

Russia and the “Color Revolution”

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A Russian Military View of a World Destabilized by the US and the West

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The British strategist, Liddell Hart, stressed the need to understand rival views of grand strategy and military developments, or "the other side of the hill." A range of Russian and Belorussian military and civil experts presented a very different view of global security and the forces behind it at the Russian Ministry of Defense's third Moscow Conference on International Security on May 23, 2014.

The first session of the Conference presented an overview of the security situation, focusing on what Russian experts called the "Color Revolution." Russian analysts have used this term since the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia in 2003, in discussing the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine in 2004, and the "Tulip Revolution" that took place in Kyrgyzstan in 2005.

Russian military officers now tied the term "Color Revolution" to the crisis in Ukraine and to what they saw as a new US and European approach to warfare that focuses on creating destabilizing revolutions in other states as a means of serving their security interests at low cost and with minimal casualties. It was seen as posing a potential threat to Russia in the near abroad, to China and Asia states not aligned with the US, and as a means of destabilizing states in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and South Asia.

The second session repeated these themes, focusing on the instability in the Middle East, and the final session addressed the war in Afghanistan and South Asia.

Many of the speakers at the meeting from other countries touched on very different themes, but the Russian and Belorussian military speakers provided a consistent and carefully orchestrated picture of the “Color Revolution” – backed by detailed PowerPoint presentations, some of which came from the audience during what would normally have been the question period.

Key Russian officers and officials presented a view of the US and the West as deliberately destabilizing nations in North Africa, the Middle East, and the rest of the world for their own ends. They describe such actions as having failed, and been a key source of terrorism. They see the West as rejecting partnership with the West as a threatening Russia along all of its borders with Europe.

Senior Russian officials are also using the term “Color Revolution” in ways that are far more critical than in the past. For example, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, has accused the United States and the European Union of an attempt to stage yet another “color revolution” in Ukraine, and said during the conference that, “Attempts to impose homemade recipes for internal changes on other nations, without taking into account their own traditions and national characteristics, to engage in the ‘export of democracy,’ have a destructive impact on international relations and result in an increase of the number of hot spots on the world map.” (RIA Novosti, May 23, 2014 ‘Color Revolutions’ Cause Apparent Damage to International Stability – Lavrov, <http://rickrozoff.wordpress.com/2014/05/26/color-revolutions-upset-global-stability-russian-foreign-minister/>.)

The end result is a radically different reading of modern history, of US and European strategy, their use of force, and US and European goals and actions from any issued in the West and in prior Russian literature.

Western experts can argue the degree to which this represents Russian anger over the West’s reaction to event in the Ukraine, Russian efforts at persuading developing nations and Asia to back Russia in a reassertion of its strategic role in the world, propaganda to cloak the character Russian actions in the Ukraine and near abroad, an effort to justify Russian action in Syria, very real Russian concern over US and European actions that have destabilized key MENA and Central Asian states, and a host of other possible motives and intentions.

What is critical is that the US and Europe listen to what Russian military leaders and strategists are saying. These are not Russian views the US and Europe can afford to ignore.

The Burke Chair has prepared two versions of a briefing that presents the key points raised by Russian speakers in note form. It should be stressed that the summaries in these briefs have to be made using quick personal notes taken during the actual speeches, and are not quotes. They are only a very rough indication of what the speakers said, and lack important nuances.

Most speakers spoke in Russian and translation may have also have used wording the speakers did not fully intend.

These notes are, however, backed by photos of many of the “slides” used in the PowerPoints during the meeting – many of which were kindly provided to me by colleagues. These slides clearly present the views of the speakers in the form they chose.

The first brief presents only the key Russian statements and presentations focused on the Color Revolution. It is entitled ***Russia and the “Color Revolution”*** ***A Russian Military View of a World Destabilized by the US and the West, KEY BRIEFS***, and is available on the Burke Chair web site [here](#).

The second, more comprehensive brief presents all Russian statements and presentations focused on the Color Revolution, including detailed briefs and comments on the situation in the Middle East, a radically different Russian view of the war in Afghanistan, and a presentation on proliferation. It is entitled ***Russia and the “Color Revolution”*** ***A Russian Military View of a World Destabilized by the US and the West, FULL REPORT***, and is available on the Burke Chair web site [here](#).

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