The Aim:

* To reflect on the change and continuity in Russian military thought during the last two decades.
* And to outline the role of Informational Struggle in it.

Contents

I. Evolution of Russian military thought and operational art

II. The Role of IS in the current Russian strategy

III. Main Avenues of Innovation and Exploration

My talk is based on unclassified primary sources – professional periodicals, conferences, and scientific work published by members of Russian strategic community & experts.

**I. Evolution of Russian Strategic Thought & Operational Art**

Let me briefly outline the context within which these ideas evolved

**Russian Strategic Mindset**

* For the last 25 years we are in the strategic competition with the West.
* Since early-mid 2000s competition intensified – it’s a war.
* Georgia 2008: not only a watershed but also a Wake-Up call.
* The 5 Days war demonstrated the awful state of the conventional military.
* Strategically it was a victory but operationally-tactically it was a fiasco.
* How did it happen? Why such poor performance?
* Since 1991 – NW were the Equalizer of conventional inferiority (qualitative & quantitative)
* Known as Escalation by de-escalation.
* No Explicit Mechanism, Large level of incoherence; Implicitly - GND on SNW; RCD - NSNW.
* Tentative remedy for the period of conventional forces reform.
* Although improvements and funds allocations started since early 2000s, in 2008 it was a clear fiasco in military effectiveness.
* Main Flaws: PGMs and standoff weapons; C4ISR & NCW operations, quality of ground forces & combined arms operations.

**Main trend since then: Major Military Reform and Modernization.**

* The aim:
* To rebuild conventional military after almost 20 years decay
* To improve specifically in the above three regards.
* To advance conventional military towards the ideal type of the reconnaissance-strike complex.
* Main characteristic: Nuclear arsenal is harmonized (without loosing its importance) with other, non-nuclear and non-military, forms of strategic influence.
* In a way, we look at discontinuity & paradigm shift
* Strategic tool kit has been diversified.
* Less exclusivity of the nuclear arsenal.
* Strategy of coercion and not of brute force.
* In sum: since 2008-2010 we look at conventionalization of the Russian military theory and practice, and the incremental rise of non-nuclear and non-military forms of coercion.
* Since then there has been two parallel trends:
  + Growing funds allocation for these needs for almost a decade ~~(and modernization will be ongoing, may be less ambitious).~~
  + The second trend --- in keeping with Russian military tradition and strategic culture --- seeking conceptual-doctrinal framework to guide the reform.

Let us have a closer look at this framework.

**Doctrinal-Conceptual Framework**

* This doctrinal-conceptual framework is sometimes called Gerasimov Doctrine after:
* The programmatic address by Chief of the GS who urged in 2013 senior military brass to conceptualize the changing character of war.
* Gerasimov argued that we are in the midst of RMA, outlined the contours of the current military regime as he envisioned it, and urged to develop this theory further.
* Not entirely novel notion - his speech, probably prepared from him by the GS experts, reflected ideas traceable in Russian expert community since mid-late 2000s under the name NGW (NTW).
* BTW, in contrast to the common wisdom, widespread in the West:
* It is not a written doctrine, or a playbook, but a constantly evolving cloud of ideas, a conceptual output of strategic community in response to Gerasimov’s call.
* Often mistakenly defined in the West by misnomer HW.
* How NGW or GD envision modern era operations and the current character of war? Let me share the main features:
* Merge all military tools (conventional, sub and non) into one integrated operational whole.
* Nuclear arsenal is necessary but insufficient condition for success in the NGW era.
* Merge these military tools with non-mil forms of strategic influence (diplomatic, economic, informational-propagandistic & population protest potential).
* The ratio of contribution of every type of strategic influence changed, and it minimized kinetic, brute force to the minimum necessary.
* 4:1 ratio of mil & non-mil efforts, but military is still in charge.
* The best illustration – Western subversion/Western hybrid threats in Ukraine, Libya, and Syria (soft power, controlled chaos and colored revolutions backed by irregular & regular military power – aimed at the regime change.
  + Libya – a story of the Western success (due to Russian inaction)
  + Syria – a story of the Western failure (due to Russian action)
  + Ukraine – a story of the mixed results. (first the Western success, and then, due to Russian counter-measures the overall correlation of trends in Moscow’s favor).
* We are looking at transition from massive battles of integral annihilation towards coercion & deterrence.
* Perception – becomes a CoG of the modern operations.
* Manipulating picture of reality by coercive signaling that aims to influence strategic calculus of the adversary, and change his strategic behavior.
* For this reason I call the current Russian approach to strategy CDC.
* Mechanism of the novel approach is as follows:
* Operation’s main rationale is to dissuade the adversary from aggression, or to deescalate it and impose Russia’s will with minimal violence.
* It is an integrated cross-domain operation: uninterrupted informational influence waged on all possible fronts against all possible audiences, augmented by nuclear signaling and supplemented by intra-war coercion.
* Nuclear manipulations (nuclear brandishing, employing dual use systems blurring distinction between conventional & nuclear, and nuclear rhetoric) in conjunction with other forms of strategic activity ~~(conventional and informational coercion)~~ aim to keep the opponent off balance, to exploit his disorientation and shape his strategic behavior in desirable direction.
* Since 2013 – we observe innovations in force build up, equipment and conops.
* Among other issues - Two new services were established:
  + - Command of Special Operations Forces
      * ~~Not intel. collection and not force multiplier, but the main tool of the battlefield.~~
    - Command of Information Operations Forces
  + ~~EW, cyber and PSYOPS – integrated in one operational plot.~~
* This innovative Russian strategic approach that links nuclear, conventional and informational (cyber) tools of influence into one integrated mechanism, manifested itself in several recent Russian gambits in Europe, Ukraine and in the Middle East.
* All these theaters enabled to test and realize the above doctrinal-conceptual outlines.

I don’t want to idealize but they are functioning as **Learning** **Machine**

* Recurring pattern of innovation – cloud of doctrinal ideas – exercises and snap inspections – war/military operation – lessons learned – cloud of ideas – exercises – war …… (Georgia, Crimea, Eastern Ukraine, Syria).
* There is an innovative professional climate within the Russian strategic community:
* No fear of failure
* Conceptual flexibility and dynamism
* Developing new knowledge by & trial and error
* Constant experimentation, adjustments and cycles of strategic-operational adaptation
* Bottom line: Russian strategic thought and operational art are constantly evolving and thus could not be understood as a point in time, but only in dynamic, and only when situated within broader historical & conceptual contexts.

One of the main novelties – **a strong emphasize on Informational Struggle**

* Since, according to NGW, the main battlefield is consciousness, perception, and strategic calculus of the adversary, thus IS, aimed at imposing one’s strategic will on the other side becomes one of the main operational tools.
* Informational struggle is a *leitmotiv* of the current Russian approach to strategy as it knits together all operational efforts, and choreographs coercion activities across non-military and military (nuclear and non-nuclear) domains.
* Its role of systemic integrator linking together all the domains is expressed both verbally and graphically in Gerasimov’s programmatic speech.
* Russian conceptualization of IS is unique –it combines digital-technological and cognitive-psychological forms of influence.
* In the West, the tools of what is called in Russian IS (PSYOPS/Cyber/EW) are not under one roof.

To understand the essence of the Russian approach we should glimpse into its intellectual history.

Russian Approach to Informational Struggle

* **Three Intellectual Sources**

Despite the puzzlement of several intelligence communities with what they qualify Moscow’s innovative “cyber warfare,” the Russian approach demonstrates remarkable historical continuity. Russian conceptualization of informational (cyber) struggle is an outgrowth of three corpora of professional knowledge.

* + Digital-Technological Inspiration: Soviet MTR & the US IT-RMA (Envisioning adversary as RSC; disrupting DM and disintegrating the system of systems by Informational strike (EW on C4ISR) - vs. classical kinetic destruction.
  + Cognitive-Psychological Inspiration: the art of Active Measures & Maskirovka (D3C2) manipulating perception & influencing DM)
  + Conceptual Imprint: Unique Soviet definition of Cybernetics Science - science exploring the nature of creation, storage, transformation and management of knowledge, in complex systems (machines, living organisms, or societies). In a nutshell, it is a discipline dealing with patterns, principles and management of DM in complex systems.
* These 3 intellectual sources account for **Differences** (from the West) **in Conceptualizing Cyber/Info Spheres**
  + Much broader meaning than in the West
  + Distinguish between three domains:
* Informational Space - where perception is shaped
* Information itself - content which shapes perception
* Informational Infrastructure - technological expression (digital & analogue) of the first two mediums
  + Tools of IS - CNO, EW, PSYOPS, Deception.
* **Perception as Center of Gravity** 
  + Manipulating perception & interfering in DM (Individuals/Org/Gv/ St) & forcing the adversary to act upon the fabricated picture of reality.
  + Both for Offense and Defense.

Uniqueness of Russian Cyber Campaign

Informational struggle is not a codified CONOP. However, the contours of this widely used tool are straightforwardly identifiable.

* **Holistic/Systemic Approach** (*Kompleksnyi podhod*)
  + Merges Digital-tech Sabotage & Cog-Psychological Subversion
  + Hostile Code and Hostile Content
* **Unity & Hybridity of Effort** *(Edinstvo usilii)*
  + IS is synchronized with kinetic and non-kinetic military means and with effects from non-military sources of power;
  + It is *unified* in terms of co-opting and coordinating a spectrum of government and non-government actors – military, paramilitary, and non-military (cyber outsourcing).
  + Seeks synergy across the domains (mil & non-mil) by synchronizing on-line effects with off-line activity.
* **Permanence** *(Bezpriryvnost’***)**
  + Informational campaign is an *uninterrupted* strategic effort. No Peace/War time division often used in the Western strategic thought.
  + It is waged during “peacetime” and wartime, simultaneously in domestic, the adversary’s, and international media domains and in all spheres of new media.
  + There is one organizing operational plot linking together activities on tactical, operational and strategic levels
  + No clear beginning, no clear end-state

Most Recent Developments

REB emerges as the most visible innovative trend in frames of Russian informational struggle.

* **2014-17 Leap Forward in RES** 
  + Rapid increase in the use of RES at the annual exercises and increase in the number of stand-alone RES exercises. (2018 the first training base / testing range of the RES forces).
* ~~Field testing functioning as RSC (both in terms of offense and defense).~~
* ~~Providing EW capability to troops on the lower tactical levels - sophisticated REB capabilities, air, sea and land based, are becoming part and parcel of any combined arms battalions and brigade level capabilities packages.~~
* ~~Revealing C2 posts of illegal combat formations and to provide real time targets’ coordinates~~
* ~~Defending from UAVs, ELINT, PGMs~~
  + Massive use in Ukraine and Syria – testing ground enabling one of the main avenues of the military reform (weaknesses from 2008).
* ~~Ukraine – denying electromagnetic communications; defeating UAVs and Artillery, targeting C2.~~
  + Splash of conceptual activity related to RES in prof publications.

**Avenues of EW Innovation & Exploration:**

* **Main Missions**
* *RE Defense* (zaschita) - protecting all the components of the RSC from two main forms of attack (EW & precision-fires) and from intelligence supporting it.
  + - In Ukraine and in Syria – reducing the signature for UAVs, PGMs attacks, interdicting radio-controlled IEDs, suppressing targeting systems of the MANPADs.
    - In Syria, all forces, air, naval and ground, operated under cover of the REB systems, and several areal (helicopters and fixed wings) and ground forces platforms were carrying REB packages.
* *RE Suppression* (podavlenie) – refers to jamming and neutralization of anti artillery strikes, anti targeting, anti infrared influence on enemy’s PGMs, AWACS, and the UAVs. Counter-intelligence and counter-targeting also refers to this category.
* *RE Intelligence* gathering for the sake of EW and Fire strikes.
* **Three Concepts** that receive the biggest share of attention in the professional discourse:
  + *RE-I blockade* - isolation of the zone of operation by maneuverable REB groups & RE UAVs operating inside and outside TVD.
  + *RE-I strike* - on C2 to disorganize internal cohesion of the enemy system.
  + *Interrelated (or independent) fire and informational-technical influence,* on informational streams within the enemy system (intelligence, command, operational, informal). The accumulated effect of the strikes aims at demoralization, disinformation, and disruption of the operational plot of the adversary
* **Main Future Trends**
* Merging lines of RE & Cyber in the NCW era operations (RE-I term).
* Blurring lines between defensive and offensive systems and tactics.
* RES – main alternative to destruction by fire.
* REB as asymmetrical advantage and as one of the responses to the 3rd Offset and its components (ex. MD) – offsetting the offset.
* **In the Midst of Organizational and Conceptual Learning** 
  + Although some sort of cyber command have been established but dozen of institutions are competing for resources, responsibilities, and promoting different concepts.
  + This competition does not constrain innovativeness and creativity.
  + New knowledge in constantly developed and adaptations are on display.

**II. How Innovative is the Current Russian Approach to Strategy?**

Some critical analysis is due here.

* Western sources frequently mention the innovativeness of the Russian approach by qualifying it as hybrid, asymmetrical, and not distinguishing between peace and war. These are the three most often mentioned features.
* Although such a diagnosis is largely accurate, these characteristics are not particularly novel for Russian operation art.
* Judged by the yardstick of Russian strategic culture, these qualities represent continuity rather than change in Russian art of strategy.

Let me please elaborate:

**Asymmetry**

* I would argue that Russian quest for asymmetry is not fundamentally novel.
* “Military cunningness” is a term in Russian prof terminology for addressing weaknesses and avoiding strengths of the adversary. It has been one of the central components of military art in the Tsarist, Soviet, and Russian traditions.
* The previous splash of asymmetry conceptualization in Russian military thought dates back to the 1980s when Soviet experts sought effective countermeasures to the SDI.
* One of then architects of asymmetrical response, and today one of Russia’s leading defense intellectuals, Andrei Kokoshin, has been popularizing the term “asymmetrical approach” in the professional discourse since the 1990s.
* Long before the publication of the current military doctrine, making reference to asymmetry and indirect approach turned into a *bon ton* among the Russian military and political leadership.
* Moreover, the Russian approach, at least in Russian eyes, is also symmetrical—the nature of the threat shapes the nature of the response. Moscow saw the United States waging a new type of (hybrid) warfare elsewhere, felt threatened, sought adequate countermeasures.

**Hybridity vs. Holism**

* The issue of Hybrid terminology is another inaccuracy in qualifying the Russian approach as innovative.
* Russian sources do not define their approach as HW and use this term to refer to the Western way of war, which they are trying to counteract.
* Until recently, HW was not at all part of the Russian lexicon and jargon.
* Two weeks ago Gerasimov was reserved in using this term even in reference to the Western strategic-operational behavior, let alone the Russian one.
* The intellectual history of the term in the West and the empirical context for its development hardly had any Russian connection.
* The term emerged in the West since the mid-2000s, as the U.S. and its allies have been co-exploring emerging forms of warfare against non-state and state actors.
* It was the Middle East that served as the main source of inspiration for initial hybrid-warfare conceptualization.
* The current Russian strategy and theory, even if similar in some respects to HW, mostly epitomizes the holistic nature of Russian mentality and its intellectual tradition.
* The holistic approach (*kompleksnyi/systemnyi podhod*) - is an all-embracing view that grasps a big picture, and describes every element of reality as being in constant interplay with others in frames of a meta-system, views issues in different dimensions as interconnected, has a generalized frame of reference, and perceives every move of any element of the system as a complexity of measures.
* This approach has been emblematic throughout the Russian intellectual tradition in literature, religious philosophy, natural, exact and social sciences, and in the military theory.

**Struggle**

* Western scholars sometimes see the innovativeness of the Russian approach as its being uninterrupted, in contrast to the Western division between wartime and peacetime.
* Indeed, the Russian approach is much broader than its Western equivalent. The Russian discourse often uses the term “struggle” (*bor’ba*) to refer to various forms of strategic interactions.
* In Russian military theory, this term has a broad meaning and refers to strategic interaction in its totality, in both wartime and peacetime.
* The term has been used and shaped Russian thinking since the dawn of the Soviet military thought.
* In the Western strategic studies lexicon Competitive strategy would be probably the closest approximation to the Russian term struggle.

That said there are two novelties:

* The main novelty is that essentially this approach is not a brute force but a strategy of coercion.
* It orchestrates the military and nonmilitary measures while minimizing kinetic engagements.
* As such it is a departure from the big war paradigm that dominated Russian military thought for decades.
* The second novelty the role of the informational domain that looms unprecedentedly large in the approach.

Strategic Style

* The Syrian theater well manifested the main organizing logic of Russian strategic design and force employment - Reasonable sufficiency (*razumnaia dostatochnost’*).
* My import/paraphrase of the Soviet term – to ensure maximum political outcome while keeping the military involvement to the minimum necessary.
* Employment of this principle enables not to cross the Culmination Point of intervention and to avoid undesired overextension.
* NGW naturally resonates/correspondes with this principle --- The amalgamation of different tools of CDC ensures that the limitations of each form of influence are compensated by other capabilities.
* When the effectiveness of one type of influence diminishes, it is supplemented by other types of coercion that could be employed in a more pressing manner including actual escalation in the use of force.
* Moscow assumes asymmetry of interests on all the theaters of competition with the West. As a result:
* It operates under notion, that it can afford assertive and risk prone behavior, because the balance of coercive credibility is in its favor.
* The West will back off due to the lower stakes in Ukraine and Syria, and Moscow assumes that DC realizes this and tries to avoid escalation.
* They can dominate every stage on the escalation ladder.
* We are looking at rapid decision-making – executions cycles and effective orchestration of various forms of national power in frames of one operation. This is due to:
* Centralized and institutionalized but not over-bureaucratized decision-making process.
* National security architecture and apparatus that resonate with:
* classical Svechin’s model of integral strategic manager (*integral’nyi polkovodets*)
* modern version of the wartime concept of the *stavka.*
* Uninterrupted political control over military strategy formulation and execution [what Kokoshin calls *postoiannoe politicheskoe upravlenie voinoi* ] ensures utility of force, and dialectical relation between ends and means along the classical Clauzevitsian logic.

**Roial’ v Kustah**

Russian operation in Syria

* Let me share some thoughts on Russian Operation in Syria.
* Decision taken more than a year ago: one of the most dangerous, difficult and complicated decisions of this administration.
* Let me talk about 3 things: Drivers, Contours, Self Assessment.

**What are Main Drivers of Operation?**

**Russian DM style** - In keeping with Russian strategic culture it was a Holistic D (kompleksnoe reshenie) simultaneously promoting international, regional and domestic goals. Holistic Cognitive style & strategic mentality: no priority – interrelated and equally important. Here and in any other example of intervention – Soviet (Kavkaz 1, 2) – post-Soviet.

1. Operation against ISIS – Preventive strike jihad in Russia (V-day speech).
2. Defending embattled ally and securing Russian assets in Syria.
3. Diverting attention from Ukraine; Breaking Isolation; Sanctions Linkage.
4. Enhancing Regional position: Cultivating new allies, regional broker, and possible arms transfers and economic benefits for sanctions hit country.
5. International: Status in Pair with Washington; indispensable global actor.

(PR Dividends – salvation of EU from the refugees problem – consequences of the myopic US policy + avoiding isolation.)

**What are the Contours of Operational Design?**

* Main Principle: a la Soviet Reasonable Sufficiency – *razumnaja dostatochnost* (ensuring maximum outcome in minimum involvement) Not crossing the Culmination Point of to avoid overextension.
* Based on lessons learned from the best and the worst practices of itself and others in this type of warfare against this type of enemy.
* Coalition Division of labor designed accordingly.
* Raison d’etre Operational Logic:
* Reversing strategic trend; denying initiative from anti-Assad forces; fragmentation strike with subsequent localization and neutralization of the opposition.
* Simultaneous political, military and informational campaign along the lines of the NGW (aka Gerasimov doctrine) – what I call CDC.
* End state & Conceptual Frame of Reference
* Reconciliation and transition processes leading to partial or full territorial integrity.
* The ruler that ensures continuity of Russian control –Chechen scenario – cultivating pro-Moscow local leader – radicalizing and smashing the rest.
  + Illustration of this approach: started in Feb after the establishment of the Reconciliation Center
  + Next step – Announcement about withdrawal
  + Recent stage – ceasefire agreements

**What’s Moscow’s Self Assessment?**

* Mixed feelings; Overall balance and correlation of forces is positive; the tone changes since mid spring into a more negative and concerned.
* Achievements:
* Saving Assad’s regime; secured its interests and presence. Low chances for “Libyan Hybrid War” regime change scenario.
* Significant blow on jihadists from the post-Soviet space.
* Diverting attention away from Ukraine at home and abroad.
* Indispensable actor in regional and international eyes + upgrading relations with several other pro-Western actors including Israel.
* Demo **conventional** mil power projection and fighting capabilities – very big deal at the backdrop of the ongoing military reform.
* Second Order effects: using Syria for:
  + Testing and training for all the services
    - Laboratory for 2 Commands: SOCOM and Info – EW/cyber
  + Marketing showroom to promote arms sales (no oil/gas)
    - new trend – not separate systems but A2/AD packages; contracts signed/discusses in Asia / ME
  + Coercive signaling to EU and Near Abroad.
* Negative Trends that I can hear starting from spring:
* Goes slowly. Despite strategic initiative cant’ develop operational success and facilitate normalization through political track.
* Tensions with Assad; No tools of serious control over him.
* No cultivated alternative to Assad (censuring continuity of control) within Syrian elits or desired balance in Syrian politics.
* No full control over military campaign but responsibility for result.
* No expected normalization with the US. (Saw Syria as the only place with cooperation potential); Risk of loosing control over the East. Vain signaling of cooperation desire – real frustration for Moscow.
* Iran (short term tensions); emerging competition with China
* Growing radicalization of Russian Muslims– a very big topic.
  + 20M more than 90% sunnis. About 1/6 of population.
  + **First Intervention in the ME/War that really matters – strong Muslim identity only after Chechnia 2**
  + Some see involvement through the **Shia-Sunna** and got to fight there (Dagi r most sensitive in this regard)
  + A la **Civil War Spain** – everyone who wants to fight Russia – Chechens, Tajiks, Georgians, Crimean & Russian Tatars.
  + Souring relations with **Tatarstan** after Turkey
  + **Internal migration** to Russian hinterland – Ural, Siberia, Far East.
  + Radicalization within the **prisons**.
  + Potential problem for Putins’ 2018 **elections**

**Last but not least - Emerging Concern**: Regime stability in Afghanistan, and Central Asia. Kavkaz 2016. Situation in the ME is seen in this conext.

**My Estimate**: Very complicated moment. Moscow is in the process of re-configuring / re-formatting its operation. It should reach its goals and terminate it, while securing achievements gained so far.

**Announcement of withdrawal**: in the current character of war there is a moment when you should make it because there will be no Reihstag.

**Rojal’ v Kustah:**

* New Trend: ROC as diplomacy multipliernew diplomacy – ROC proved itself a very useful player for Kremlin’s agenda
* Herzliya conference – Storm 888.
* China involvement dilemma
* 9 May greetings in Congress – mixed reactions
* Big Questions:
  + Iran in the short term
  + China in the long term
  + Involving Egypt to counterbalance Shia image

Budget cut

Highly exaggerated; even if it were correct, it still enables ongoing modernization; the peak of modernization was passed; due to economic difficulties allocation planed to be allocated to the industry in one chunk will be dispersed over several years.

First Point: Majority has positive strategic expectations from Trump.

* Trump - Unpredictable but energetic and passionate. Energy that he generates offers opportunities can be maneuvered into directions favorable to Moscow.
* He looks dogovorosposobnyi – negotiable / open to dialogue. And similar to us in some respects.
  + Not dogmatic politician but businessman who knows how to make deals of all kinds – like us.
  + Promotes traditional and conservative values and attacked by liberal on media – like us.
  + Centralized and personalized mode of management – like us.
  + Similar harsh approach to terrorism.
* His most noticeable statements on Russia:
* No intervention in the internal affairs of others.
* Positive towards Putin leadership style.
* Skeptical on IC anti-Russian hacking acquisitions – witch-hunt.
* Avoiding tensions that can lead to inadvertent nuclear escalations (extended deterrence to Eastern Europe)
* ISIS and China - the main challenges, not Moscow.
* Called to improve relations.
* His nominations seem very promising from Moscow.
* SoState, DNI – constructive and pragmatic (national emergences can create strange bedfellows), and personal ties.
* SoD, NSC – mostly anti Jihadi anti Iran- not anti Russian.
* Kissinger – the wisest person in the US - main advisor – potential architect of the new Détente - and his protégées on influential positions – potential Amb to Moscow & deputy NSC.
* ~~Broader historical and comparative frameworks. History teaches we do work with anti-Russian Westerners when interests converge.~~
  + ~~Right after the 1917 and Civil War they acknowledged the USSR.~~
  + ~~During the war Stalin worked with Truman, Roosevelt and even Churchill.~~
  + ~~We had Détente ----- Bottom line ----- nothing new. Another phase.~~

Second Point: What are the concrete expectations/deals of the best case scenario:

* Major expextation – nirmul ha yahasim.
* Sanctions: from relaxation to cancelation.
* Post-Soviet space: from acknowledging that this is an area of Russian interests (eizorim hiuniim) to reduction of the current reinforcements in the Baltics, and support to Ukraine, up to withdrawal from NATO.
* Middle East:
  + Convergence of interests in Syria – against ISIS (whoever we call ISIS and terrorists) and not Assad.
  + Iran – several nominees can be harsh on Iranian nuclear program and influence in the region – plays into Russian interests.
  + Can work together on the host of regional issues - although Russia felt the vacuum left by Obama admin, it cannot sustain the region as the US can.
* The US Focus on China challenge: a very good competitive strategy for us. Let him be absorbed with this issue. We will enjoy both DC and Bejing courting us to each side – expands our space for maneuver.
* Overall aspiration: New and multipolar world with divided spheres of influence.

Third Point: What are the possible dangers challenges (still a minority view)

* Nirmul for concrete benefits. ---- On China and on many other issues Moscow does not have a lot benefits to offer to DC. As long as Turmp will not be satisfied by declaratory pledges *a la* “we will not wage cyberwar against you.”
* Whatever he wants, bureaucracy in DC, strategic community and Congress are mainly anti-Russian and they can promote policies he will not control.
* After some learning & transformation he can basically continue the along the lines of the previous administration, especially in light of:
* active lobbing of the EU allies
* ~~tensions on arms control – MD and PGS.~~

Bottom line: Russian strategic community is closer to Groupthink rather to Polythink and on the issue of the next administration.

Roal’ v Kustah

SoS - Rex Tillerson;

Potential ambassador to Moscow - Tom Graham (from Kiss.)

SoD – James Mattis

NSC - Michael Flynn (neocon + realist = working with friendly tyrants);

DeputyNSC- K.T.McFarland (form Kiss)

DNI candidate – Dan Coats (national emergences can create strange bedfellows.)