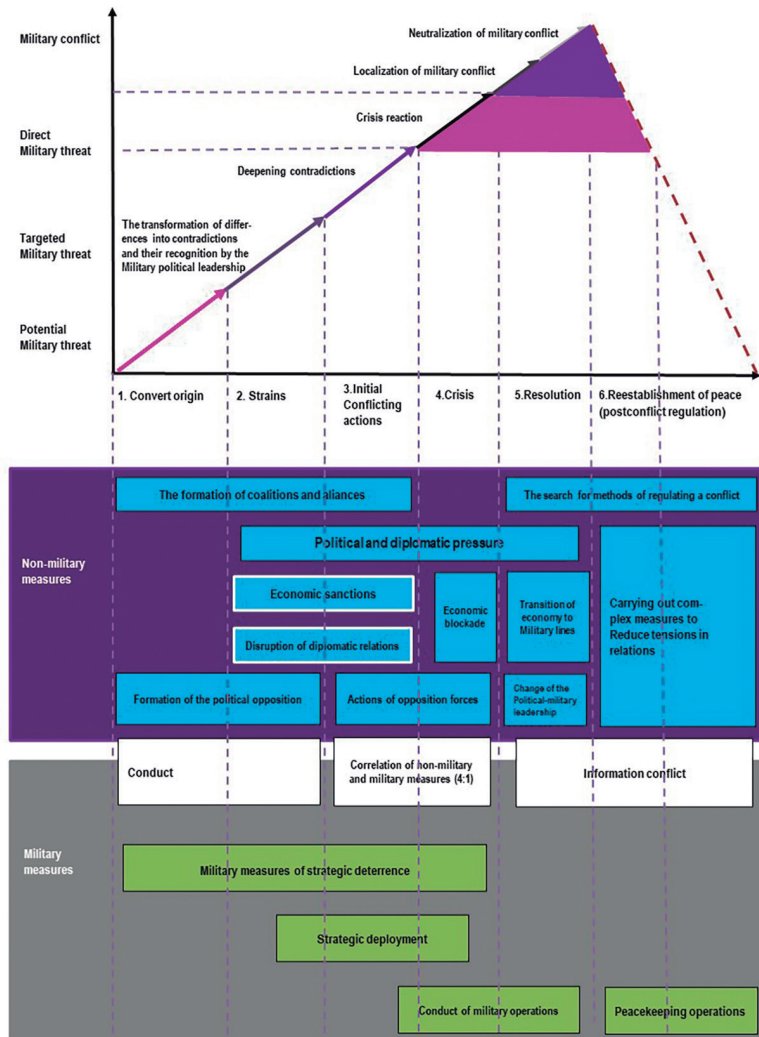
Source: Masalleras (2022).

Note: adapted by Samuel Morales from the article "The value of science lies in anticipation", by Valery Gerasimov, in VPK.

The construction of this strategy focuses on a work between the political-military elites, which began in a stage of unknown crisis, through a process of intensification of contradictions, so that a crisis scenario explodes, which hopes to achieve a space of resolution in favor of Russian interests that end in a restoration of peace from the implementation of non-military and military measures. Such development could be connected with the idea of being a charismatic leader, who

at first intervenes in a deliberate way, tends towards a common participation, is inclusive -because it considers all possible measures of intervention without being strictly military and without using weapons in a mandatory way-, and then justifies the development of the crisis from the discarding of said less offensive operations.

Alexander Dugin: an approach to Russian foreign policy

Dugin's ideological thinking is built on the belief that there is an irresolvable confrontation between the *Atlanticist world*, which refers to the United States and the United Kingdom, and Eurasia; in the latter, predominantly Russia, Central and Eastern Europe and Asia, all of which resist globalization and *ethno-cultural* universalization led by the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2020). Such ideas connect with the *multipolar world* concept, whereby Dugin asserts that Russia must achieve the goal of dominating its neighbors: it divides Georgia, annexes Ukraine, Finland, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece, and "gives" Azerbaijan to Iran (U.S. Department of State, 2020).

Following the 2014 Ukrainian revolution and Russia's subsequent war against Ukraine, political thinker Alexander Dugin became "the mad mystic who inspired Russia's leader" or "Putin's brain." Dugin became especially famous in Russia, given his neo-Eurasian version of classical geopolitics. According to this politician and thinker, neo-Eurasian foreign policy is revisionist and expansionist and relentlessly opposes the United States, so his theory focuses on a collaborative approach, since his ideas include not only Russia, but also the whole of Europe, considering the construction of an agenda that implies the liberation of said continent from all Atlanticist influences (Shekhovtsov, 2014).

Likewise, Dugin actively supported the Russian invasion of Georgia; in fact, he longs for the complete occupation of this country. For Dugin, the Georgian war represented an essential battle against Atlanticism, so he mentioned: "If Russia decides not to enter the conflict, it will be a fatal choice. It will mean that Russia renounces its sovereignty" (Shekhovtsov, 2014). Additionally, this thinker fanatically supported the annexation of Crimea and urged Putin to invade southeastern Ukraine, through ideas such as:

> The sovereignty of Ukraine represents such a negative phenomenon for Russian geopolitics that it can, at first, easily provoke a military conflict. Ukraine as an independent state constitutes a huge threat to all of Eurasia and without the solution of the Ukrainian problem, it makes no sense to talk about continental geopolitics. (Shekhovtsov, 2014)

Likewise, his ideas are consolidated through thoughts against Western practices. In this way, he affirms that the current crisis is a logical result of the decline of the global liberal system, clearly under the leadership of the West. It is, then, a crisis caused by Western and unipolar liberalism and system. In addition, he argues that nations are built from a selfish and realistic attitude. Therefore, from the realistic point of view, rivalry, competitions, and conflicts are always possible. In this sense, he suggests that Russia, Turkey, Iran, China, and other countries, such as India, Pakistan and many other Arab countries, African countries, and Europe itself can ensure true independence only by creating a kind of Eurasian geopolitical alliance, called a *multipolar alliance* (Dugin, 2020).

In this sense, Dugin affirms that the initiatives must be led by Russia, since it must be a great power or empire gathering and putting under its control the lands of the former Soviet Union. Alexander Dugin has become Putin's ideologue and has made clear to him the idea that European leaders have not been able to think of a response to this type of threat. So, in a sense, the EU and Russia are operating on different frequencies, in ways that prevent the European Union from effectively mitigating Russia's actions (Starr & Cornell, 2014). Regarding the analysis of his ideas, Dugin could be characterized by using factors from the theory of the great man, given that he contributes to his identification as a leader from his ideas. In addition, he has the ability to express his power and influence before other human beings. In this case, the Russian president: Vladimir Putin.

Despite the leadership characteristics demonstrated by General Valery Gerasimov and the politician and thinker Alexander Dugin, it is necessary to mention that their successful strategies have not contemplated a little respect for Human Rights or the independence of each of the affected territories - in this current case, over Ukraine - which can generate diverse global perspectives on how this leadership of Russia in the military sector is carried out towards the global arena. Even so, there is no doubt about his ability to create key strategies in advancing Russian objectives.

Conclusions

During the analytical development presented, it is possible to consider that the conflict scenario is not a situation that highlights positive factors in the global vision. However, it allows us to identify the characteristics that make General Valery Gerasimov and the thinker Alexander Dugin strategic leaders who have contributed to the creation of structured programs and plans in favor of Russian success.

In this way, it is recognized that its characteristics are based on the different theories of leadership, which have nuances of institutionalism, but continue to focus on a field of charismatic leaders, strategists, in favor of the opening of relations, among other factors that have been part of the development of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, in order to position Russia as a power in the Middle Eastern region and, from a future perspective, throughout the world.

General Gerasimov and Dugin have found a way to intervene in the construction of Russian foreign policy, either from the structuring of military strategies or from the ideological construction that leads Russia to think of itself in a favorable scenario of expansion that makes use of unconventional means of warfare in a changing and multipolar scenario, as mentioned by the leaders studied.

In this sense, leadership has been presented as a crucial factor that leads leaders to determine the objectives that Russia must achieve to position itself on the international stage to achieve territorial goals such as the acquisition of new territories, which favor its political, economic, and military interests. All this makes the region a center of conflict that, through the use of strategies, gives Russia the role of power for which it fights.

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