Research Article

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Modern Resistance – Learning From Non-Western Examples

Abstract: Due to Russia's continuous malicious actions against the Baltic and Scandinavian countries, as well as its ongoing war against Ukraine, most European countries have recently been forced to take a critical look at their national defense strategies and military capabilities. These reviews unearthed serious capability gaps, resulting in the emergence of so-called total defense strategies based on peacetime social resilience and war time resistance. This article focuses on resistance, arguing that the current manifestations of such a strategy do not ensure maximum results for the countries because their fundamental characteristics and principles were derived from cases that are limited in spatial and temporal scope. The article suggests that lessons must be also learned from recent experiences such as the Chechen resistance against Russia, Hezbollah's fight against Israel, the Iraqi and Taliban insurgencies, the Syrian insurgency, and other similar cases. This article offers a starting point for identifying such critical lessons by analyzing the First Russo-Chechen War through a research model built on the common principles of Mao Zedong, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, and General Vo Nguyen Giap.

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Introduction

During the Cold War, small European countries' defense strategy, military culture, and structure were dictated by their patrons, the United States on one side and the Soviet Union on the other. This period was characterized by large conventional militaries organized, trained, and equipped to fight a Second World War type conflict, in which all militaries had their own clear role to play. This straightforward situation drastically changed with the end of the Cold War and the start of the 'end-of-history' period (Fukuyama, 1989). In the absence of both a major sponsor and a clearly defined enemy, small European countries' defense strategies and military organizations entered a decade that was characterized by a significant identity crisis. This desperate search for relevance brought endless defense reforms across Europe, mostly resulting in defense budget cuts, the abolition of conscription, and major reductions in the size of standing military forces. Regardless of NATO membership, no European country was able to formulate a coherent and long-standing defense strategy, and as a result, the capabilities of their militaries continued to deteriorate during the 1990s. This situation was changed with the tragic events of 9/11 after which the United States stepped in once again as a major sponsor, influencing the directions of military developments and presenting a well-defined single enemy for small European countries.

During the period between 2001 and 2014, all European countries developed defense strategies and military capabilities that matched the requirements of the moment and exclusively focused on expeditionary counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations. However, the unexpected Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its ongoing aggressive actions forced European countries to switch their focus back to their own front yards and once again take a critical look at their national defense strategies and military capabilities. Such reviews led to the realization that the capabilities developed over the last two decades were hardly useful in a national defense scenario against a numerically and technologically superior conventional Russian military. As a

result, two major trends emerged among European countries. While some fell back right into the well-known, Cold War type of conventional warfare-based strategies and military structures, others that understood their space-time-force ratio disadvantage started to look at alternative, asymmetric solutions to defend their national sovereignty and ensure their country's survival.

Such a new approach was developed by the Scandinavian and Baltic countries, called the 'Total Defense Strategy' (Wither, 2020). The concept is based on peacetime societal resilience and wartime resistance in which all segments of the government, private organizations, and civil society have tasks in the defense of national sovereignty and waging resistance operations against an occupier. The idea of incorporating patriotic resistance into their national defense strategies is not completely new for these countries, as they all have had a rich history of operating covert organizations in difficult physical terrain during foreign occupation during the Second World War and the Cold War (Davoliūtė, 2021).

This article argues that while the idea of asymmetry focused and resistance-based defense strategy is indeed the correct and arguably the only viable solution for small European countries, the current manifestations of such strategy do not ensure maximum results due to the fundamental characteristics and principles of studied historical cases that are limited in their spatial and temporal scope (Fabian, 2015). These strategic approaches drew their lessons only from romanticized western examples from the Second World War (French, Polish, Philippine, and Baltic resistance) and the Cold War (NATO, Italian, and Norwegian stay-behind groups, and Switzerland's total defense model) while systematically ignored other relevant historical examples (Fiala, 2019). This article suggests that a much more comprehensive analysis of historical cases is needed to achieve the best possible results for a resistance-based national strategy. Such an investigation must include recent experiences such as the Chechen resistance against Russia, Hezbollah's fight against Israel, the Iraqi and Taliban insurgencies, the Syrian insurgency, and other similar cases. This article offers a starting point for identifying critical lessons by analyzing the First Russo-Chechen War through a research model that is built on the common theoretical principles of Mao Zedong, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara,

and General Vo Nguyen Giap. The case was selected due to its relevance to the topic, the availability of detailed information about the Chechen and Russian operations, and Russia's recent attack of Ukraine.

Research Model for the Case Studies

Any rigorous scholarly analysis of historical cases requires a well-designed research model that is built upon the most relevant principles of the given topic. While the first element of such a research model appears to be an obvious starting point, a comprehensive overview of the background of the actual conflict providing a strong framework for any subsequent analysis, determining the other pillars of the model requires a series analysis of relevant theoretical works. Since one might argue that the foundation of the resistance-based strategies is found in irregular warfare, it seems appropriate to use the theories of some of the masters of irregular warfare to identify additional potential elements of the proposed research model. Since this article focuses on lessons that one can learn from non-Western cases, it seems appropriate to also utilize the fundamental characteristics and principles of non-western theorists of irregular warfare. Furthermore, a strong model should consider theories across time and space from theorists from different cultural and historical background. For such reasons, Mao Zedong, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, and General Vo Nguyen Giap's theories of irregular and guerrilla warfare have been chosen to serve as foundations for such model.

In his seminal work, *Yu Chi Chan* (*On Guerrilla Warfare*), Mao Zedong provided important insights on the relationship between conventional and irregular forces and the training, support, and operations of irregular units. According to Mao, irregular operations are not independent from the conventional form of warfare but a part of it. He explains the direct relationship between conventional and irregular forces by stating, 'during the progress of hostilities, guerrillas gradually develop into orthodox forces that operate in conjunction with other units of the regular army' (Mao, 1961, p. 42). Mao considers irregular warfare as 'a weapon that a nation inferior in arms and military

equipment may employ against a more powerful aggressor nation' (Mao, 1961, p. 42). One of Mao's characteristics of guerrilla warfare was that such conflict follows in three phases, which are sometimes barely distinguishable, and many times overlap.

The first phase of guerrilla warfare is the establishment and development of the organization. The next phase is the conduct of guerrilla operations, such as direct attacks on vulnerable military and police targets, sabotage, and assassinations. The third phase is the period for destroying the enemy. According to Mao, during this phase the guerrilla force transforms into a conventional, orthodox military and engages the enemy in conventional fighting. Another principle identified by Mao is the necessity of cooperation and support from the side of the population. This support is necessary to establish operational bases and to train, equip, and sustain guerrilla units. Another important characteristic in Mao's strategy is the ability to adapt. The guerrilla strategy 'must be adjusted based on the enemy situation, the terrain, the existing lines of communication, the relative strengths, the weather, and the situation of the people' (Mao, 1961, p. 46). Mao emphasizes that guerrilla units need decentralized control due to their organization and tactics, with close coordination with conventional forces. 'In guerrilla strategy, the enemy's rear, flanks, and other vulnerable spots are his vital points, and there he must be harassed, attacked, dispersed, exhausted, and annihilated. Only in this way can guerrillas carry out their mission of independent guerrilla action and coordination with the effort of the regular armies' (Mao, 1961, p. 46). Mao referred to organization as a fundamental characteristic. He explained that the origins of the guerrilla forces may stem from five roots: the 'civilian' population, conventional military units, local militias, turncoat enemy soldiers, and criminal groups. Mao also discusses the importance of equipment, emphasizing that guerrillas need light weapons, and that there is no need for standardization. Equipping the guerrilla units must be a combined product of the population, the regular army, and the use of captured weapons. Mao summarizes, 'we must promote guerrilla warfare as a necessary strategical auxiliary to orthodox operations; we must neither assign it the primary

position in our war strategy nor substitute it for mobile and positional warfare as conducted by orthodox forces' (Mao, 1961, p. 57).

In his book, *Guerrilla Warfare*, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara introduces his theory regarding guerrilla warfare, called the 'Foco.' The basic element of Guevara's theory is small and mobile groups of guerrilla cadres, which travel around rural areas to ignite rebellion among the peasants against the ruling regime (Guevara, 2019). These 'fighter teachers' provide training and general leadership for locals in order to mobilize and launch guerrilla attacks from rural areas (Johnson, 2006). Guevara's theory agrees with Mao's on several questions. First, he emphasizes the importance of popular support for guerrilla forces. Second, Guevara explains that the countryside is the basic area for armed fighting. Third, he agrees that the guerrilla force has to be transformed into a conventional army to fulfill the overall goal, the destruction of the enemy. Fourth, Guevara emphasizes the ability to adapt to the conditions of the operational environment and adjust guerrilla tactics as the situation changes, in order to hold the initiative and the ability to surprise the enemy. Nevertheless, while Mao emphasizes the importance of prior establishment of the proper conditions for guerrilla war, Guevara states 'it is not necessary to wait until all the conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection can create them' (Johnson, 2006, p. 27). Guevara explains several other important factors of guerrilla warfare.

He emphasizes the importance of familiarizing oneself with the terrain and thoroughly understanding guerrilla tactics. According to Guevara, guerrilla forces need a special strategy to achieve their goals while also preserving their units, calling for 'the analysis of the objectives to be achieved in the light of the total military situation and the overall ways of reaching these objectives' (Guevara, 2019, p. 10). Guevara believed that specific tactics characterize guerrilla warfare in comparison with conventional warfare, especially mobility, sabotage, night operations, treatment of the civilian population, and any 'practical methods of achieving the grand strategic objectives' (Guevara, 2019, p. 15). For example, 'One of the weakest points of the enemy is transportation

by road and railroad. It is virtually impossible to maintain a vigil yard by yard over a transport line, a road, or railroad' (Guevara, 2019, p. 15). Guerrilla operations have to focus on the enemy's lines of communications and its resupply system to effectively undermine conventional operations and inflict significant casualties.

Finally, in his seminal work, *The Military Art of People's War*, Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap developed a new kind of guerrilla-strategy model. General Giap's 'new guerrilla-warfare model' follows the main line of Mao's principles but introduces the need for greater willpower and the ability to switch between the different types of warfare. He modified Mao's principles to fit the time and space in which a war is fought. Like Mao, General Giap divides guerrilla warfare into three phases, but with significant differences. The first phase is the 'stage of contention,' which covers the organization of the movement and the conduct of guerrilla-type operations. This period acts as a foundation for organization and limited guerrilla activity to target the enemy's morale and start attrition. According to General Giap, during this phase, military operations are to be conducted only when success is guaranteed. The next phase is the 'period of equilibrium,' a combination of guerrilla operations and conventional mobile warfare. This period is designed to establish the balance between the two opposing forces and for conventional forces to exploit guerrilla successes by occupying and holding significant locations. General Giap's final phase is the 'stage of counteroffensive,' a combination of mobile and positional warfare, in which the transition from guerrilla war to conventional war is completed and large conventional forces dominate the fighting; however, guerrilla-type operations do not cease (Chapman, 1972). General Giap emphasizes the use of conventional forces during a much earlier phase than Mao, but at the same time, he supports the usage of guerrilla-type operations during all three phases of war. Another notable difference in General Giap's concept is the notion of fighting in both rural and urban regions at the same time, as well as adopting positional warfare. According to Mao's theory, guerrillas have to avoid being pinned down and must retreat to base areas. As Mao explains, 'The enemy advances, we retreat; the enemy camps, we harass; the enemy tires, we attack; the enemy retreats, we pursue'

(Chapman, 1972, p. 46). On the other hand, General Giap suggested the use of positional defense in the cities. The introduction of significant geographical locations and the need to hold them is a substantial departure from Mao's theory.

Several common concepts and traits may be identified in the views of the three theorists, which could serve as the foundations for a research model suitable to examining historical episodes of resistance. Beyond the foundational step of providing a historical overview of the conflict, another component of such a model is an overview of the nature of the irregular warfare strategy used by the disadvantaged side. This part investigates the specific characteristics of this party's irregular warfare strategy and explore how these characteristics helped the achievement of the overall goals of the weaker side. Another question that should be addressed within this section of the model is whether irregular warfare was integrated as a supporting activity into a conventional strategy, or it was the main approach of the weaker side.

By answering these questions, one can determine whether there are any necessary and sufficient strategic conditions exist under which irregular warfare might be preferable to a conventional strategy for small countries, whether irregular warfare should only be used as a supporting activity for a conventional approach. The next part of the proposed research model is an assessment of organizational characteristics and leadership principles of the weaker side. Through an examination of the operational structure of irregular units and the behavior of their leaders, such questions as whether these components of irregular formations have any effect on the outcome of engagements and the overall outcome of the conflict can be addressed. An analysis of organizational characteristics and leadership principles can help decide whether there are any specific organizational and leadership requirements for the successful employment of irregular warfare strategy. The fourth potential element of the proposed research model should investigate the importance of the types of different irregular tactics, the level of training given to irregulars, and the role of intelligence in irregular warfare. Similar to

the previous element, this part could help identifying any necessary and sufficient training, tactical, and intelligence requirements for small countries that consider the use of irregular warfare-based defense strategy. The final element of the model focuses on factors that are external to irregular warfare formations and explore the potential role of physical and social terrain. While the model indeed requires more analysis and potentially some additional elements, it still allows for an initial, demonstrative analysis of a non-Western case to derive some useful lessons. What follows is a simplified application of the proposed research model to analyze the First Russo-Chechen War.

The First Russo-Chechen War

Conflict Background

As a result of aggressive Russian policy, the Chechens have been struggling to keep their independence since the early 19th century. Because of the tremendous disparities between Russia, which is large and powerful, and Chechnya, which is small and weak, the conflict has been regarded as an irregular fight from the start.

With the collapse the Soviet Union, the Chechens, now led by a former Soviet air-force officer, General Dzhokhar Dudayev, sensed an opportunity for independence and sprang into action. On 6 September 1991, they dissolved the local pro-Soviet government and started to create the conditions necessary to declare independence. During the following months, Dudayev consolidated his power and soon was elected the first president of the Independent Chechen Republic (Arquilla, 2011). In response, the Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, initially sent some internal troops to restore order, but they were quickly forced to withdraw. Then, the Russians turned to covert operations in an effort to overthrow Dudayev. The Russians first provided financial support and military equipment for Chechen opposition groups, but since they did not manage to make enough progress, the Russians soon went on providing military units to support anti-Dudayev operations. Russian involvement became public after one of the opposition factions, the Provisional Council, failed in its effort to seize Grozny on 29 November 1994. At this moment, Yeltsin made the decision to begin a full-fledged offensive against Chechnya.

The initial Russian strategy was formed around the quick occupation of the Chechen capital and other key urban areas. Since they did not expect any serious resistance; the Russia plan was to conclude the war within fifteen days (Oliker, 2001). However, when Russian troops entered Chechnya on 11 December 1994, they quickly realized that their timeline had to be quickly adjusted. Although the Russians quickly obtained air superiority by destroying the Chechens' 266 aircraft, they met an unexpectedly strong resistance from the local population, which inflicted casualties and seriously slowed their advance (Oliker, 2001). The Russians finally reached Grozny on 26 December 1994 and initiated a siege. They found themselves fighting against hundreds of small, highly trained, and well-organized enemy units led by the Chechen military's chief of staff, a former Russian artillery officer, Aslan Maskhadov. The few thousand Chechen defenders quickly defeated the initial Russian attacks and caused a large number of casualties. The Chechens were able to hold Grozny through fierce irregular urban combat for one more month. Even when the Chechens decided to capitulate the city, the war was not lost. Since the Russian forces never managed to completely seal off the capital, small irregular teams could leave the city to continue their fight in the rough mountainous regions.

Following the seizure of Grozny, the Russian forces started to expand their control over the rural areas. They systematically advanced from village to village to defeat the resistance. To counter these operations, Chechen irregulars conducted holding actions as long as tenable, then moving away from the enemy while executing continuous harassing operations against Russian troop columns and logistic nodes. By May 1995, Russian forces controlled the major towns in Chechnya and the fight was taken to the mountain villages. On 14 June 1995, a small Chechen unit, containing about 100 fighters and led by Shamil Basayev, infiltrated into Russia using Russian military uniforms and equipment. The Chechen detachment raided the town of Budennovsk with the main objective of taking as many hostages as possible and, through them, to force a Russian withdrawal from Chechnya. During the

operation, the Chechen raiders captured the town's hospital and held about 1,500 hostages. The Russians launched multiple attacks to recapture the hospital and liberate the hostages, but all of them failed, and finally the Chechens managed to negotiate free passage back to Chechnya. The success of this operation forced the Russians to start engaging in negotiations and led to a brief cease-fire between the sides (Kramer, 2005). On 30 July 1995, both parties signed an agreement to stop military operations, and the Russians promised a phased withdrawal from Chechnya. However, an increasing number of violations of this agreement on both sides during the fall of 1995 swiftly put an end to the hope of a long-lasting peace.

Although the Russians scored a tremendous success by killing the Chechen president with a rocket after triangulating his position by tracking his satellite phone, the Chechens soon took over the initiative (Knezys and Sedlickas, 1999). The loss of their president did not weaken the Chechens' fighting spirit. Maskhadov immediately launched countrywide offensive against the Russians. While the Chechens attacked in the rural areas and mountains, their main objective was Grozny. Hundreds of small Chechen units infiltrated the capital and 'after more than two weeks of fighting that turned Grozny into a smaller-scale Stalingrad' (Arquilla, 2011, p. 262), the Russians entered negotiations with Maskhadov and signed a peace agreement in August 1996.

The Chechen Irregular Strategy

During the initial phase of the war, including the 1995 defense of Grozny, Maskhadov formed his strategy around urban combat, waged by hundreds of small and dispersed swarming fire teams. They pioneered the concept of 'maneuverable defense,' holding a position one day and then disappearing the next to maneuver into new locations, making it nearly impossible for the Russians to eliminate the defenders. Another strength of this approach was its adaptability. After heavy losses during the defense of the capital, Maskhadov could quickly modify the approach to fit rural areas and smaller Chechen towns. He introduced 'an indirect strategy of attrition in which he avoided general actions against the Russian main efforts but instead concentrated what forces he had against weak enemy outposts and piecemeal detachments'

(Cassidy, 2003, p. 17). During this phase of the war, the Chechen strategy focused on two major objectives. First, they had to keep the struggle alive by preserving their forces and exhausting the Russians with raids and other harassing operations. As one of the Chechen battle groups' deputy commanders, Khamzat Aslambekov, explained, they did not have too many choices at that time, 'There is no winning. We know that. If we are fighting, we are winning. If we are not, we have lost. The Russians can kill us and destroy this land. Then they will win. But we will make it very painful for them' (Celestan, 1996, p. 25). The Russians played into the hands of the Chechen strategy by falling into the same trap as many counterinsurgent forces before them did, by trying to control the country throughout the extensive deployment of small outposts. Once dispersed, their outposts had never been numerous enough to truly control the country, as raids on the smaller posts had compelled them to consolidate into fewer and fewer garrisons. But the garrisons were too few and too small to keep the Chechen operations throughout the countryside under control (Cassidy, 2003).

The second main objective of the Chechen strategy during this time was to break the Russian leadership's will to fight and to force the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechen territory. The Chechens strategy contained an integrated information campaign that was based on a theme of a free nation being oppressed by an aggressor. Chechens allowed journalists to be present in hot spots and provided first-hand access to information in order to influence public opinion. Chechen leadership encouraged journalists to report about the brutality of Russian tactics and to describe the suffering of Chechen civilians 'The rebels were very open to press interest, granting interviews and generally making themselves available to domestic and foreign journalists' (Arquilla and Karasik, 1999, p. 217). To further influence public opinion, the Chechens also introduced psychological operations supported by terrorism as another form of their irregular approach, besides waging continuous small-scale attacks on the Russian troops.

Chechen Organization and Leadership

The Chechen military forces in 1991 consisted of 62,000 fighters in the National Guard and an additional 30,000 in the militia (Dunlop and Dunlop, 1998). By 1994, these forces were augmented with Shamil Basayev's 350 men from the Abkhazian battalion, 250 men under the command of Ruslan Galayev, an artillery detachment with 30 artillery pieces, an armored unit containing fifteen tanks, and the Chechen Ministry of the Interior's force, consisting of 200 fighters (Magnusson and Faurby, 1999). At the beginning of the war, the Chechen's organization was remarkably flat, taking a 'network' form of organization (Arquilla and Karasik, 1999). This irregular organization was a result of two factors. First, Aslan Maskhadov recognized that an open, conventional war against Russia would end in disaster for Chechnya, and he encouraged the subdivision and dispersion of Chechen forces. The second factor was that throughout history, the organization of Chechen forces had a direct link to the clan-based social structure of Chechnya. Theodore Karasik explains this phenomenon: Chechen clans, called *taip*, identify member descent from a common ancestor twelve generations removed. A particular *taip* might consist of two to three villages of 400 to 600 people each and supply 600 fighters. For combat purposes, these groups are broken down into units of 150 and further subdivided into squads of about 20 for combat operations that work one-week shifts, one after the other (Karasik, 2000). Clan base non-standard squads formed the bases of the Chechen military structure.

These squads consisted of fifteen to twenty fighters, subdivided into fire-team-sized cells. Each fighter within these small elements was armed with different kinds of weapon systems, including RPG-7s, RPG-18s, machine guns, and Dragunov sniper rifles, to increase unit effectiveness. Usually, several fighting cells were deployed as 'hunter–killer teams' against armored targets. While the antitank gunner would engage the armored target, the sniper and machine gunner pin down Russian supporting soldiers. Normally, five or six hunter–killer teams attack one armored vehicle in unison and forced serious delays in Russian actions (Karasik, 2000). These small elements eventually could form a larger unit, consisting of 25 men, including ammunition bearers, medics, and supply personnel. If it was operationally necessary, three of these 25-man units

could be further combined into a 75-man element, which was augmented with a highly mobile mortar crew. These units played a key role in urban combat, since the Chechens frequently divided the cities into quadrants and a 75-man element was responsible for the defense of an individual quadrant (Oliker, 2001). Other than the use of these units, the Chechens also deployed individual snipers or small sniper teams to inflict as many casualties as possible and create fear among the Russian troops. Olga Oliker noted that 'Chechen snipers, whether operating alone or as part of an ambush group, nightly terrified Russian soldiers, who dubbed them ghosts' (Oliker, 2001, p. 21). The snipers were so effective and accurate that, in one case, only ten soldiers and one staff officer survived out of an entire Russian battalion (Knezys and Sedlickas, 1999). The Chechen organizational design provided unique flexibility for the rebels. Their organizational simplicity and durability enabled the widely dispersed small units to conduct self-coordinated attacks but also gave them the ability to reorganize into larger formations when needed. Still, the effective organizational characteristics of the Chechen forces would have not been enough for success. To capitalize on these characteristics, capable military leaders were also much needed.

At the strategic level, the Chechen leaders had to understand the traditional Chechen fighting organization and form a strategy that would capitalize on its advantages to create a chance against a numerically and technologically superior enemy. Maskhadov was aware of the strengths and weaknesses of both sides and therefore could form a strategy that not only exploited Russian weaknesses but also made the most of Chechen strengths. He tested his approach during the initial skirmishes between Dudayev's supporters and the pro-Moscow movements between 1992 and 1994. His vision of commanders' intent-based operations, which relied on highly decentralized execution and small-unit level coordination, proved to be effective not only during this initial conflict but throughout the entire war against the Russians. He continuously learned from engagements and developed his irregular approach. Maskhadov was capable of facing reality and fought only when it was practicable. His main

goal was to keep the struggle alive while he tried to shape the battlefield through harassing raids, terrorist acts, and other irregular means to set the conditions to take over the initiative. That being said, Maskhadov's strategy could only work if he had capable subordinate leaders with the ability to act along the lines of his irregular strategy. Since his entire strategy was based on hundreds of small elements capable of autonomous action or as functioning as a part of slightly larger formations, the question of effective small-unit leadership was crucial to the success of the Chechen struggle. Small unit leaders indeed possessed those capabilities and were the backbone of the Chechen strategy's success. They not only led their fire-team-sized units into battle, but they were also able to coordinate larger-scale attacks to increase their effectiveness and maximize Russian casualties (Arquilla, 2011).

Chechen Training, Tactics, and Intelligence

The centuries-old armed struggle against Russia, combined with Chechnya's militant society, offered a solid foundation for an irregular civil-militia force, but Chechen fighters had even more training and experience to draw on. By 1991, the majority of the Chechen male population had gone through training in the Soviet military. Since the Russians trained the Chechens from the tactical to the strategic level, they were not only capable of operating Russian weapons and conducting missions effectively they also knew the Russians' order of battle, the capabilities of their military systems, and their tactics in different operational environments. Additionally, a large number of Chechen fighters received training in 'mountain guerrilla fighting,' based on the Russian experience in the Soviet–Afghan War. The Chechens were also trained in night operations, which gave them a significant advantage over the Russian forces, especially early in the war (Arquilla and Karasik, 1999). Furthermore, the Chechens never stopped training. They continuously evaluated lessons from engagements with Russian forces and frequently developed new procedures to fight more effectively. Furthermore, Chechens utilized every imaginable and seemingly unimaginable way to fight their opponents.

The tactical foundation of the Chechen irregular struggle was the swarm (Arquilla, 2011). By mastering this concept, the Chechens were able to

effectively confront larger conventional formations. Small mobile teams defeated large, armored formations converting the strength of Russian weapon systems into weaknesses. They learned to attack the front and rear vehicles of Russian convoys first, immobilizing the convoy, then to strike at close range with sawed-off RPGs — shorter barrels made for greater velocity — that had napalm charges attached, starting fire inside and often blowing up the invaders' tanks swarm (Arquilla, 2011). Chechen tactics did not only pose a threat to the Russian ground units; the rebels were successful in destroying air assets, including both attack and cargo helicopters. As Karasik explains, 'The Chechen forces also lure Russian air assets into specially prepared 'kill zones.' Chechen forces jam Russian radio transmissions and use radio direction finding equipment to hunt and kill Russian controllers that guide Russian forces to targets. When Chechens knock down Russian helicopters, they swarm their small combat teams to Russian landing zones hitting them with machine gun, sniper, and RPG fire.' (Karasik, 2000, p. 112).

In the First Russo–Chechen War, the information advantage was on the side of the Chechens. Since a large portion of the Chechens had trained in the Russian army, they knew the enemy's tactics, techniques, and procedures. The Chechens knew the capabilities and the limitations of the Russian weapons systems and, through this knowledge, how to counter them. Simply put, the Chechens could think with the Russian mind, which gave them an enormous advantage. The Chechens' familiarity of Russian and the Russian use of open-channel radio transmissions allowed the Chechens to listen to Russian conversations and even to give confusing orders to Russian troops. The Chechens also had a major advantage in intelligence gathering due to their civilian-based, human-intelligence network that provided accurate and timely information about Russian positions and troop movements (Arquilla, 2011).

External Factors

Initially, the Chechens not only tailor their irregular strategy to the rough natural terrain and severe weather conditions of Chechnya, but they also

created an 'urban terrain' that best complemented their swarming strategy. 'The Chechens simply applied their mastery at the art of forest warfare, so evident in the 18th and 19th centuries, to the urban forests in Grozny and other cities' (Cassidy, 2003, p. 44). The Chechens had spent a long period preparing for the Russian invasion and transformed the country into a fortified battlefield. They many times locked down the first floors of buildings by blocking the doors, or booby-trapped the entrance around their ambush sites, to prevent the Russians from taking cover. The Chechens used the sewer systems as concealed avenues of approach and escape. Based on their previous experiences with the Russian military, they could forecast potential ground force assembly areas and landing sites for Russian helicopters and prepare to maximize the effectiveness of future operations on those sites. Later, as the fight moved to mountainous areas of the country, the Chechens used the territory to their advantage, exploiting the limited number of roads and mountain passes as areas where they could lay effective ambushes against Russian armored convoys.

The weather also had significant influence on military operations because the Russians knew surprisingly little about the Chechen climate. The winter months, in particular, had a significant impact on both Russian soldiers and their equipment. Many of them did not have proper clothing, and their vehicles were not equipped for a hard winter environment. Russian drivers frequently remained in their vehicles with running engines, which not only revealed their locations but also burned a large amount of fuel increasing their resupply needs (Thomas, 1997). The severe weather, including snow, low cloud cover, and fog were key natural assets at the Chechens' disposal. It sometimes restricted the Russian air support of ground troops and conduct of aerial reconnaissance, which provided temporal and local advantages for the Chechens (Magnusson and Faurby, 1999).

The next significant external factor was the social terrain on both sides. On the one hand, the intervention in Chechnya was an unpopular decision in Russia. Not only was society divided on the question, but the Russian leadership was as well. Some high-ranking military leaders, including the deputy minister of defense, Boris Gromov, even went so far as to oppose the

invasion. Others, like Colonel General Aleksey Mityukin, the commander of the northern Caucasus military district, refused to take command of the invading forces (Magnusson and Faurby, 1999). This schism in Russian leadership played into the hands of the Chechen irregulars, who devised an effective psychological warfare strategy around it.

The social terrain had another significant aspect that influenced the outcome of the conflict. As Faurby and Magnusson explain, 'The Russian leaders had no understanding of Chechen society. They had no understanding of the popular support for Chechen independence. They did not understand that as soon as Russian troops crossed into the republic, the majority of Chechens would put their internal disagreements aside and fight under Dudayev as their symbol of national independence' (Magnusson and Faurby, 1999, p. 84). Without any indigenous allies, the Russians had no basis for any kind of cultural sensitivity or for a 'local' force not seen by the civilian population as invaders. Simply put, the Russians had no chance to normalize the security situation through an internal ally. Furthermore, the Russians' continuous harassment of Chechen civilians and their indiscriminate aerial and artillery bombardments, which had no serious military effects on the rebel forces, deepened the anti-Russian mindset, which led to the majority of the *taip*s being willing to provide fighters, supplies, and safe havens for the irregular forces.

The last external factor worth considering is the international environment in which the conflict occurred. Only five years after the Cold War ended, neither the United States nor other Western countries were willing to jeopardize their improving relationships with Russia over the Chechen issue. As President Clinton stated at a press conference in August 1994, his administration saw the events in Chechnya as an internal affair of Russia, which he hoped would be solved quickly and with minimal violence. This announcement 'sent the message that the United States had no intention of involving itself in the conflict' (Bagot, 2009, p. 33), which quickly made the Chechens realize that they could not hope for involvement by the any significant outside actor. As

a result of this, the Chechens fought a two-year war against a superior enemy without any outside support.

Conclusion

Major changes in the geostrategic environment forced European countries to re-evaluate their national defense approaches. In many countries, this process led to the implementation of defense approaches in which post-occupation resistance activities serving as their basis. While this author recognized that such approach is the appropriate, if not the only viable option for some European countries, it also suggests that the current manifestations of such strategy do not ensure maximum results because their fundamental characteristics and principles were derived from limited and sometimes even irrelevant historical cases.

This article argued that it is important to identify and learn lessons from systematically ignored examples such as recent insurgencies and terrorist activities. The article offered a starting point for identifying such critical lessons by analyzing the First Russo-Chechen War through a research model that was built on the common principles of Mao Zedong, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, and General Vo Nguyen Giap. According to the case study, small countries can indeed consider irregular warfare strategy as their primary national defense strategy, but to use such approach effectively, they need to meet some necessary and sufficient conditions. Creating a single, unified national will to resist an aggressor seems to be one of the necessary conditions for successful resistance. A unified will can provide information superiority over the aggressor, maintain societal support to resistance throughout the entire conflict, and ensure nation-wide resiliency in the face of any attempts of division. Small countries must also develop concepts in case of conflict that can ensure gaining international political and popular support to their cause while attempting to exploit any rifts within the aggressor country's political system and domestic affairs.

The findings of the analysis also suggest that resistance activities might be most successful if they are conducted by organizations whose structural designs, tactics, and procedures are the least similar to those of modern

conventional military formations. Small countries might consider designing purpose-built, trained, and equipped resistance forces utilizing small unit swarming tactics instead of maintaining their large and slow-moving Western-style conventional militaries that exhaust the majority of scarce defense resources, potentially yielding sub-optimal results in case of an irregular war. While the case study suggests that prior conventional military training and leadership experience were beneficial in the Chechens' struggle against the Russians, if small countries implement significant changes in organization, small unit tactics, techniques, and procedures, then they will need to overhaul the training and education system of the future leaders of the resistance forces. New training and education regimes might focus on skills like adaptability, innovation, and mission command, and while this can be found in contemporary special forces training, they are not necessarily common among the leadership of conventional military formations. The case study also suggests that physical terrain, especially urban terrain, and rough weather conditions were key contributors to the success of the Chechen approach. Small countries are at a unique point in history where they have the opportunity to build their own future battlefield through the pre-conflict development of urban areas. Just like the Chechens prepared their towns and cities for the upcoming war, small European countries should do the same. Countries should enhance and fortify existing features and build new artificial ones to limit the maneuver abilities of an occupying force while maximizing the effectiveness of their irregular formations. Small countries may consider implementing changes in urban development practices that would allow them turn these areas into fortresses by preparing underground avenues of approaches to potential targets, preparing escape routes, pre-positioning weapons caches, building camouflaged field hospitals, pre-mining key terrain, and building dummy positions to mislead occupying force intelligence.

The time for small European countries to continue taking cautious steps that do nothing to break down outdated and irrelevant military concepts and with that potentially prevent future success is over. If they want to ensure their

national survival against a numerically and technologically superior conventional enemy, then they must strive to better understand the essence of successful resistance. Such an endeavor requires the application of more rigorous research and willingness to go beyond romanticized historical memories and learn from more peripheral contemporary cases as well. This article was written to take a step in that direction. Hopefully, there will be many more.

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