



# Insights into the Concept of Wargaming in the Russian Military

---

**Citation for reference:** Verrall, N. (2025). Insights into the Concept of Wargaming in the Russian Military. DSTL/CP170476 (Porton Down: DSTL). Proceedings of the Connections UK Wargaming Conference, Brunel University of London, 9-11 September 2025.

- Military reforms under Peter (I) the Great (1690s-1720s) then Catherine (II) the Great (1760s-90s)
  - More exercises than wargaming, but also development of military thought, professionalisation, publications.
- First notable push in mid-late 1800s (1830s – 1870s) and then again early 1900s (just in time for WW1).
- Soviet Military Thought series (1970-90):
  - Mentioned in nine separate publications 1970-78 (see Annex A at back).

- Sloan, J., Jalali, A., Wardak, G. & Giessler, F. (1986). Soviet Style Wargames.
- Main, S (2017). 'Military games for training, education and propaganda (Russia)'. Paper and presentation for the Russian Military Studies Centre, UK Defence Academy, Shrivenham (Sep 2017).
- Main, S. (2018). How Russia 'Plays' at War. *British Army Review*, No. 171, pp. 53-60.
- Caffrey, M. (2019). Testing tactics. *Jane's Intelligence Review*, November, pp. 56-57.

- There are numerous terms used to describe wargaming.
  - **War game** (WG) (*Voyennaya Igra* [Военная Игра]).
  - **Command-Staff War Game** (CSWG) (*Komandno-Shtabnaya Voyennaya Igra – KShVI* [Командно-штабная Военная Игра - КШВИ]).
  - **Exploratory Command-Staff War game** (ECSWG) (*Issledovatel'skaya komandno-shtabnaya voyennaya igra - IKShVI* [Исследовательская командно-штабная военная игра - ИКШВИ]).
  - **Strategic Command-Staff War game** (SCSWG) (*Strategicheskoy komandno-shtabnoy voyennoy igry - SKSHVI* [Стратегической командно-штабной военной игры – СКШВИ]).
- Occasionally, the terms '*Military Exercise*' (*Voyennyye Ucheniya* [военные учения]) or '*Command Staff Exercise*' (*Komandno-Shtabnoe Uchenie* [Командно-Штабное Учение]) may also be seen, but these would relate to field exercises as opposed to wargaming.
- The term *wargame* could also be confused with '*military games*' (*Voyennyye igry* [Военные игры]), which relates to Russian military sporting and professional events, and are often reported in military news articles.

“A form of **operational training** used to test and improve **officers' skills** in preparing for operations and commanding troops (forces) during combat operations, as well as to study new issues in military art, organisational structure of troops (forces) and methods of their application. The content of CSWG consists of a game confrontation of the parties, during which the trainees, **as part of a regular or temporarily created military command body**, perform official duties in commanding troops (forces) against the background of a single situation. CSWG can be: by scale - **strategic, operational-strategic and operational**; by the number of command and staff instances involved - single-stage and multi-stage; by the number of parties involved - **bilateral (as a rule)** and unilateral. Conducted mainly on maps **under the supervision of the immediate or senior commander**. The duration of CSWG is **determined by the leadership** depending on its scale, goals, topic and number of training questions”

*Current online military encyclopaedic dictionary of the MOD of the Russian Federation*

**Insight:** Specific use, for specific people (it's not for everyone, for anything).

# Appearance in Russian Military Lexica

Year	Source reference	Primary Language(s)	Wargame	CSWG	ECSWG
1818	Russian military dictionary of ground forces (A-O)	Russian	No	No	No
1855	Military encyclopaedic lexicon (vol. VIII)	Russian	No	No	No
1863	Polyglot naval dictionary (Russian, French, English)	Russian English French	No	No	No
1887	German-Russian military technical dictionary	German	Yes <sup>26</sup>	No	No
1912	Military Encyclopaedia (Vol. 6)	Russian	Yes (Def) <sup>27</sup>	No	No
1940	Military Turkish-Russian and Russian-Turkish dictionary	Turkish first	No	No	No
1942	Military English-Russian Dictionary	English first	Yes	No	No
1942	Russian-Kazakh military dictionary	Russian	No	No	No
1942	Military Russian-Tajik dictionary	Russian	No	No	No
1958	English-Russian military dictionary of terms for rear support and supply services	English first	No	No	No
1958	Brief dictionary of operational-tactical and general military words (terms)	Russian	Yes (Def)	No	No
1962	English-Russian military-engineering dictionary	English first	No	No	No
1965	Arabic-Russian military dictionary	Russian and Arabic	No	No	No

1965	Dictionary of basic military terms	Russian	Yes (Def)	No	No
1966	Explanatory dictionary of military terms	Russian	Yes (Def)	No	No
1968	English-Russian Military Dictionary	English first	Yes	No	No
1976	Soviet Military Encyclopaedia (Vol. 2)	Russian	Yes <sup>28</sup>	Yes (Def)	No
1983	Military Encyclopaedic Dictionary	Russian	Yes (Def)	No	No
1986	English-Russian textbook minimum military terminology dictionary	Joint	No	No	No
1987	English Russian military dictionary	English first	No	No	No
1988	Dictionary of military terminology	Russian	No	No	No
1990	Military naval dictionary	Russian	Yes (Def)	Yes (Def)	No
2000	Dictionary of military terminology	Russian	No	No	No
2002	Military encyclopaedic dictionary	Russian	No	Yes (Def)	No
Online	Military encyclopaedic dictionary	Russian	Yes (Def)	Yes (Def)	Yes (Def)
Online	Terminology of the Strategic Missile Forces	Russian	Yes	Yes (Def)	Yes (Def)

- Remarkably few articles on the topic (regardless of type) – see citations.
  - Very few in the title of an article, but more generic use in the main body text of other article contexts (e.g. command training; strategic coordination, etc.).
- The contexts where it's mentioned include (non-exhaustive): Strategic Missile Forces; Medical Services; the Coordination of Military Cooperation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); Russian-Belarusian Regional Group of Troops; Training for Command positions; Computer simulation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chechen War; The general upskilling of Officers in Naval Forces, Airborne Forces, etc; and in general press releases across all Services.
- As an Officer training tool, consider the professional military education of Russian Officers:
  - There are 41 military universities across Russia.
  - There are 140 Military Training Centres (MTC) in civilian universities across Russia.

- The terminology for war game appears intermittently within the lexicon of the Russian military since the nineteenth century (Soviet history skews our perception of much longer Russian military history).
- There are numerous terms used to describe wargaming.
  - War game, Command-Staff War Game (CSWG), Exploratory Command-Staff Wargame (ECSWG), Strategic Command-Staff Wargame (SCSWG).
- The term *Command Staff Wargame* is the most likely equivalent term for the contemporary concept of wargaming.
- Don't get confused with other terms like *military games*, *military exercise* and *command staff exercise*, which relate to sports events, professional events and field exercises.
- Many contexts for application, but remember that: Mostly for the operational level; For Officers; Senior officer dictates; adversarial (bi-lateral); the organisation and use of military forces.

# List of useful citations (in date order)

- Reisswitz G. (1831). Description of a military game invented by the Prussian Guards Artillery.
- Kuzminsky, A.P. (1847). Guide to the wargame (with coloured drawings).
- Stankevich, A. (1862). Wargame. *Military Collection*, No.7 (Jul), pp. 91-116.
- Kolodeev (1862). Troop Education. Comments on the Manual for the Military Game. *Weapons Collection*, No.4, pp. 37-48.
- Kazansky, P.P. (1873). Guide to the wargame.
- Skugarevsky, A.P. (1874). Wargame: a collection of problems for tactical exercises.
- Plyutsinsky, A.F. (1876). On the Fortress Wargame. *Military Collection*, No.2 (Feb), pp. 301-328.
- Manual of the War Game with some reference information appended: Compiled in the office of the district quartermaster general of the Vilnius military district headquarters. Vilno, 1907.
- Vitsnuda, K.A., Trotsky, V.V., Pnevsky, N.V. & Suvorov, A.N. (1907). Field reference book of an officer for manoeuvres, field trips, military games and tactical tasks.
- Suvorov A.N. (1908). Manual for conducting classes with officers: (war game, tactical tasks and reports). pp. 1-26.
- A set of instructions given by the Chief of the General Staff during the military game of General Staff officers in 1907 (St. Petersburg, 1908).
- Instructions for conducting a war game in the senior class of the Nikolaev Academy of the General Staff in 1908 (St. Petersburg, 1908).
- Analysis of a military game of senior infantry commanders conducted in February 1910 at the headquarters of the Warsaw Military District.
- Report on a military game of senior troop commanders of the Warsaw Military District in 1911.
- Sulkevich, M.A. (1911). Guide for conducting a war game for officers of the Irkutsk Military District. Irkutsk.



# List of useful citations (in date order)

- Dvigubskiy, N.P. (1911). Rear military game. *Military Collection*, No.12 (Dec), pp. 21-28
- Schwartz, A.V. & Dukhanin N.E. (1912). Fortress war: a guide to conducting a fortress war game (with all the necessary reference information).
- Sulkevich, M.A. (1913). Guide to the war game Simferopol.
- Kosyakov, V.A. (1913). Guide for conducting a war game.
- Report on the strategic war game that took place in the city of Kyiv from April 20 to 24, 1914.
- Suvorov A.N. (1919). War game of senior military commanders in April 1914. *Military-Historical Collection*, issue 1. pp. 9-28.

## Contemporary articles

- The Russian State Military Historical Archive. (2000). Brief report on the strategic wargame in the city of Kyiv.
- Alpeev, O. (2014). History of the emergence and development of wargames in the Russian Army (1824-1905). *Military History Journal*, No.6 (Jun), pp. 28-32.

**Summary.** This article examines the history of emergence and development of military game as a form of tactical and operational training and means of verification of war plans in Russia in 19th - early 20th centuries. The author reveals the influence of the military-theoretical thought on this process, analyses the main guidelines for managing wargames.

- Alpeev, O. (2014). Introduction of wargames as a mandatory form of training of generals and officers in the Russian Army on the eve of the first world war (1906-1914). *Military History Journal*, No.7 (Jul), pp. 40-44.

**Summary.** This article discusses the reform of military games in Russia in 1906 - 1914. The author analyses the causes that led to introduction of war games as necessary studies with officers of the General Staff and combatant commanders, reveals the role in this of the Chief of the General Staff Lieutenant-General F.F. Palitsyn.

- Alpeev, O. (2019). The strategic wargame by senior army leaders in Kiev on 20-24 April 1914. *Military History Journal*, No.10 (Oct), pp. 14-23.

**Summary.** The paper focuses on analysis of reasons for organization of the strategic war game by senior army leaders of the Russian Army in Kiev on 20 - 24 April 1914. The paper reconstructs its course and explains the importance of the game for strategic planning at the General Staff prior to the First World War.

- Chekmarev, S.A. (2019). The Wargame of 1902: The Bosphorus Expedition. *Military History Journal*, No.8 (Aug), pp. 22-26.

**Summary.** The paper describes the practice of military gaming in the Odessa Military District simulating likely actions by the troops and the Navy to capture and hold the Bosphorus.

- Nezhivoi, E.N. & Danilyuk, M.N. (2020). Command and staff wargames as the main method of training operational personnel of military command bodies to perform tasks as intended. *Military Thought*, No.10 (Oct), pp. 133-39.

**Summary.** The paper examines the issues of preparing operational personnel of military control bodies for carrying out tasks according to their designation in peacetime outside the Russian Federation. It suggests methodologically justified measures aimed at improving the professional standards of the operational personnel and work coordination in the control body so as to improve the discharging of official duties.

- Finaev, O. (2021). “Know-How” of Operational Training. *Military Herald of the South of Russia*, No.1 (11 Jan), p.2.

**Summary.** Command and staff war games in 2021 will be included in the operational training system of the command staff of the Southern Military District. Following the results of the Strategic Command and Staff War Game with the management and command staff of subordinate formations and units, the Commander of the Southern Military District, General of the Army Alexander Dvornikov, decided to include a new form of training in the operational training system on a regular basis.

- Belkin, P. (2022). Wargame in Dagestan. *Military Herald of the South of Russia*, No.21 (31 May), p.12.

# Annex A: Contexts within the Soviet Military Thought Series

**1970 Civil Defence** contains one mention of wargames to support the organisation and performance of Pioneer camps. This is expressed as Directive No.6 (of 8) within the Directive of Civil Defence for directors of specific locations and facilities.

**1971 The Officer's Handbook** mentions wargames and command and command-staff games as one method of delivering combat and political training.

**1972 Concept, Algorithm, Decision: Decision Making and Automation** describes the concept and value of wargames.

**1975 Maskirovka** provides two operational examples where wargaming was employed in real-time for operational planning during the Great Patriotic War.

**1976 Dictionary of Basic Military Terms** contains three entries for wargames. In addition to these, wargames are mentioned as a consideration for the application of 'operational time' (Operativnoye vremya), which is the hypothetical time (hours, minutes, date) used in wargames, training and exercises.

**1970 The People, the Army, the Commander** mentions wargaming twice. First, by providing evidence to the fact that Commanders have very little time in contemporary warfare to process, assess and decide; and secondly, the analysis of wargames allows commanders to develop competencies in abstract thought and theorising, as well as logic, so that can be both inquisitive and discerning.

**1975 Forecasting in Military Affairs** mentions wargames in the context of selecting optimal methods for employing new weapons in combat; and tasks in the operational and combat training of troops.

Within the **1975 Selected Soviet Military Writings 1970-75** there is an article on "Soviet Military Science: Its Social Role and Functions" that mention wargames as part of a suite of techniques (alongside training, exercises and manoeuvres) to help solve practical problems, as part of the 'Revolution in Military Affairs'.

**1978 The Soviet Armed Forces: A History of Their Organisational Development** it mentions wargames in the context of training command personnel in the reserves; wargaming as an updated Red Army regulation published between 1924-25; and as field-based methods to train concepts and processes within military academies.



**Delivering  
Mission Success**

Discover more

