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Multi-Domain Concept of Using A2/AD Capabilities in the Military Strategy of the Russian Federation

Abstract: This article presents the results of research, which set out to clarify the importance and role played by the concept of using A2/AD capabilities in the military strategy of the Russian Federation. Analysis and criticism of the literature were used to solve the research problems. In order to guide the research process, a hypothesis was formulated, assuming that the Russian concept of using A2/AD capabilities is an operationalisation of a broader military strategy for defeating the adversary, as well as an effective deterrence mechanism. The research process established that the Russian concept of using A2/AD capabilities is a theory and operational practice, a broader military strategy of achieving multi-domain superiority over the adversary by conducting strategic offensive operations. Integrating offensive and defensive operational capabilities plays a key role in this concept, which guarantees possession of the strategic initiative and maintenance of dominance in the international security environment and supports the idea of creating Russian spheres of influence. It also prompts NATO states to counter the supremacy of the Russian Federation.

Keywords: *military strategy, operational capabilities, superiority, dominance, bastions*

Introduction

Russian aggression against Ukraine has raised legitimate concerns about their own security of states in the immediate vicinity of the Russian Federation. The militarisation of the Kaliningrad Oblast (Sukhankin, 2018) and Crimea, expressed in the construction by the Russians of a system dedicated to limiting NATO's ability to enter the theatre of operations and perform a manoeuvre described in Western literature as Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD), is still a topical issue, stirring up emotions and discussions in both academic circles and military experts. The concentration of capabilities in a relatively small area, for example, allows Russian naval and air forces to perform strikes and conduct amphibious operations in the rear of Estonia and Latvia, seize Gotland and other strategic islands in the Baltic Sea,

and block sea traffic from Stockholm to Riga and Tallinn (Bonds et al., p. 92). The Suwałki Gap arouses similar emotions. Strikes from Kaliningrad on Polish territory could physically cut off the Baltic states from the Allies and thus prevent any support from being provided (Lasconjarias, 2019, p. 78).

While the concerns are genuine, in the case of the Russian Federation, Western strategists seem to have misdiagnosed the nature of these challenges. The concept, commonly known as A2/AD, is more than just a keyword understood only in military circles. It has now become a certain blueprint for thinking about the military capabilities possessed by adversaries of the United States of America (US), posing certain difficulties for US and NATO troops to conduct unrestricted and uncontested operational activities. Interpreting the conceptual framework for the Russian Federation's use of A2/AD capabilities based on American patterns of strategic thinking is dangerously misleading and leads to misinterpretation of Russian military doctrine and strategy¹.

It should also be made clear that Anti-Access (A2) must not be considered separately from Area-Denial (AD) since the essence of A2/AD is the skilful combination of actions that block the possibility of military access to an area with actions that inhibit the possibility of conducting military operations there (Depczynski et al., 2022, p. 72). Given that the space controlled under A2/AD can include any place where no military operations are carried out, it can be concluded that exercising this type of control makes it possible to gain an advantage and even dominance in any region of the world (Radomyski, 2021, p. 43). In addition, the distinction between the two separate parts of the cited definition indicates that implementing the A2/AD concept requires using qualitatively and quantitatively diverse military and non-military means (Kondakov, 2022). It is also worth noting that kinetic actions are supported by interaction in cyberspace (Erdogan, 2018) and the information sphere (Dinicu, 2014).

Based on a literature search, it was determined that the available studies comprehensively explain the A2/AD issue concerning both the epistemological and ontological layers. The scientific literature extensively characterises the capabilities of the Russian Federation possessed within the framework of the A2/AD zones being created. However, it is worth noting that the studies include only Western views based on different strategic thinking from Russia, which makes the knowledge incomplete. The lack of an assessment of Russian theory regarding the use of operational capabilities dedicated to A2/AD creates certain theoretical

¹ The dependence of U.S. armed forces on foreign bases created a rationale for strategic rivals to acquire capabilities to deny access of enemy forces to a specific territory, in order to prevent troops from intervening and engaging in crisis resolution. Thus, these were anti-access capabilities referred to by the acronym A2 equivalent to the word anti-access, preventing troops from entering the theater of operations. In contrast, the capabilities abbreviated Area-Denial AD were intended to prevent the free movement of troops in a narrower area under the direct control of the adversary. Thus, they prevented the enemy from conducting operations in the defended battlespace (Krepinevich et al., 2003, p. 25).

as well as utilitarian limitations, which as a result, may lead to incorrect strategic-operational assessments regarding their use within the framework of the Russian Federation's current military strategy.

Based on the existing cognitive gap, the main research problem was formulated: What is the significance and role of the concept of using A2/AD capabilities in the military strategy of the Russian Federation? The main research problem was fragmented, and the following specific problems were identified: 1) What is the positioning of the concept of using A2/AD capabilities from the Russian strategic perspective? 2) How does the Russian Federation implement the concept of using A2/AD capabilities in its military strategy?

The purpose of the research, the results of which are presented in this article, was to clarify the meaning and role played by the concept of using A2/AD capabilities in the military strategy of the Russian Federation.

In order to guide the research process, a research hypothesis was formulated, expressed in the following assumptions. The Russian concept of creating zones of limited access and free manoeuvre of troops is an operationalisation of a broader multi-domain military strategy for defeating the enemy. A2/AD is a concept of the use of operational capabilities utilised by the Russian Federation as part of its offensive strategy to gain an advantage over the opponent and achieve strategic dominance. At the same time, the creation of buffer zones is an effective deterrent mechanism against possible aggression on Russian territory.

A systemic approach was used to study the interactions, interdependencies and relationships between the Russian Federation's mechanisms of influence in using A2/AD capabilities and the participants in the international security environment. The system was understood as the set of all capabilities used to apply the strategy of influencing the adversary and the relationships between them. Based on this approach, the states and processes of achieving strategic advantage and dominance in the past and present were examined. Based on this, it was possible to draw conclusions about future states of influence and identify mechanisms through which the Russian Federation can achieve its own military goals. Literature analysis and criticism were mainly used to solve the research problems and obtain objective qualitative data. Also helpful was comparative analysis and generalisation, which made it possible to confront Russian views with those of the United States and to determine the mechanisms for using A2/AD capabilities in the military strategy of the Russian Federation in the future. The conclusions presented in the article result from using inductive and deductive reasoning.

Situating the Concept of Using A2/AD Capabilities in the Russian Strategic Perspective

The essence of the concept of using A2/AD capabilities is contained in conducting operations of both an offensive and defensive nature (Paździorek, 2021). Russian military strategy² does not view modern warfare in defensive terms. Rather, it focuses on offensive operations aimed at inflicting heavy losses, leading to the destruction and disorganisation of the enemy, which at the same time creates conditions for gaining an advantage over him (Gerasimov, 2016). Accordingly, during the threat of war, the Russian Federation prefers pre-emptive and preventive strikes to seize the initiative and impose its own will. Despite the defensive nature of Russian military doctrine (Petkevich, 2018), it is envisaged to proactively neutralise threats to state security, expressed in a strategy of active defence (Bredesen & Friis, 2020, p. 71). In this context, it is very important to seize the initiative achieved through swift and decisive offensive actions, identifying the opponent's weak points and posing threats to them, and inflicting heavy losses. The advantage in a direct armed clash is to be ensured by seizing and maintaining the strategic initiative (Russian, 2019). Russian military officials envision the use of both kinetic and non-kinetic measures, ranging from forms of intimidation and coercive threats to nuclear deterrent strikes inclusive (Bruusgaard, 2016).

Active defence is not a new term in Russian military thought. The concept appeared in the debates of leading military theorists during World War I and the Russian Civil War. In the early 1920s, active defence was a tactical concept, representing the opposite of passive defence (*Voprosy...*, n.d.). Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky did not favour this type of strategic activity because, in his view, it required a significant force (*Voprosy...*, n.d.). He considered active defence as an indecisive form of defensive activity. In his view, moving to passive defence, involving fortifications, entanglements and well-developed lines, was advisable only when holding back the attacker with smaller forces, thus gaining the time necessary to prepare offensive actions. For the active defence to be viable, the defending side had to have at least the same military strength as the attacking side, which is why it was rarely used (*Voprosy...*, n.d.).

After World War II, the term transformed and was understood as an activity in defence closer to its modern meaning. Defensive activity meant the continuity of the forces defending themselves against the enemy (defence). Its defeat was possible through the intensive application of fire, disruption of offensive preparations, persistence in holding designated positions, manoeuvrable retreats, and the execution of counterattacks against enemy forces breaking through defensive lines (defence). In this context, it is worth noting two modern principles of the Russian art of war that can be considered components of active defence.

² Russian military strategy is the highest form of operational art, offering general principles on the theory and practice of warfare, preparation for national defense, ways to prevent conflict, management of armed forces during war, and directions for strategic operations (Kofman et al., 2021, p. 1).

These are manoeuvre defence (Shelomski & Maksimov, 2020; Buyanovski & Runov, 2016; Trushin 2020) and non-contact warfare (Gerasimov, 2016; Bogdanov & Chekinov, 2013; Kartaplov, 2015). The essence of non-contact warfare is the execution of precision strikes from a distance against selected critical infrastructure and military facilities located throughout the territory of the attacked state (Banasik, 2021, p. 135).

It is worth emphasising that modern Russian active defence is not based on denying access to an area or restricting an adversary's freedom of action. Nor is it based on the effectiveness of defensive capabilities at the operational level. Rather, it is a way of thinking about exploiting an adversary's potential weaknesses and defeating him (Kofman, 2019, p. 31). The terminology of denying access to a specific area and restricting the freedom of manoeuvre of troops does not appear anywhere in Russian military writing. Activities carried out within the framework of the concept of using A2/AD capabilities are related to offensive operations and manoeuvre defence but are not focused on the ability to deny access to specific spaces (operational regions). Russian operational concepts are dynamic and do not see a clear distinction between activities included in offensive and defensive operations (Zarudnitskiy, 2021). It is also difficult to conclude that the concept of using A2/AD capabilities constitutes a viable theory of victory. The thesis of clearly delineated boundaries between offensive and defensive systems has been blurred and goes way back to the late period of Soviet military thought (Adamsky, 2020).

Modern Russian strategy does not reflect a denial-based approach to war. It is based on the assumption that the initial period of the war will be decisive (Russian, 2019). Therefore, according to theoretical assumptions, the main effort will be directed at repelling, devastating, disorganising, and slowing down the advancing troops, which is supposed to prevent the aggressor from pursuing his preferred way of waging war. The failure to achieve a quick victory is supposed to have a decidedly negative impact on the political determination to continue fighting further (Kofman, 2019). Even though the Russian General Staff seeks to raise the cost of access to the theatre of operations and limit the manoeuvrability of troops, it is still assumed that the so-called U.S. air and space blitzkrieg will not be blocked at the outset. Therefore, from the very beginning of the armed conflict, the goal will be to block troops and thwart the conduct of offensive operations, destroy the enemy's ability to fight and achieve victory in the armed clash (Zarudnitskiy, 2021). In short, it is assumed that Russian strategic operations will raise the opponent's cost of conducting operations enough to force him to de-escalate the conflict. If this is not possible with general-purpose troops, the possibility of using non-strategic nuclear weapons is always envisioned (Kristensen & Korda, 2022). Thus, the Russian Federation prefers, instead of conducting positional defence, pre-emptive and preventive strikes to seize the initiative and bring about ultimate domination (Kofman, 2019). The Russian A2/AD concept does not appear to have been modelled on the conclusions of U.S. General Ronald Fogleman, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, who in 1996 recognised the inadequacy of U.S. forces' ability to defend against strikes

during the redeployment of U.S. forces to disputed territory and the high operational risk (Petraitis, 2018).

An argument for understanding the concept of using A2/AD capabilities as a component of a broader military strategy is that the Russian General Staff does not view the world in terms of domains. For example, Russia has integrated airspace defence from low-altitude capabilities to space and anti-satellite defence and air defence with air and missile defence (Radomyski, 2021, p. 43). Russian military theory also combines radio-electronic warfare with cyber and space warfare (Depchinsky et al., 2022, p. 81). Therefore, the Russian Federation's goal is not to deny access to particular combat domains but to destroy the adversary's operational capabilities and deprive its military system of performing its basic functions. The Russian General Staff views the space of the ongoing competition in terms of theatres of operations, strategic directions, correlation of forces and the asymmetry that occurs. What matters at the operational and strategic level is the quantitative and qualitative ratio of means of warfare, not where they are physically located or which type of armed forces are at their disposal. Bringing the enemy into dysfunction is as useful as physically destroying it. Incidentally, this is also why the Russian Federation is unlikely to be deterred in a particular domain (Kofman, 2019).

It raises a broader question in a strategic context. Are the A2/AD capabilities that the Russian Federation has recently acquired dedicated solely to challenging access to Russian territory by NATO troops when it is so vast. Russian strategic thinking seems to be based on a theory of war that assumes that the adversary is a system with key subsystems and nodes, which is not unlike the concept of the well-known American strategist John Warden, who treats the adversary as a complex whole (West, 1999, p. 11). Since this is the case, strategic effects are achieved through simultaneous strikes focused on key functions of combat systems, systems that support them or negatively affect decision-making processes. This strategy aims to defeat the adversary at the operational and strategic levels of war across the spectrum of capabilities possessed.

The arguments prove that Russian theorists use the concept of A2/AD, like a hybrid or cyber warfare, to describe perceptions of Western doctrines and concepts of operational activities. Conversely, the U.S., the West and NATO use the term to describe the Russian Federation's actions and capabilities. In Russian military thought, no concept is associated with creating zones that deny access or restrict manoeuvre to enemy forces (Giles & Boulegue, 2019, p. 23). Instead of the limited concept of so-called "exclusion", Russian theorists treat the conduct of military operations holistically, meaning that they integrate all available resources and treat strategic A2/AD capabilities as part of the combined operation being conducted. Thus, these capabilities should not be treated independently but understood as enablers of broader strategic operations (Giles & Boulegue, 2019, p. 23).

From a strategic point of view, the A2/AD concept should be considered from the perspective of the theory of Russian new-generation warfare and the Russian Federation achieving dominance. Considering the correlation of non-military capabilities (Sokolov, 2019), it can

be assumed that the Russian Federation will have an advantage already in phase zero before the start of direct armed conflict. It may even turn out that the greater resources possessed by NATO may not be enough to achieve victory if we consider the international rivalry from the point of view of a new generation of war (Erdogan, 2018; Banasik, 2021).

It is assumed that the main strategic objective of the Russian Federation pursued in conducting active defence will be to lower the operational capabilities of the adversary. It will be done through the use of long-range means of destruction, which is intended to prevent the entry of troops into the theatre of operational activities, and then deprive him of the opportunity to perform free manoeuvre using medium- and short-range means of destruction (Mickiewicz & Kasprzycki, 2021, p. 68). The strategy of military action adopted in this way aims to protect one's own territory by creating so-called defensive bastions, the core of which are overlapping operational capabilities of different domains. Bastions are, at the same time, a kind of blanket providing comprehensive protection against land, sea, and air attacks. On the other hand, the capabilities concentrated under such a lampshade offer the possibility of projecting Russian power onto neighbouring states, which can lead to their domination in the military sphere (Lasconjarias, 2019, p. 77). It also appears that the creation of bastions is, on the one hand, a response to Western threats and, on the other hand, enables the Russian Federation to achieve regional dominance. Bastions thus form the basis for a strategy based on three key elements. First, bastions allow for deep manoeuvring, i.e., troops can move quickly, avoiding reconnaissance and destruction, and at the same time can conduct deep fire, isolating the enemy's troops' access to the direct combat zone and its material resources. Secondly, inside the bastion, there is precisely established interaction and synchronisation of actions of all the entities forming it, which was tested and verified in the Zapad 2017 (Petraitis, 2018) and Zapad 2021 exercises. Thirdly, multi-domain surface, surface, underwater, air, space, radio-electronic and cyberspace missile capabilities are concentrated in a single area, which enables comprehensive defeat of the enemy. It is also presumed that exploiting synergies in cyberspace, space, and the electromagnetic spectrum will make it possible to synchronise effects and create dilemmas in different domains and across multiple operational sites. This approach to conducting armed combat provides greater strategic depth and a deterrent to attacking the Russian Federation, thus avoiding escalation of the conflict and contact war. Multi-domain capabilities applied within the A2/AD concept thus become an effective instrument for achieving dominance and deterrence (Adamsky, 2018), forcing and limiting the adversary's ability to choose an action option (Adamsky, 2018). According to Russian strategists, the Russian Federation not only has an advantage in the organisation of the A2/AD zone but also in the means of armed struggle, including the means of electronic and cyber warfare (Leonkov, 2019). Therefore, defeating the A2/AD zone will first require neutralising Russian cyber warfare. However, in their view, this is not a problem since Russian military doctrine, in this case, allows the use of nuclear weapons, which are equipped with hypersonic manoeuvring

warheads capable of easily penetrating the existing and prospective A2/AD zones of any likely adversary (Leonkov, 2019).

Implementation of the Concept of Using A2/AD Capabilities in the Military Strategy of the Russian Federation

Using A2/AD capabilities involves preventing an adversary from accessing the theatre of operations, which entails the need for long-range influence capabilities. It focuses on activities against threats in the land, air, sea space, cyberspace, and other combat domains (Depczynski et al., 2022, p. 82). In contrast, capabilities that prevent freedom of manoeuvre tend to have a shorter range of impact and focus on regions of ongoing operational activities. Blocking capabilities focus on the space where direct armed confrontation can occur. Distinguishing separate activities aimed at preventing access and blocking an operational area makes only theoretical sense since, from the point of view of ongoing combat, the capabilities possessed can be used for both A2 and AD tasks (The Joint, 2012, p. 6).

The deliberate use of multi-domain capabilities leads one to view bastions as a concept for conducting armed combat against an adversary. Some argue that due to the offensive and defensive nature of the capabilities, which include instruments of military and non-military, kinetic and non-kinetic influence, the A2/AD concept is an operationalisation of the strategy of, on the one hand, discouraging or preventing the adversary from projecting force, and, on the other hand, actively lowering the adversary's capabilities and achieving superiority over him, as well as comprehensive or domain dominance³. Countering bastions is becoming a key component of the overall strategy for conducting international competition, including political, military and economic strategy, for at least two reasons. First, if anti-access systems cannot be successfully defeated and enter the theatre of operations, all other efforts will become pointless. Second, using multi-domain A2/AD capabilities becomes a deterrent mechanism that makes potential aggressors consider their intentions too risky (Tangredi, 2013). It is also important to be aware that actions taken under A2, although different from those taken under AD capabilities, should be considered comprehensively since they lead to

³ The comprehensive nature of the capability consists of, among other, multi-layered integrated air defense systems, consisting of modern fighter, attack and bomber aircraft, fixed and mobile anti-aircraft and anti-missile sets, coastal defense systems, cruise and ballistic missiles, launched from a variety of air, sea and land platforms, long-range artillery and multi-missile rocket systems (MLRS), conventional and nuclear-powered submarines armed with ballistic missiles, supersonic or hypersonic cruise missiles to counter surface and land targets and advanced torpedoes and naval mines, kinetic and non-kinetic anti-satellite weapons and their supporting space launch and surveillance infrastructure, sophisticated cyber warfare capabilities, information and radio-electronic warfare capabilities, advanced reconnaissance and strike systems including air, ground, surface and underwater dimensions, systems for the incapacitation and destruction of command systems, as well as special forces operations and biological and chemical weapons, unmanned aerial and underwater systems, and other (Tol, 2010; The Join, 2012, pp. 9–10).

the common goal of gaining an advantage over the adversary. In addition, it will not always be necessary to use all effectors of missile systems simultaneously. Their use will depend on the specific situation and will be dictated by operational needs (Elak, 2018, p. 5). In addition, it should be noted that the goal of the strategy employed in the use of A2/AD capabilities is not to destroy the adversary but rather to delay, disorganise and weaken him to such an extent that the intentions taken cannot be realised (Radomyski, 2021, p. 45).

In creating bastions, Russian capabilities are deliberately integrated (Depczynski et al., 2022, p. 80). These include capabilities to increase resistance to enemy strikes, precision strike capabilities, and destruction of vital resources and critical military and economic facilities necessary to sustain the armed struggle and disorganise the enemy (Bredesen & Friis, 2020, p. 73). Such strikes can be carried out serially, singly or in small groups. Larger-scale strikes, i.e., the possibility of simultaneously striking multiple critical facilities to achieve a synergistic effect of paralysing a military or political system, are also not excluded (Kofman, 2019). Thus, one can conclude that the capabilities in the concept of bastions have defensive or offensive functions but are certainly not dedicated only to deterring the enemy.

From a strategic point of view, the concept of using A2AD capabilities deserves to be studied not only through the prism of armed forces (Borshchevskaya, 2020) but also in the broader context of Russian new-generation warfare, i.e., the use of non-military instruments (Zarudnitskiy, 2021), which, thanks to synchronisation, make it possible to gain an advantage already in the so-called “zero” phase, i.e., before a direct armed clash. In order to face the strategy of the Russian Federation’s application of next-generation warfare, it will be necessary for the Alliance to adapt to the new operational conditions, even though NATO has an advantage in resources over Russia. It is because it will be extremely difficult to predict the conditions of war, which is always a peculiar situation that requires a distinct logic (Belousov & Kokoshin, 2014). Moreover, the strategic perspective questions the validity of a concept that appears defensive but is operationally offensive. The same operational tools can be used in both directions, i.e., defensive against an attacking adversary and offensive against another state. It means the possibility of taking the initiative over the adversary and denying him any advantage. In this context, there is also the risk of unjustified escalation of military actions. Let us remember that the Russian Federation possesses nuclear weapons, which it can use to make pre-emptive strikes at the very beginning of a conflict and thus dominate the international security environment (Lasconjarias & Marrone, 2016, p. 5).

From the point of view of armed struggle, it is expedient to determine the hierarchy of importance of operational objectives, i.e., is it most important to gain permanent military access by establishing superiority over the operational area, or is it more important to dominate key points in it (Lasconjarias & Marrone, 2016, p. 5)? After all, Russian operational capabilities are designed to impede access to the space of the conflict being played out by eliminating, for example, aviation, land and naval bases, and key points that determine the possibility of armed combat. It will also be difficult to move from the deployment of troops on the operational theatre to the phase of direct armed clash and subsequent operational

phases. In the case of conducting hostilities, the Russian Federation will try to completely isolate the theatre of operational activities from the enemy's main forces, as well as cut off from resources those forces already in the area of armed combat. In this way, the Russian Federation, with its advanced A2/AD capabilities, poses real threats while dominating NATO in selected geographic regions. Finally, from a tactical point of view, using A2/AD capabilities facilitates the use of asymmetric approaches (Zarudnitskiy, 2021) and the development of asymmetric means of warfare in the face of the assumed superiority of the strategic adversary (Erdogan, 2018).

The Russian Federation is currently acquiring bastion-dedicated capabilities that can be used to conduct a wide range of missions. These include integrated air defence systems, space systems (sensors, means of communication and global GPS navigation) and counter-space systems, technologically advanced fighter and attack aircraft, means of strategic transport, medium-range nuclear warhead-carrying capabilities, precision-guided ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, submarines and surface ships, expeditionary forces, irregular subdivisions, special operations forces, support for proxy operations and cyber-operational capabilities (Erdogan, 2018).

The Russian Federation's military strategy treats A2/AD capabilities as one of the pillars of its comprehensive approach to deterring and neutralising NATO's military superiority in peacetime, crisis and war and regards them as an element that perpetuates the belief within NATO that the Russian Federation is dominant (Nechaev, 2020). Considering the impact of the bastions' firepower deployed near the borders with NATO, especially in the Kaliningrad region and Crimea, it can be concluded that they can seriously affect the restriction of the Alliance's ability to move troops on its own territory. During a crisis, the Russian Federation may, through a demonstration of force, discourage the Alliance from military action against Russia. It will also be able to effectively influence the lowering of Allied situational awareness by disrupting means of communication, radiolocation and radio reconnaissance (Erdogan, 2018). In addition, the ever-increasing range of hostile influence may distort the assessment of Russian strategic intentions and blur the picture between military manoeuvring performed as part of military exercises and actual preparations for escalating tensions leading to a heated conflict. On the other hand, it puts Russia in a privileged position expressed in terms of spatial and temporal superiority over the Alliance. In case of an armed conflict with NATO, the Russian Federation will try to isolate the theatre of operations from the flow of fresh forces and supplies while positioning its own troops in an advantageous grouping. Given that the Alliance will need to reinforce its eastern flank in a contingency, it is clear that Russia's concept of strategic use of A2/AD capabilities was designed specifically to prevent the deployment of NATO's main forces in the theatre of operations, cut off second-strikes and retreats, and prevent logistical support in the zone of direct armed combat (Erdogan, 2018).

Conclusions

Based on the research, it was found that the Russian A2/AD concept, although based on operational offensive/defensive capabilities, is part of a broader perspective of the Russian Federation conducting strategic offensive operations and achieving dominance over the adversary, especially in the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea regions. The concept of using A2/AD capabilities is an operational theory and practice, perhaps overstated, but it does not, in its essence, represent new threats. Instead, it is a logical consequence of the conventional arms race and achieving superiority over the adversary. The creation of Russian A2/AD bastions can be seen as a response to Western power projection capabilities. On the other hand, Russian precision-guided missile capabilities pose threats to regional security. With advanced A2/AD capabilities at its disposal, Russia can attempt to threaten NATO bases near its borders with Russia, prevent the deployment of major forces in the conflict area, disrupt allied surface and submarine naval operations and prevent effective operations against Russian troops. In addition, it prevents the conduct of air operations, disintegrates air and missile defence systems, impedes the use of space for command and guidance of missile means, and, through cyber strikes, effectively disrupts the adversary's fire, support and logistics systems.

The research determined that building bastions and using multi-domain capabilities fits well with the strong Russian belief in the critical importance of strategic offensive operations, in which integrating military capabilities with non-military capabilities plays a key role. The Russian Federation intends to win the race for dominance in the contemporary international security environment by conducting strategic operations and modern strategic thinking.

The strategy of conducting offensive operations with A2/AD capabilities allows the Russian Federation to gain regional dominance and fits well with the concept of creating new spheres of influence and rebuilding Russia's superpower position. On the other hand, it prompts NATO states to counter the supremacy of the Russian Federation in terms of its conventional capabilities and reduce their military effectiveness, especially in the zones of created bastions.

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